Textual Analysis in Advertising Research: Construction and Deconstruction of Meanings

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A postmodern literary method of textual analysis is presented as a systematic approach to understanding the meaning of an advertising text. The method has three steps: identification of textual elements (the parts or literary attributes), construction of meaning (the whole, a sum of parts), and deconstruction (the unsaid assumptions that challenge singular meaning). The steps are demonstrated in a workbench analysis of a single advertisement. The author proposes that the addition of deconstruction to literary analysis of advertising text contributes to behavioral and cultural research on advertising by enabling researchers to "read" advertisements as expressions of contemporary consumer culture. Traditional language devices long thought to influence affective responses and memory are reexamined and future research directions suggested.

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> Here we have the lesson of our epoch, the one that most fascinates us just now—that unlike physics, in which two bodies may not occupy the same space, language is a material in which the same names are capable of supporting several mutually exclusive meanings simultaneously.
>
> Ulmer (1988, p. 165)

In the postmodern epoch, insights from the humanities have been a rich source of knowledge about advertisements (see Hirschman 1986; Sherry 1991). Literary theory (see Scott 1994b; Stern 1988, 1989a) has proven especially useful in cracking the communication code (Geertz 1983; Jhally 1990). However, the introduction of literary analysis into our discipline has not yet moved beyond the tenets of modernist criticism, which seeks to assuage the "discomfort with figures of speech that pluralize meaning" (Ahl 1988, p. 20) by discarding whatever does not fit into a neat bundle. Advertising research is stuck in modernism because our adaptation of literary analysis has not moved forward from semiology (Williamson 1978) to deconstruction—the most profound challenge to text-centered and reader-response inquiry (Scott 1994a,b).

One reason for the neglect of deconstruction is that advertising research has not yet caught up with postmodern criticism. The influence of literary theory has occurred in two waves that parallel its evolution up to the 1970s, but not beyond. The first wave was text-centered (Deighton 1985; Stern 1988; Wells 1989), oriented toward "close reading" of advertisements from several modernist perspectives: New Critical (Stern 1988, 1989a,b), semiotic (Mick 1986), and structuralist (McQuarrie and Mick 1992; Mick and Politi 1989). The second wave was reader-oriented, with reader-response theory (Scott 1994b) proposed as "the bridge from text to mind" that would enable development of "consumer response theory" (p. 462).

At this point, a third wave is needed to incorporate the postmodern insights of deconstruction, originally formulated in the 1960s by Jacques Derrida. These insights have been applied by the American critics known as the "Yale School"—primarily Paul de Man (1979), Geoffrey Hartman (1981), and J. Hillis Miller (1982) (for review, see Culler 1982). They have redefined textual meaning as "open" to continual shifts, in contrast to the earlier

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Table 1
Marketing Communication: Text Versus Word of Mouth (WOM)

Text	WOM
Sponsor pays	Freely given
Sponsor controls	Uncontrolled
Goal: consumption	Goal: satisfaction
Physically tangible	Ephemeral
Permanent	Transitory
Mass Media	Interpersonal
Public articulation	Private conversation
Created	Spontaneous

modernist conception of meaning as "closed" in finite denotations.

From a postmodern perspective, the relationship among language, text, readers, and culture is better described as a network of associations than as a bridge (Scott 1994b). The metaphorical shift acknowledges that belief in linear processes has given way to awareness of densely convoluted webs of meaning. Advertising copywriters, like poets, borrow from the network to create short but complex works of "rhetorical fiction" (Scott 1994b, p. 470). The justification for turning to literary methodology to analyze these works is that it enables us to address three additional questions: What kind of fiction is it? What kind of reader responses is it presumed to elicit? What does it reveal about the cultural context? Finding the answers requires an integrative method to synthesize information about the text, the readers' responses, and the cultural context.

A three-step method that includes deconstruction, adapted from literary criticism, is proposed. It provides rich analysis of advertisements in terms of language attributes, rhetorical influences, and cultural assumptions. After a brief overview of the literary theory that grounds postmodern inquiry, the method is demonstrated in a reading of an exemplar text—a single advertisement. Taking a single text through the step-by-step analytical process is an efficient way to illustrate a new method's procedure and outcome (see Stern 1989a). As each analytical step unfolds, different aspects of the text are revealed, which ultimately triangulate on a fuller interpretation than single-step analysis can provide. The article concludes with a discussion of the added value that textual analysis brings to research on the cultural underpinnings of persuasion and consumer responses.

A Word About "Text"

Before considering textual analysis, let us clarify the definition of "text." A precise definition can be derived from the distinction between advertising (the most visible but not the only vehicle of marketing communication) and word of mouth (WOM). Advertising is a crafted or created communicative exchange in the media, whereas WOM is a spontaneous verbal exchange in daily life. The differences (see Table 1) are summarized in a definition of advertising text as *any media artifact designed to persuade consumers, and generated, composed, recorded, and analyzed by sponsorial agents and/or researchers.*

Textual Analysis: Background and Method

The definition posits media artifacts as persuasions to consume (see McQuarrie and Mick 1992; Scott 1994b) that can be analyzed in a systematic way (Table 2). The first step is the *identification* of textual elements (naming the literary attributes). The second is the *construction* of a provisional meaning (categorizing the attributes as a type or genre). The third is the *deconstruction* of meaning (exposing the cultural assumptions that both sustain and subvert it).

A brief overview of the historical background of postmodern textual analysis clarifies its position in contemporary research. In the 1920s and 1930s, literary criticism focusing on "formal" features of a text such as poetic devices, structure, and language began in Eastern Europe (see Erlich 1965; Steiner 1984). Text-centered criticism took hold in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States, where "New Critics" (see Lentricchia 1980) such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1961), Wayne Booth (1961), and John Crowe Ransom (1941) refined and disseminated it widely. After a generation of dominance, "formalism" became a derogatory term in the 1960s, and textual analysis fell out of favor. The New Criticism was attacked by reader-response critics for its exclusion of readers and by sociological critics for its exclusion of socio-cultural influences. But the wheel of criticism keeps spinning, and by the late 1970s, deconstructive criticism (see Culler 1982; Lentricchia 1980) renewed the focus on text. However, unlike the New Critics, who viewed text as a repository of finite (albeit am-

Table 2
Three-Step Textual Analysis:
Identification—Construction—Deconstruction

1. Identification of Attributes
   - A. Language
   - B. Character
   - C. Plot
2. Construction of Meaning
   - A. Genre categorization
   - B. Rhetorical tactic
3. Deconstruction of Meanings
   - A. Oppositional binaries
   - B. Revelation of gaps
   - C. Deprivileging privileged voices

biguous) meaning, the deconstructive critics view text as a playing field where multiple meanings clash.

Steps 1 and 2: The New Critics and the Text

Nonetheless, deconstruction begins with construction, for virtually all text-centered analysis is indebted to the New Critics. They systematized textual analysis by devising replicable procedures for answering the question, "what kind of text is it?" Their method of identifying attributes and classifying different combinations into genres (Fowler 1982) can be used by advertising researchers to establish categories of advertisements just as marketing researchers establish categories of brands (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Cohen and Basu 1987). The New Critics' foundation of rigorous rules reflects their penchant for empirical inquiry—a kind of scholarship that descends from Aristotle, who was the first scientist as well as the first literary critic.

To ensure proper training, the New Critics perfected the method of "close reading" or "explication" (Stern 1989b) aimed at providing a "detailed and subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and *ambiguities* (multiple meanings) of the components" within the work (Abrams 1988, p. 223). This method is still widely used by American college instructors to teach students to analyze literature. It is so ingrained in our cultural heritage that most people educated in American classrooms approach text in this way. The adaptation of close reading to advertising text (Stern 1988) meshed with the research community's interest in identifying a text's formal properties and classifying its genre.

Reader-Response Theory: Return to the Reader

However, as Scott (1994b) pointed out, by the early 1970s the primacy of the text had been rejected in literary criticism. Scott introduced reader-response theory to advertising research, refixing attention on the response side. The theory she set forth had grown out of critical pressure to reposition the reader as the dominant partner in the literary triad (author/text/reader) (Bleich 1975; Holland 1975; Iser 1978). Reader-response critics posited a multiplicity of individual interpretations rejecting the New Critical assumption of one universal "right" reading. They also discarded the notion that text is the only legitimate object of inquiry, turning to cognitive psychology to learn about mental schema (Bettman 1979) or scripts (Abelson 1976; Kelly and Rubin 1988; Mandler and Parker 1976). Critical emphasis on reader-driven meaning fueled the suggestion to improve advertising research by blending reader-response criticism and cognitive psychology (Deighton 1985; Scott 1994b). This alliance mapped onto the discipline's tradition of response-side research on consumer information processing (see Jacoby and Hoyer 1987; Wright 1986).

Nonetheless, the influence of reader-response theory (Mick and Buhl 1992; Scott 1994b) ought not divert attention from the text and context. Readers and texts can not be set apart from either each other or the culture that sustains them. Rather, greater understanding of responses requires *more*, not less, attention to texts, as Holland (1975, p. 12), one of the most esteemed reader-response critics, pointed out:

> ... the reader is surely responding to *something*. The literary text may be only so many marks on a page—at most a matrix of psychological possibilities for its readers. Nevertheless, only some possibilities, we would say, truly fit the matrix.... In the basic question... "Who reads what how?", there must be a "what"....

Step 3: Deconstruction: The "What" of Text

The thrust of deconstructive criticism (see Culler 1982; Norris 1982) is to revisit the "what" of text. Reader-constructed meaning is folded into a larger argument for infinitely open meanings brought about by the play of language itself. American critics are

responsible for taking deconstruction to the workbench, using it to analyze literary and nonliterary text alike. They have leapt over the boundaries set by the New Critics to begin deconstructive analysis where New Critical close reading ends.

The New Critical identification of language attributes and genres serves as a springboard for deconstructive exploration of the "unperceived, the nonpresent, and the nonconscious" (Derrida 1967, p. 68) aspects of language. Deconstructive critics engage in the reading of "presences" (things "in" the text) only to expose the underlying "absences" (things *not* in the text). These absences are the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions (Derrida 1967, 1975) at play in the binary oppositions fundamental to the denotation of meaning (e.g., man/woman, white/black, truth/error). The Sesame Street jingle that says "one of these things is not like the others" is but a friendlier way of teaching readers about "the warring forces of signification within ... text itself" (Johnson 1981, p. xiv). Deconstructive criticism aims at teasing out these forces to unseat "the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another" (Johnson 1981, p. xiv).

Thus, step 3 addresses the contradictory meanings inherent in language by disassembling the cultural assumptions that a text simultaneously reveals and conceals. The justification for this step is that fuller understanding of language and culture flows from viewing the words as markers that empower one term in a binary by suppressing its opposite. The power struggles occur in advertising as in all language, and their exposure uncovers the premises on which commercial culture rests. To date, deconstruction has been found useful in management theory "for penetrating the surface of symbols—for silencing symbols to reveal their detached and hidden implications" (Gephart 1996, p. 42).

It promises similar usefulness in advertising theory and practice, for penetration of advertising symbols clarifies the partialed-out meanings hidden under "universally" agreed-upon correct meaning. If what previously was considered "universal" is seen as but one construction of reality (e.g., that of the white, male, educated, middle class), then deconstruction brings to light the alternative disenfranchised realities (e.g., those of culturally marginalized audiences such as minorities, women, lower classes, or uneducated members of society) that have been suppressed. To sum up, the postmodern method of textual analysis begins with the New Critical steps of identifying the parts and constructing the whole and then moves to the deconstructive step of unpacking the cultural baggage.

Textual Analysis of the Exemplar

Analysis of a coupon as an exemplar (Figure 1) takes the method to the workbench. The rhetorical goal of coupons is clear—the Snausages and Pup-Peroni dog snacks text is an action message aimed at persuading consumers to buy the items. It offers a cents-off inducement to stimulate purchase of two different brands (one a biscuit in a 7-oz box, one a rolled stick in a 1.2-oz or 2.8-oz bag) with different taste attributes (sausage or beef jerky). Step 1 of the analysis is an examination of the attributes of language, character, and plot.

Step 1: Identification of Attributes

Language. The New Critical technique of paraphrasing a few lines of text in one "ordinary, intelligible English" sentence (Richards 1929, p. 12) highlights the intention of the execution. The paraphrase—one dog says to the other, "Now that spring and its flowers have arrived, Snausages are the snack for me, and Pup-peroni the snack for you"—compresses two brand offerings in one message, an execution probably determined by the sponsor's sales goals. Each brand name is a neologism, a new word made up of parts of extant words (see Attridge 1988), with "Snausages" combining "snacks" and "sausages" and "Pup-Peroni" combining "pup" and "pepperoni." However, just as the brand attributes differ, so too do the names—they share no distinctive acoustic elements other than an "n" sound. Hence, the copywriters have to weld disparate words into a gestalt via a textual form capable of unifying dissimilar entities.

One such form is poetic, for rhythm, rhyme, and sound effects function as unifying structural devices. Note that even though the use of poetic devices is considered commonplace in advertising, which has been called "the poetry of consumer culture" (Schultze 1987, p. 3), researchers must acquire specific information about the precise poetic devices deployed (which ones, how many, and to what end). Our exemplar uses so many that the sound pattern (Figure 2) has to be analyzed closely.

Rhythm and rhyme: This pattern is determined by rhythm, defined as "a recognizable though variable pattern in the beat of the stresses in the stream of sound" (Abrams 1988, p. 101), and rhyme, defined as the recurrence of regular units of repeated sounds.

Figure 1
Snausages and Pup-Peroni
Advertisements and Coupon

Rhythm is analyzed (or scanned) to determine the number and kind of poetic "feet," a term that sums up each unit of stressed and unstressed syllables comprising a single "foot" (see Ciardi and Williams 1975). Rhythm determines the pace (or tempo) of the text, for the pattern of stressed/unstressed syllables controls the speed of a line's movement. Although metrics was first developed by literary critics to analyze poetic text, it has been used recently by some researchers to scan advertisements (see Cook 1988; Stern 1989b).

Metrical analysis of line length, kinds of feet, type of line ending, and pattern of regularity/variation indicates that the pattern is a quatrain—a four-line stanza, with the second and fourth lines rhyming. This is called a/b/c/b rhyme or 2-4 rhyme because lines 2 and 4 end in similar sounds. The number of metrical feet in the lines varies: three (trimeter) in line 1, five (pentameter) in lines 2 and 3; and six (hexameter) in line 4. Line 4 is unusually long in English meter because it must accommodate the four-syllable brand name. All of the other words are short (either one-syllable or two-syllable), and the predominant pattern is iambic (stress on the last syllable of a two-syllable unit). The only exceptions are the brand names, which are dactyls (stress on the first syllable in a three-syllable unit). That is, the brand names are set apart from the rest of the words by length, stress, and tempo. In this way, the rhythm and rhyme establish a pattern that foregrounds (Peer 1986) the brand names as variations from a predictably regular background.

The poetic devices resemble those used in children's counting-out verses (Kelly and Rubin 1988) and orally transmitted folklore (Lomax 1960). This resemblance has important processing consequences, for the copy-

Figure 2
Scanning the Text: Analysis of Rhythmicity

/ /
SPRING HAS SPRUNG,

/ /
THE FLOWERS HAVE TOO.

/ /
SNAUSAGES FOR ME,

/ /
PUP-PERONI FOR YOU.

writers have co-opted (perhaps unconsciously) a bundle of language attributes long used to persuade children to learn, remember, and repeat textual material. Further, the quatrain's rhythm is considered culturally preferred by adults as well as children (Gombrich 1961), reflecting the presence of inherently pleasing natural patterns in a given language (Kiparsky 1975). Metrical analysis of text is a prerequisite for further research on different advertising rhythms (see last section).

Sound patterns: When metrical analysis is combined with close examination of sound patterns, it yields even more information about vowel and consonant sequences and clusters, repetition of words/phrases, and types of rhyme (Ciardi and Williams 1975). These, too, have been studied in terms of processing consequences (Schloss 1981; Vanden Bergh 1982; Vanden Bergh, Adler, and Oliver 1987), although not programatically. In the exemplar, the sound pattern is held together by alliteration (the repetition of consonant sounds) and assonance (the repetition of vowel sounds). Alliteration is evidenced in the "s" and "p" sounds—"spr" is used twice in line 1, "s" carries line 2 ("flowers") to the triple use in line 3 ("Snausages"), and "p" is used twice in line 4 ("Pup-Peroni"). The sound pattern organizes the text as follows: "r" sounds are present in all of the lines; the end-rhyme followed by a period forces a full stop at the end of each two-line unit; and the last two lines are grammatically identical (syntax and internal repetition of "for"). Thus, the advertisement's writers solved the problem of unifying dissimilar-sounding brand names—plural forms drawn from different languages (regular English "Snausages" versus mock-Italian "Pup-Peroni")—by means of poetic devices.

Cross-language made-up words (see Attridge 1988) often comprise the nonsense syllables familiar in children's verse (Jakobson and Waugh 1987). The union of neologisms and nonsense sounds reflects language at play—in Attridge's (1988) words, "those irruptions of the disorderly world of childhood pleasures and unconscious desires into the clear and linear processes of practical and rational thought" (p. 141). The decentering of stable meaning by "puncepts" (Ulmer 1988) justifies deconstructive analysis to ferret out the complexities of language that confound binary thought. Insofar as advertising creatives use word play much as literary creators do (Redfern 1985), research based on more informed knowledge about "both/and" meanings can contribute to more accurate determination of the precise influences on persuasion.

Metaphor: Analysis beyond the acoustic level involves the study of figures of speech (Ahl 1988) such as symbols, metaphors, and similes used by copywriters to poeticize consumer goods (Redfern 1985). The exemplar uses the central metaphor of "spring" to associate seasonal rebirth in nature (flowers bursting out of the earth) and a (metal) spring's elasticity with canine snack-fueled energy. The copywriters emphasize an association (not necessarily logical) between the dogs' desire for snacks (in the human world) and the advent of spring (in the natural world) by using parallel structure in the lines featuring the brand names. The association sustains creative positioning of human-made products as natural needs-satisfiers, for just as spring comes each year and flowers bloom, so too are dogs said to crave snacks.

However, it also forces an irrational juxtaposition of the two worlds, for dog snacks are not seasonally relevant to any particular time of year. The metaphoric "reason why" stems from the coupon's marketing goal—it appeared in a late February insert in the Sunday papers, thus targeting the pre-spring period in early March for increased sales stimulated by the cents-off offer. Further, the metaphor is a literary figure rather than a literal truth claim, and as such can legally convey the suggestion that manufactured products are naturally good. In other words, the attributes of language kick-start the transformation of a bald "buy now" message into a creative text.

Character and Plot. The transformation continues by means of character and plot. "Character" refers to the "who" of text and answers the question, "Who says it?" (Stern 1991). Choice of a type of character

(the persona, see Stern 1989b, 1993, 1994b) solves the authorial problem of how a text gets told. The coupon uses a first-person character—the dog that refers to itself as "me," speaking to a silent but visible second dog (referred to as "you"). The Snausages character is a humanized dog that informs the reader about the action (plot).

Character and plot are intertwined (Stern 1994a) in that the action sequence is bound up with the personalities of the actors. The key to the exemplar's plot type—a comedy—is its seasonality (Stern 1995), for plots that feature a happy outcome derive from the mythological lore of springtime rebirth (Frye 1973). The coupon depicts a happy ending: the dogs get their snacks; they frolic in a field; and they each munch happily. However, "comedy" is a voluminous genre, and another analytical step is needed to address the classification question, "What kind of comedy is it?" Thus, step 1 identifies the attributes of language, character, and plot so that we can move to step 2 and classify the sum of parts.

Step 2: Construction of Meaning

Specification of genre taps into historical tradition to trace the connection between formal conventions and meaning. Recall that the poetic devices in our exemplar resemble those in children's verses and counting rhymes. Similarly, the characters resemble those in a familiar genre of childhood literature—animal allegories, where dogs that speak, walk, and act like humans are commonplace (Stern 1988, 1990). That genre is a literary form used since classical times to teach children and naive audiences lessons about appropriate behavior. It has been a pedagogical commonplace since Aesop's *Fables* (sixth century BC), a compendium of beast lore in which each fable ends with an explicitly rhetorical moral maxim. Given the prevalence of allegorical animals in Western literary text (see Benton 1992; Clark and McMunn 1989), their reappearance in advertisements is not surprising (Callcott and Lee 1995).

The exemplar's dogs are allegorical representations of children at play—they walk upright, munch on snacks, smile, gesture to each other, and enjoy the spring day. The dogs behave as though they were good children, exemplifying human values such as sociability, cheerfulness, responsiveness to nature, and love of simple pleasures. The last two lines state the point of the message (dogs are happy when eating snacks) as a maxim for the dogs' owner. The enjoyment = snacks equation defines animal happiness in human terms, for when the dogs behave appropriately by human standards (playing harmoniously and taking advantage of the nice weather), they are rewarded with food. In this way, the brands are promoted as a message to dog owners designed to persuade them to treat their pets as children (see Hirschman 1994).

Step 3: Deconstruction of Meanings

Now let us deconstruct the message. Step 3 involves disassembling the simplistic notion of a singular meaning to uncover assumptions likely to discomfort readers by shaking them out of complacency. Its value lies in the power to strip away placid surfaces and reveal the subversion, suppression, and hierarchical power struggles that bubble underneath. Skepticism about a single "right" interpretation arises when one pulls apart binary oppositions to reveal the privileging of the dominant term at the expense of the repressed one (de Man 1979). Challenging the hierarchical ranking of superior/inferior makes the deprivileged term visible and brings the assumptions that sustain the hierarchy into focus as cultural imperatives rather than as universal truths (e.g., the dominance of man in patriarchal society). The exemplar's binaries—human/animal, activity/passivity, society/nature, feeder/fed—expose a hegemonic system masquerading as the "right" way to do things.

Human and Animal Worlds: Dominance/Submission. The central binary is the superior/inferior hierarchy that situates humans as masters of the animal kingdom (see Baring and Cashford 1991). This hierarchy dates back to Biblical text, for Genesis (I:28) is the source of the divine command to humans: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon earth." Allegory functions in the exemplar by sandwiching events in the animal and human worlds that are parallel but reversed in significance—the explicit animal activity cloaks the implicit human value judgment.

Allegory itself has been the focus of much deconstructive analysis (de Man 1979), for its blurring of boundaries between disparate worlds forces readers to interpret multiple meanings. The comprehending reader must realize that what is not explicitly presented in the text is as important as what is on the surface, in that meaning flows from the tension between the unstated and the stated. In the exemplar, the hierarchical assumption is that hu-

mans rightfully infantilize pets. Snacks are a human invention, and the emotional equivalence of food and love is transferred from the human to the animal kingdom when dog snacks are positioned as treats. This positioning privileges human values, for it implies that dogs have the good life when they are anthropomorphized (Hirschman 1994) and fed the canine equivalent of junk food.

Deconstructing the allegorical duality suggests that the superimposition of the human on the animal world may be good only from the human perspective (Hirschman 1994). Because humans view snacks positively and because humans control the diets of domestic animals, the use of food to elicit desired animal behavior is deemed culturally correct. Nonetheless, questions arise as to whether dogs ought to be fed junk food, ought to be encouraged to expect it as rewards, or ought to be rewarded when they mimic children's behavior. These questions challenge cultural shibboleths by asking whether the human world is superior and by positing the possibility of human exploitation of pets to meet their owners' emotional needs.

Animate and Inanimate Worlds: Dynamism/Passivity. A related deconstructive question challenges the hierarchical ranking of dynamic action as superior to passivity. In the exemplar, even the inanimate objects signify motion, for the field of flowers, bright green grass, and direct sunlight casting a shadow under the dogs' feet depict growth and animation. The natural world is backgrounded to foreground the metaphor of "springiness" in the human world. Movement also characterizes the animal world, where the dogs are active, running, eating, and conversing.

In consumer research terms, the dogs are so dynamic that they use time synchronistically, performing several different activities at once. When human consumers behave this way, it denotes time pressure and the need to maximize efficiency—often enjoyable, for our culture equates time with money and respects time well spent. However, the elevation of activity as more desirable than passivity continues the privileging of human criteria as the determinants of pets' happiness. Perhaps the dogs want to sleep in the sun instead of running around. No matter, for Western culture approves of activity, and human values are assumed appropriate for pets.

Society and Nature: Sociability/Aloneness. Deconstructing the human values projected onto pets also reveals the status of sociability—the coupon depicts *two* dogs in a friendly relationship. This is difficult to justify on the basis of target marketing, for the two products/one coupon execution need not imply ownership of two dogs (why not buy two types of snack for one dog?). Rather, the paired dogs reflect transference of the human desire for pets as companions (Hirschman 1994) to the pets themselves, with two dogs presumably being happier than one alone. Anthropomorphism underlies the assumption that pets resemble humans in preferring social relationships to aloneness. Its foundation is projection of the "absence of community" (Cushman 1990, p. 600) as an ailment of postmodern life from the societal domain to the natural one. That is, dogs are expected not only to serve as surrogate friends for humans, but also to replicate the human need for friendship. The opposite possibility—that a dog might prefer being alone—is hidden by cultural faith in the superiority of community.

Feeders and Fed: Master/Pet. Another possibility also is hidden—perhaps the dogs would prefer fighting with each other or attacking humans. In the culturally situated master/pet relationship, the powerful master "civilizes" the disempowered pet. However, the power hierarchy is unstable, for it depends on cultural circumstances—either humans *or* dogs can be a locus of danger. In a culture of affluence, humans award dogs quasi-human status—their wilder urges are tamed into obedience. Our respect for affluence empowers a master/pet relationship whereby dogs are incorporated into a human family (Hirschman 1994) by domestication to suit family needs.

The dark side of this hierarchy is that human mastery is often motivated by fear of the oppressed. That is, humans fear the uncontrolled power of dogs, who are capable of unprovoked aggressive behavior. Interestingly, fear is acknowledged in the advertisement's poetic form, for children's counting-out rhymes resemble magical incantations originally devised as spells to ward off danger. The rhymes themselves are ritualized game preludes in which participants cast lots for players or choose someone to be "it." Their "magical intent" has been transmuted from its origins in spirit worship to play (Jakobson and Waugh 1987, p. 222), but vestiges of rituals designed to keep evil at bay remain in advertising (Otnes and Scott 1996). In the advertisement, the verse is reworked to encourage human mastery over dogs by rewarding pets when they behave like controllable children rather than like dangerous wild animals.

But humans may be as dangerous to dogs as the reverse, for domestication of animals as part of the extended family is neither universal nor culturally praiseworthy. Rather, it is affordable only in stable,

affluent societies. When Western culture is unstable (war, as in the last century's Paris Communes; see Christiansen 1995), dogs are not fed by humans, but instead are food *for* humans. In nonaffluent societies where sources of protein are scarce, domestic animals such as dogs and cats are items in the food chain. Americans may regard eating dogs as cannibalistic, but poorer cultures do not necessarily make the same judgment.

The exemplar hints at an undertone of uneasiness in the culture of affluence, for its form is that of a magical spell articulated to bolster the power structure by keeping animals in their proper place. Propriety is determined by a society wealthy enough to engage in the manufacture of snacks for childlike animals, as opposed to one so poor that animals must be eaten. Dismantling the hierarchy reveals that the presumption of cultural "rightness" in cherishing dogs as surrogate children is chauvinistic, implying that wealthy countries are superior to impoverished ones. If the notion of treating an animal as a human offspring (Hirschman 1994) is exposed as culturally determined rather than as universally ordained, the assumptions that are presumed to govern "correct" readings can be questioned.

In summary, whereas postmodern textual analysis begins by examining various formal attributes of language (Scott 1994a, b) to construct a provisional meaning, it continues by deconstructing the latter to make hidden assumptions overt and to give voice to silent cultural influences. When the hierarchical oppositions are challenged, the cultural props on which consumption rests can be seen clearly. Deconstructive criticism is often provocative, for scratching at the surface of a culture opens raw spots ordinarily concealed from view. Nonetheless, textual analysis is incomplete without the deconstructive contribution to heightened understanding of the cultural network that binds advertising, consumers, and society.

Future Research on Textual Effects: Memory and Desire

The three-step method of textual analysis can make specific contributions to response-side research on topics such as emotional responses to advertisements and memorability of marketing communications. Understanding relationships between textual forms and audience responses hypothesized since Aristotle's day (Fergusson 1961) can help researchers frame better hypotheses about consumer effects.

One such effect is implicature—what is inferred (Barnes and Dotson 1989) as a consequence of what is said. Deconstructive analysis focuses attention on the unsaid as well, an important contributor to the gestalt sum of meanings that a perceiver takes away from a message (Grice 1975). Up to now, researchers have been more intent on studying the meaning cues conveyed by content (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagly 1989; Ratneshwar and Chaiken 1991) than those implied by absence or encapsulated in form. Let us begin redressing this gap by using postmodern textual analysis as an aid to emotion and memory research.

Affective Responses: Beauty and the Beat

Perhaps the most neglected textual attribute is rhythmicity—the recurrent patterns of stressed/unstressed syllables and the rhyme or sound configurations characteristic of English. The idea that marketers attempt to influence positive attitudes toward products by devising messages that elicit pleasurable emotional responses (Puto and Wells 1984) is now well accepted, for emotions have been shown to influence positive attitudes toward advertisements (see Batra and Ray 1986). However, the role of rhythmicity in stimulating pleasure (Olney, Holbrook, and Batra 1991) and the preference for some rhythmic patterns over others (Kelly and Rubin 1988) have not been studied adequately. Here, textual analysis is essential, for even though associative learning theory (see Craik and Lockhart 1972) affirms the notion that people are conditioned to "hear" rhythmic text and to experience it as enjoyable, our understanding of rhythm is, in Kiparsky's (1975) estimation, impoverished.

One reason is that despite the extensive study of affeet in persuasion (O'Keefe 1990), researchers have paid little attention to the role of rhythmicity in eliciting pleasure. The pleasurable dimension of attitude toward the ad (Olney, Holbrook, and Batra 1991) is likely to reside in sound as well as in substance, and more study of the former seems necessary. Research on affective responses as an array of emotions elicited by an advertising stimulus (Edell and Burke 1987; Gardner 1985; Holbrook and Batra 1987) can be enriched by better understanding of "the rhythmic structure of poetry, ordinary speech, and the acquisition of prosodic rules" (Kelly and Rubin 1988, p. 737). At this point, virtually no research has explored these aspects of marketing stimuli, yet the importance of affective responses in the acceptance stage of processing suggests that enjoyment of rhythmicity may be a

major determinant of positive attitude toward an advertisement.

Research on the rhythmicity of marketing text can lend explanatory power to the emotion literature. The role of sound in messages that "attempt to make the experience of using the product richer, warmer, more exciting, and/or more enjoyable" (Puto and Wells 1984, p. 638) can shed light on the way emotional and symbolic qualities become attached to products (Batra and Ray 1986). Such research needs to access prosodic as well as poetic rules and children's literature as well as adults' to identify preferred patterns. In sum, textual analysis can add value to ongoing research by identifying the elements of rhythmic language to be studied as hedonic stimulus hooks (Rossiter and Percy 1987).

Memory: Hedonic Stimuli

Textual analysis can also contribute to memory research, for the hedonic aspects of rhythmicity as memory cues have been more or less ignored for the past half century. This neglect contrasts with the early emphasis of pioneers in advertising research such as H. F. Adams (1916), who began conducting experiments before the first world war to determine ease of learning and memorability of conventional poetic rhythms. Research on textual cues to memory continued up to the midpoint of the century, for by the 1940s Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1943) had labeled rhythm a key principle for making a message memorable. Their guide to advertising memorability, "How to Remember Commercials," advocates using the "laws of poetry and verse technique" to create and copy test commercials (Gregory 1945). After World War II, advertising researcher/practitioners such as Hattwick (1950, p. 252) revisited Adams' (1916) memory experiments and Politz and Chappell's wartime work, reiterating the claim that "rhyme, rhythm, and song ... [are] powerful aids to memory." The reason was pleasure—rhythmic devices and sound effects were said to "combat monotony [and to] ... provide a moment's pleasure" (Hattwick 1950, p. 254).

Despite this promising early start, little contemporary follow-up research has been undertaken. One reason may be that the few post-war laboratory experiments on rhyme produced neither consistent nor significant results (see Wallace and Rubin 1989). In experimental situations, rhyme did not work well as an aid to memory. However, the apparent conflict between negative laboratory results and positive real-world effects (recall the memorability of the "four p's") led to a reconsideration of rhyme as a mnemonic device by Wallace and Rubin (1989). Their hypotheses were drawn from the oral ballad tradition (1988a, b), in which singers are able to recall the exact words because the possible word choices are constrained by both poetic and semantic rules. Constraint stimulates recall by enabling the listener/reader to recognize the pattern and respond appropriately because few words will fit. Wallace and Rubin's experiments showed rhyme in the real world to be an effective aid to recall, and what remains to be done is to transpose the research from the context of ballads to that of advertisements.

Given the findings about rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration as cues to memory enabling the stable transmission of ballads over time (Wallace and Rubin 1988b), they appear likely to serve as multiple retrieval cues in advertisements. What textual analysis contributes is a systematic method of identifying these attributes by breaking down the dense mass known as "text" into component parts such as line length, word length, metrical foot, alliteration, assonance, and so forth.

Penetrating Symbols: The Deconstructive Spirit

Just as identification of attributes is a first step in accounting for stimulus elements that influence construction of meaning, deconstruction leads to better understanding of the openness of meaning influenced by a shifting network of language, power, and culture. It requires a closer look at familiar metaphorical descriptions of advertisements as "social tableaux" (Marchand 1985) or "mirrors" (Pollay 1986), for those terms imply static singular meaning encoded by social construction and decoded by consumers (Williamson 1978).

A better deconstructive metaphor for advertisements might be Derrida's "blinds" or "jalousies" (Kamuf 1991), terms that express the shifting nature of symbolic revelation and concealment of "hidden political interests and tacit features of social power" (Gephart 1996, p. 42). One such tacit feature of advertising that has attracted little attention is its linguistic chauvinism. Like Hollywood films, advertisements export First World language to Third World countries, reifying "Anglo-American power, technology and finance" (Shohat and Stam 1987, p. 236). The unidirectional flow elevates Western culture as the "transmitter" of products and messages to non-Western nations, conceived of as "receivers" (Bakhtin 1981).

Deconstructive analysis exposes the "metaphorical colonisations having to do with region, class, race and gender" (Shohat and Stam 1987, p. 241) that empower global marketers and disenfranchise non-Western consumers, who are presumed to be needy recipients of the culture of consumption.

Deconstruction can heighten researchers' sensitivity to the political and cultural messages concealed under the surface of persuasions to consume. Further, the systematic use of identification/construction/deconstruction can contribute to empirical research on consumer responses by making possible more systematic investigation of "the copresent and coacting" aspects of language, both ordinary and poetic, "familiar to the human being from his first linguistic steps" (Jakobson and Waugh 1987, p. 225).

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