

# LITERARY GENRES AS POINTS OF INTEREST IN PRINT ADVERTISING

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## Abstract

The article focuses on the interplay between print advertisements and literary genres such as poetry, drama, folklore, etc. This interplay may be used to develop an advertisement's point of interest to attract attention from a specific target audience. Based on previous research we hypothesise that literary genres are exploited as a means to engage audiences. The study aims to give a description of the typical genre characteristics of modern literary genres in SA print advertising. It also endeavours to do a pragmatic analysis of these advertisements against the background of the specific literary genre category and the genre qualities of advertisements to identify the implied marketing message.

**Keywords:** literary genres, advertising language, pragmatics, linguistic analysis of advertisements

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a nexus of postmodernism and evolving economic exigencies, advertising remains a fruitful area of interest for research on the discursive production of culture. Speaking on its prominence, Mika (2004: 491) contends that:

[Advertising] considerably shapes fashions of behaviour and manners of perceiving and describing the world. [It is] a specific kind of art [and] we can describe its structure similarly as we can do with reference to different arts (such as film, music, and fine arts).

Discourse analyses have found fertile ground in such features as the creation of new registers, and the exploitation of intertextuality to expedite the aims of advertising. These features are typically used to economise communication, by drawing on background knowledge already available to the audience, and to load the advertised brand with positive associations (Luna, 2004; Van Niekerk, 2008; Conradie, 2012). Here we focus on the role of literary genres, as a similar means of streamlining communication and enhancing the appeal of an advertising text to its target audience.

Bearing in mind De Wet and Looek's (2010; cf. van Wyk, 2001) observation that adolescents devote less leisure time to reading, the above suggests that advertising might become a contemporary form of literature for a younger, globalized market.

However, present study does not endeavour to compare the social and aesthetic functions of literature with advertising, but how literature might be employed towards advertising's goals (cf. Stern, 1988). Specifically, we suggest that literary genres offer a structurally-economic means of communication, intended to activate background knowledge among the intended audience, as a means of actively involving them in the process of meaning-production.

## 2. THE GENRE OF ADVERTISING

For the purpose of this study, advertising is conceptualised as: a way of telling the market what we [advertisers] want to sell or want to buy, a means of informing existing and potential customers about a product, its special features and benefits and a means of persuading them to buy the product (Koekemoer, 2011: 99).

These objectives exert a considerable influence on the characteristics of advertising, as a communicative genre. Of central significance to the present study, is Goddard (1998) and Myers' (1994: 10) observations that advertising:

- “construct[s] positions for the audience;
- offers a relationship between the advertiser and audience based on the association of meanings with commodities; and
- is open to reconstruction by the audience in diverse ways.”

These conventions work to enhance advertising's efficiency in assisting brand X to sell product/service Y to market Z (Koekemoer, 2011: 99). The myriad strategies at copywriters' disposal share an interest in persuading audiences to exert the cognitive effort required to reconstruct an advertisement's commercial message (Skinner, von Essen and Mersham, 2001: 60-61). The prevalence of literary genres in advertising suggests copywriters' assumption that audiences not only possess sufficient knowledge to recognise them, but are capable of interpreting them within advertising's commercial goals (Myers, 1994: 10). Copywriters therefore construct a position for consumers, based on the assumption that they 1) possess sufficient background knowledge regarding the relevant literary genres, and 2) are aware of the commercial purpose of advertising. This contention is supported by the value marketing companies attach to research aimed at ascertaining the knowledge and preferences of audiences, prior to launching new campaigns (Skinner *et al.* 2001: 60-61). That the attributes of an established literary genre can be exploited to play a role in such campaigns by, for example, building a brand's persona has already been noted by Brooks and Warren (1960: 7) as well as Stern (1988: 3). However, these have mainly concerned stylistic similarities, without strict attention to way literary genres may expedite commercial imperatives.

### **3. HYPOTHESIS**

Based on previous research which suggests that advertising is emerging as a new form of art - and even a new form of literature for contemporary, globalised audiences who engage less frequently with traditional forms of literature – we hypothesise that literary genres are exploited as a means to engage audiences.

### **4. OBJECTIVES**

Based on this broad hypothesis, the study's objectives are to:

- Give a description of the typical genre characteristics of modern literature types as is found in print advertising in SA;
- Do a pragmatic analysis of these advertisements against the background of the specific literary genre category and the genre qualities of advertisements to identify the implied marketing message.

### **5. METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALE**

In the findings reported subsequently, we argue that from a strategic perspective literary genres offer advantages in terms of structure, familiarity and engagement (Fowler, 1989; Gledhill, 1985; Stern, 1988; Morris, 2005). We note how recognisable genre conventions justify specific processing patterns, especially the organisation of information to reflect a given genre, such as poetry or biographies. Next, we examine how such processing-expectations are coalesced with background knowledge about the commercial functions of advertising, and how this combination stimulates active cognitive engagement in the process of assigning meaning to advertising texts. To pursue this objective we draw from the Gricean maxims, as explicated under the theoretical framework.

Before reporting the results, we define the genre types found in our data, in terms of the typological characteristics of each, as a precursor to analysing the interplay between these genres and advertising. We operationalise the criteria that served to code the data as containing references to one or more genre, based on literary scholars such as Cloete (1992) and Baldick (2008). Thereafter, we present a pragmatic analysis of a representative case study for each genre category.

### **6. DATA**

A total of 84 advertisements were sourced from 14 general circulation magazines, printed between 2008 and 2012: Car Style, Cosmopolitan, De Kat, Destiny Man, Good Housekeeping, Good Taste, Heat, Huisgenoot, Men's Health, Rooi Rose, Sarie, Sariekos, Signature, Top Billing.

All advertisements referring to any literary author, title or literary genre characteristics (such as rhyme and alliteration in the case of poetry, or dialogue and layout in the case of drama) in the broadest sense were initially selected as data.

In the second step, the initial dataset was re-evaluated in terms of criteria for literary genres gleaned from literary scholars like Cloete (1992) and Baldick (2008). Nine categories of literary genres were identified as being frequently used in SA print advertising. These form the basis of the pragmatic analysis and are reviewed below.

## **7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **7.1 Pragmatics and the Gricean co-operative principle**

Pragmatics offer a frame for examining tensions between the surface meaning of utterances and the intended meaning of these, by investigating interlocutors' capacities for drawing implicatures, which (in Gricean terms) denote inferences drawn to preserve the co-operative principle (Grice, 1989; Crook, 2004: 721; Levinson, 1983: 102). This capacity to draw implicatures, in order to arrive at what an audience member considers the intended meaning of text, is informed by the assumption that co-operative speakers (in this case advertisers), adhere to four maxims:

- **Quality:** co-operative speakers do not utter what they know to be fallacious.
- **Quantity:** co-operative speakers design utterances to contain information proportionate to, and sufficient for, the requirements of the engagement. A single word may suffice if audiences can legitimately be expected discern its contextual meaning.
- **Manner:** in close alliance with the above, co-operative speakers seek to avoid ambiguity by electing the most intelligible expressions, within a given context.
- **Relevance:** co-operative speakers endeavour to render all utterances relevant to the purpose of the exchange (Grice, 1989: 368-372).

These maxims act as cognitive guidelines that aid the process of interpreting utterances/texts, with the consequence that implicatures are drawn for the degree to which they preserve the co-operative principle. For example:

Speaker A: Going to watch tonight's movie?  
Speaker B: It's a comedy.

If it is given that A and B have reason to consider each other co-operative speakers, the following process may apply.

While the surface meaning of B's utterance ostensibly fails to cohere with the maxim of quantity, since it seems insufficient to cogently answer the question, A resorts to background knowledge that will render the response sufficient in terms of quantity. Provided that A has access to background knowledge pertaining to B's tastes, this might suggest that B dislikes comedies. If so, the latter's utterance is taken to implicate no. Similarly, in the case of advertising, audiences are predisposed to restore co-operation by drawing implicatures that optimally satisfy the above-mentioned maxims, during the process of assigning meaning to an advertising text.

#### 7.1.1 The maxim of quality

In the Yumchums juice advertisement a claim is made that the bones of children who drink this juice will be strengthened and not break easily. This is not literally true, as audiences have no (immediate) way of assessing the veracity of such a claim.

#### 7.1.2 The maxim of quantity

The information immediately available to readers in the captions of printed advertisements is often reduced to the bare minimum, based on the genre convention to say more with less. The subtext often helps to provide more information about the reduced statement, by aiding audiences in their selection of implicatures to reconstruct the implied marketing message. This is the case in the Renault advertisement, where the subtext's reference to God's rest after creation aids interpretations of the very short headline "And on the eighth day".

#### 7.1.3 The maxim of manner

In advertising language vagueness can help to create an implied message, as is the case in the Glenfiddich whiskey advertisement in which the headline "age of discovery" is open to multiple interpretations and thus so vague that one cannot argue with the claim. However, background knowledge about historic novels supports an interpretation of the word discovery as an allusion to the era during which Portuguese sailors explored and conquered new worlds. Combined with background knowledge about advertising, this supports the implicature that discovery is intended as a figurative allusion to new worlds of experience that can be explored when drinking this whiskey (kept in Madeira cases).

#### 7.1.4 The maxim of relevance

Background knowledge about the commercial function of advertising (Koekemoer, 2011: 99) encourages readers to draw implicatures specifically to determine ways in which the various elements of an advertisement contribute to a marketing message (Crook, 2004).

In the case of the Virseker insurance advertisement, where the drama of a broken car and a troublesome boy-girl relationship is linked to insurance, the maxim of relevance encourages audiences to ask: what do troublesome relationships have to do with insurance?

## 7.2 Literary theory and advertising

Attempts to catalogue the similarities between advertising and literary discourse have departed from the observation that both rely more heavily on persuasive rhetoric than the strictly informative content of a text, with a clear preference for language that conveys “implied meanings through associations and comparisons” (Stern and Gallagher, 1991: 85; cf. Stern, 1992: 72; Crook, 2004; Kanthimathi, 2007). Interest has therefore centred on analogues in rhetorical style, with several researchers drawing on genre theory - an approach that examines the typical conventions/traits of each member of the literary family, as well as their effects on consumption and production (Hodge and Kress, 1988: 7; cf. Philips and McQuarrie, 2002; 2004; Stern and Gallagher, 1991; Tom and Eves, 1999). Consumers/readers are liable to process a literary work on the basis of pre-existing expectations for the genre in question. Consequently, producers/authors both obey and extend these, exploiting their advantages (such as ease of readability), while simultaneously seeking room for creative deviation (Fowler, 1989: 215; Gledhill, 1985: 63). For literary theorists, this practice points to the evolving nature of genres, and raises questions as to whether genres are in fact part and parcel of the essence of a text (Stam, 2000: 14). Nevertheless, for scholars of advertising, genre theory offers criteria for determining whether the attributes of a given genre are also present in advertisements (Stern and Gallagher, 1991), as illustrated below.

## 7.3 Literary genres

### 7.3.1 Biographies

Biographies provide a narrative account of the life of a noteworthy individual, covering the subject's life from birth to death or, if still living, to the time of writing. Such accounts typically aim to establish the subject's “character, temperament, and milieu” (Abrams and Harpham, 2012: 27; Baldick, 2008: 38). Advertisements that incorporate biographic features form part of a branding campaign. They set forth the character, temperament and activities of the advertised brand, treating it as a living person, with the aim of appealing to the target audience.

### 7.3.2 Historical novels

This genre traces its origins to historical romances used to “advance nationalist causes and sentiment” in the late 18th and 19th centuries (Drabble and Stringer, 2007: 336).

These tales served to celebrate a set of virtues considered central to a particular national identity. In the 20th century, the genre is increasingly viewed as commercially-driven adventure stories, or romances that draw on historical settings, events and characters for its appeal to particular niche market, instead of its utility for fostering national identities (Drabble and Stringer, 2007: 337). No fixed criteria exist for the historical accuracy that is expected, thus affording authors a significant degree of latitude.

### 7.3.3 Comic strips

Comic strips are a combination of word-image units, commonly but not exclusively used to generate humour, and organised in at least two panels that signal the sequential reading order. This division distinguishes comic strips from cartoons, which consist of a single picture-frame. Narrative coherence within and between panels is maintained by a chain of reference, enabling readers to interpret the content of each panel as parts of a single plot (Mey, 2006: 623). This chain proved an essential means of classifying the data. Advertisements were not classed as comic strips for using caricatures/cartoon-images alone, but for establishing coherence across and within multiple word-image units (Mey, 2006: 623). In advertisements, the narrative may serve to generate humour that hinges on a particular product/service attribute.

### 7.3.4 Folklore

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the term has served to denote a given community's collection of legends, nursery rhymes, proverbs, folktales and folksongs, transmitted primarily by word of mouth, especially those dating from pre-literate societies/social classes (Abrams and Harpham, 2012: 136; Baldick, 2008:132). In advertising discourse, folkloric elements bear similarities to archetypal texts, as defined in Hitchon and Jura's (1997: 147) seminal work on intertextuality. However, the conceptualisation of folklore used for the current data includes references to comparatively more specific folkloric characters and events, such as unicorns or finding the pot of gold at the end of rainbow, as these are considered to invoke characters/events from legends and tales etc. that predate any particular written account.

### 7.3.5 Fairy tales

These constitute a subset of folklore, in that they are folktales written down on the basis of oral accounts, and adapted for the entertainment of children (and originally adults as well - Baldick, 2008: 124). Typical features include fantastic/unrealistic characters and creatures, especially the use of magic. The term finds its origin in the French *conte de fée*, as the process of setting down written versions of oral tales flourished under the patronage of French aristocrats in the 17th century (Baldick, 2008: 124).

In Hitchon and Jura's (1997:149) categories for intertextuality, such tales are similar to specific literary references, since they are closely associated with a specific "title, recognisable characters, and a plot" compared to other folkloric tales.<sup>1</sup>

### 7.3.6 Children's literature

Children's literature is recognised as a branch that explores the complex and interrelated facets of human existence to the same extent as adult counterparts, with the primary difference that the former is devised to appeal to and suit the cognitive and emotional resources available to children between 6 and 12 (Bisschoff, 1992: 202). For example, shifts between first- and third-person perspectives are less common, while character development frequently assumes a distinctly positive rather than negative or ambivalent direction, as the audience is considered to occupy a very sensitive and malleable stage of personal development. Language use tends toward concrete rather than abstract descriptions, relying heavily on imagery, especially similes that draw on the familiar (Bisschoff, 1992: 203).

In terms of coding criteria, we agree with the view by Ghesquiere (1993: 172-173) that books for children are often very cliché like in aspects such as plot, humour, characterization etc. because characters are typical and their behaviour very predictable. The plot is based on repetition and the humour is exaggerated and the image of the society is confirmed in the sense that generosity and braveness solve all problems.

### 7.3.7 Drama

The term applies to literary compositions designed for performance by actors, that may be staged or broadcast through radio and television, and characterised by the prominence of conflict between and within characters, as a means of developing plot and themes (Abrams and Harpham, 2012: 93; Baldick, 2008: 97).

### 7.3.8 Religious stories

Advertisements in this category employ linguistic references to events and/or characters from religious texts, such as the Bible and Qur'an. They share traits with the type of intertextuality defined by Hitchon and Jura (1997: 147) as specific literary references. Audiences are anticipated to recognise the intertextual allusions to texts such as the Bible, and to particular people and events, before postulating their relevance to advertising (Pretorius, 1992: 51).

<sup>1</sup>Ads that refer to a particular biography, play, novel or poem, by a specific author, all share this characteristic with Hitchon and Jura's (1997: 149) category for specific literary references, that they encourage the reader to retrieve background knowledge about the specific referenced text during the process of interpreting the advertising text.

### 7.3.9 Poetry

Poetry denotes literary compositions marked by schematic patterning, such as metre, rhyme, alliteration and assonance (Baldick, 2008: 262). Advertisements were considered to draw from poetry if they exhibit the schematic patterning associated with the genre. Tropes, such as metaphor and irony, were not considered exclusive to poetry and therefore omitted from the coding criteria. To distinguish schemes from tropes, Tuan's (2010) semiotic division between over- and under-coding was adopted (Tuan, 2010: 177; cf. Eco, 1979; Leech, 1969). In under-coding (typical of tropes), a text's explicated information is insufficient to achieve a contextually satisfying interpretation, with the result that addressees must resort to implicatures until they have achieved an interpretation that is meaningful in its context (Tuan, 2010: 179). Consider the metaphor: your child's best bodyguard (advertising a children's multivitamin). To process this under-coded text, readers draw implicatures until they have achieved an interpretation that conforms to their contextual expectations. By contrast, over-coding is typified by excessive regularity. The text contains "more possible organisations of information than are necessary for message reception" (Tuan, 2010: 178), such as ABSA's slogan: today, tomorrow, together (compare: always together).

In the data, a number of the schematic patterns associated with poetry emerged, with the most prominent being repetition of sound structures, as occurs in rhyme, alliteration, assonance, metric feet (or rhythm) and parison.

## 8. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 8.1 Biography

#### *Ormonde wine*

The advertisement gives a narrative account of the life of a noteworthy individual while simultaneously advertising wine. The subtext is devoted to the life of the original winemaker, Theodore Ormonde Eksteen, at the expense of a specific wine or cellar. This point of interest has an important branding function in treating the brand as a living person or in this case the extension of the life of a once living person.

The violation of the co-operative principle's maxim of manner supports the implied marketing message that the qualities of the original winemaker can be extended to the wine Ormonde, as testified by its carrying the subject of the biographies' name.

The marketing message is understood against the background of this biography, replete with life story and portrait, to enhance the construction of the wine as the offspring and the legacy of the subject, Ormonde Theodore Eksteen.

## 8.2 Historic novel

### *Glenfiddich* whiskey

The advertisement reflects the utility of historic novels for conveying romanticised nationalist sentiment. In this case the historic events are related to the discovery of Madeira by Portuguese sailors in 1419. Historical accuracy is important only in as much as it anchors fictional characters in a recognisable setting. It is therefore expected that the target market will recognize the human figures and the map as dating from the appropriate time.

**This violation of the co-operative principle** gives birth to the implied marketing message derived from the visuals (map, compass, etc.) and headline: “Age of Discovery” (Madeira Cask Finish). The maxim of quality is violated in the sense that the marketing message is not literally true. The maxim of manner is also violated, as no fixed meaning can be attached to the heading: “Age of Discovery”. The maxim of relevance is regularly violated in implied advertising messages of this type (literary interplay) because this is the point of interest (the discovery of new worlds), which is not at all relevant to whiskey as a product.

**The marketing message:** In this case Glenfiddich promises that their target market will discover new horizons like the Portuguese (Historic novel) when they discovered Madeira in 1419.

## 8.3 Comic strips

### *Nedbank* banking

The panels in the advertisement facilitate a sequential (top-to-bottom) reading, and the chain of reference is created by the continued use of the same protagonist across a developing, but similar background. The potential humour centres on the protagonist's desperate need and failure to access a lavatory, inducing his unsanctioned use of a ladies' lavatory. The humour is contingent on culture-specific background knowledge, as unfamiliarity with the character's initial urgency and the mores surrounding sex-segregated bathrooms will compromise its humorous potential (Yus, 2003: 1309).

**Violation of the co-operative principle:** Provided that the intention to produce humour has been recognised, audiences are encouraged by the maxim of relevance to consider its function within the advertisement. Searching for such a relationship by processing the comic strip alone suggests a violation of the maxim of quantity. However, the headline and subtext provide additional guidance to the relevance of the humour: “Frustration. You wouldn't put up with it anywhere else, don't put up with it from your bank”. Processing the comic strip and these lines as coherent parts of the same text encourages a metaphorical interpretation of the humour. The protagonist's solution to a frustrating situation suggests the relevance of an implicature that maps his ingenuity onto the novelty of internet banking.

**Marketing message:** The protagonist's innovative solution is set up as metaphorical counterpart to internet banking as both constitute a solution to frustration. As such, a specific aspect of the narrative becomes the basis of the subtext's claim: since you will not tolerate frustration anywhere else, you should not tolerate it from your bank.

## 8.4 Folklore

### *Clicks* skincare

The advertisement employs the pot of gold from Celtic myth, hidden by leprechauns at the end of the rainbow (Ellis, 1999). The legend is considered folkloric as it cannot be traced to any particular author, single written account, or even any one of the various Celtic tribes that peopled northern Europe and the British Isles between the 6th and 1st centuries BCE (Ellis, 1999).

The most salient reference to the legend is situated in the combination of "The pot of gold" in the headline, and the image of a rainbow stretching down from the top left-hand corner to the product. The word "gold" becomes an anaphoric or cataphoric reference to the product, depending on whether it is processed prior to the image or vice versa (Gardner and Luchtenberg, 2000: 1814), thus constructing a metaphorical relationship between product and myth.

**Violation of the co-operative principle:** Provided that audiences have successfully recognised the folkloric pot of gold, they are anticipated to draw implicatures that resolve its context-specific function. The maxim of quantity is ostensibly violated by the omission of a clear exposition of the relationship between product and legend. Under the co-operative principle, however, this may be interpreted as reflecting an assumption on the communicators' part that the target market will be able to retrieve a contemporary metaphorical interpretation of "The pot of gold" as a much-coveted item that is difficult to attain. If audiences are able to retrieve this interpretation from background knowledge, they are still required to determine how it is relevant to the present context.

**Marketing message:** To aid audiences in drawing implicatures that fall within the communicators' preferred range of interpretations, both the image of the rainbow and the product, as well as the first two lines of the subtext are noteworthy: "Dry & mature skin? The end of the rainbow's within reach".

## 8.5 Fairy tales

### *Bourneville* dark chocolate

The fairy tale in question in the advertisement is Little Red Riding Hood. It is exclusively situated on the graphic level, where the main protagonist is made recognisable by her garb, which corresponds closely to the Grimm Brother's description.

Firstly, it is assumed that audiences will recognise the protagonist despite the absence of stronger allusions than her dress, as well as the presence of the tale's antagonist: the wolf. Secondly, and more importantly, the image of Little Red Riding Hood in bed with the wolf serves as evidence of the assumption that audiences are familiar with the basic plot and are therefore capable of recognising the deviation.

**Violation of the co-operative principle:** The above-mentioned assumption of the audience's familiarity with the fairy tale relates to the maxim of quantity. More specifically, the image alone is considered strong enough to render both characters and basic plot retrievable from memory, without additional word-based clarification of the deviation. However, the maxim of quantity is nevertheless violated by the failure to offer clear and cogent links between the fairy tale and a sales agenda, suggesting an assumption among copywriters that audience are capable to resolving this link through implicatures.

**Marketing message:** Although the headline, "Deliciously Dark", may support a wide range of unpredictable meanings the maxim of relevance supports the implicature that the advertised product represents a guilty pleasure, considered to be as taboo, or "dark", as the notion of Little Red Riding hood getting in bed with her traditional nemesis.

## 8.6 Children's literature

### *Yum chums* fruit juice

The child-centred approach of children's literature is evident when looking at this advertisement of Yum chums fruit juice with the picture drawing of a happy and active young boy, full of scars and bruises obtained by playing and having fun. The font and colours of the picture also activate our immediate understanding that this is aimed at children. Language use in such literature is, as explained above, concrete rather than abstract, as evidenced in the word choice of this advertisement: compare the Afrikaans words "ma", "rowwe" "knaap", "val", "speel" (mom, rough, chap/bloke, fall/tumble, play in English) and even language errors typical of young children in Afrikaans, "meer beterder" vs. "meer beter" (more betterer vs. more better).

**The violation of the co-operative principle** gives birth to the implied marketing message derived from the visuals and word choice in the subtext that this juice will make young children stronger or will enhance bone density in comparison to other juices. The maxim of quality is violated to create this implied marketing message because the truth of this statement (\*meer beterder in Afrikaans – meaning of more betterer) or the implied message cannot be verified.

**The marketing message:** Yum chums wants mothers/ care takers to believe that this juice will keep children safe and healthy (enhance bone density) because it is so healthy and it is therefore ideal for active young children.

## 8.7 Drama

### *Virseker insurance*

This advertisement's design reflects the conventions of drama as a composition for performance by actors, who deliver speech and portray actions. The main characters depict a scene in which a hopeful suitor's car problems prohibit him from taking out a girl. The resulting conflict is evident in the girl's severe disappointment that her would-be boyfriend had no backup like Virseker insurance.

**The violation of the co-operative principle's** maxim of quality has to be accepted to make this marketing message possible. Literally it is not true that boyfriend troubles can be solved by Virseker's insurance. Furthermore, the violation of the maxim of relevance is the point of interest and makes the target market ask: what is the relevance of boyfriend trouble to insurance? In this implied answer, the marketing message is created.

**The marketing message:** The solution to this conflict and drama in life (portrayed in the advertisement) is thus portrayed as to be insured by Virseker.

## 8.8 Religious stories

### *Renault car*

In this advertisement the specific reference in the headline, "and on the eighth day...", to the Bible's creation cycle (God's six days' labour and rest on the seventh), makes it evident that the Renault advertisement falls in the category of religious stories. The subtext underlines this claim: "we never rested in the quest for excellence".

The marketing message again is the result of the violation of different maxims of **the co-operative principle**. The maxim of quality is violated by the literal fallacy of the claims made in the headline and subtext. Furthermore, the maxim of quantity is violated in order to activate the target market's knowledge of the Bible as religious text. The relevance of the Bible to the marketing of Renault is the point of interest and gives rise to the marketing message.

**The marketing message** might be seen as controversial in the sense that it implies that, unlike God in the story of creation, Renault did not rest after all their hard work; Renault is a miracle (like creation).

## 8.9 Poetry

### *Clover dairy products*

Both the headline and subtext exhibit schematic patterning, but it is most strongly reflected in the subtext by virtue of its greater length. In addition to rhyming couplets (aa-bb-cd-ee), the metric feet of the subtext are arranged in iambic tetrameter.

Both features reflect exceptional regularity, or semantic over-coding on the level of sound structures. As such, the headline (“Breaking new ground, makes Clover’s business sound”) can be read as the title of a poem, organised in a single stanza with four rhyming couplets.

**Violation of the co-operative principle:** Although the use of over-coding does not mean that a text is less cryptic and devoid of finely nuanced meaning, the present text adheres to the co-operative principle to a greater degree than those previously analysed. That is, with regards to its marketing message, the text reads like declaration of a promise that extended by Clover to market. This promise contains the following elements: 1) innovation (“To go where no one’s gone before”), 2) dedication (“To do great things and then do more”), 3) excellence (“To blaze a trail”), 4) innovation (“a path that’s new [...] Fresher thinking just for you”), 5) dependability (“Our values followed to the letter”).

**Marketing message:** The aspects of this promise are advanced as grounds for the brand’s superiority. Despite this apparent clarity, the text exhibits a number of instances of playful language, as demonstrated in the double meaning in “Fresher thinking”. Although this kind of playful language is certainly not exclusive to poetry, it is nevertheless a staple semantic property of poetry (Baldick, 2008: 262).

## 9. DISCUSSION

Taking the pragmatic approach assumed in this study points to advantages derived from designing advertisements to share specific conventions with literary genres, which may be described as linked to three interrelated factors (from a copywriting perspective): structure, familiarity (background knowledge), and engagement.

Structurally, literary genres offer an economic means of communication by relying on previously-encountered expectations of form and function. To elaborate, once the content/structure of an advertisement has been recognised as resembling a comic strip, pre-existing expectations expedite text-processing, provided that copywriters have correctly estimated the background knowledge at the audience’s disposal. If familiarity with comic strips is given, recognition of its structure in an advertising text justifies the assumption that its frames form part of a coherent narrative with humorous intent. This provides a more expeditious method of communication than would be the case if readers were uncertain as to whether or not a text is intended to incite humour. Similarly, recognising the conventions of drama, warrants expectations regarding the centrality of conflict to the narrative. The structural advantage is, therefore, comparable to the manner in which the authors literary works both obey and extend a genre’s conventions, exploiting them for ease of readability while simultaneously seeking room for creative freedom (Fowler, 1989: 215; Gledhill, 1985: 63; Stern, 1988: 4).

With regards to familiarity, all the advertisements under study require audiences to activate background knowledge in order to arrive at an interpretation that satisfies co-operation. From a copywriting perspective, advertisements should effectively signal the relevance of specific threads of background knowledge that aid audiences in retrieving interpretations that fall within a range of meanings that support a sales objective. Advertisements that incorporate features from fairy tales, historical novels and children's literature, etc. are thus contingent on effectively doing this, by signalling the importance of aspects such as:

- the characters and plot of a specific fairy tale,
- elements of folklore such as legends, as well as their potential metaphoric values (the pot of gold is a coveted but elusive goal), and
- the traits associated with certain nationalities during specific historic periods.

The commercial advantage that may be gleaned from this activation of background knowledge (through implicatures) is that members of the target audience may be relied upon to retrieve a wealth of pre-existing knowledge, all of which need not be explicitly referred to in the lexical (word-based) features of the advertisement (Stern, 1988: 4). Moreover, provided that audiences are familiar with the commercial objectives of advertising, they may also be relied on to postulate how specific parts of the knowledge thus activated can be commercially relevant. A case in point is the Bourneville advertisement, where knowledge about Little Red Riding Hood's traditionally antagonistic relationship with the wolf is particularly relevant. Undoubtedly this use of literary genres opens advertisements to multiple interpretations, some of which may endanger copywriters' goals. Yet the regularity with which such tactics are attempted suggests that it is considered a calculated risk (one possible reason is advanced in the next paragraph). Nevertheless, as illustrated by the advertisements for Nedbank and Clicks, subtexts are often added to offset this risk by clarifying the relation between a literary genre and the advertised product.

Engagement, denotes the challenge of enhancing the salience and memorability of advertising texts amid a myriad of distractions (Simpson, 2001: 605). Since the late twentieth century, this challenge has been exacerbated by the proliferation of media literacy, globalisation and media saturation (Kuppens 2009: 119). Engagement, in this milieu, involves the strategies that copywriters attempt in order to render advertisements salient and memorable. Scholarly literature on the topic has taken specific interest in strategies aimed at actively involving consumers in the process of constructing the meaning of an advertisement (Crook 2004: 730; Pérez 2000: 45). Specifically, although meaning constructing is never completely passive, audiences can be involved to a greater or lesser degree, as illustrated by the difference between modern and postmodern advertising.

While the former centred on the production of clear product claims (buy x because it gives you y), texts designed under the latter approach are more opaque, and invite elaboration (and implicatures) from audiences (Morris, 2005: 705). The findings suggest that literary genres represent a means of stimulating such engagement. It offers a strategy premised on the audience's capacity to recognise the presence of a particular genre (structure), in order to spur the formation of hypotheses regarding that genre's relevance to a sales agenda (familiarily), enabling a higher degree of cognitive engagement than might have been the case if confronted with a clear product claim.

Bearing in mind the degree to which these three factors (structure, familiarity and engagement) centre on the background knowledge of the audience, as well as the range of magazines from which they were drawn, it is striking that all the advertisements in the sample refer to genres from Western (European) literary traditions. On the one hand, this points to an assumption among copywriters that their particular target audience is sufficiently well-versed in these genres to both understand and find them interesting. On the other hand, this practice runs the risk of implicitly supporting a Euro-centric ideology, upholding Western work as the most representative branch of literary art. As such, the results offer an essential foundation for critical analyses aimed at examining the cultural effects of such Euro-centric advertisements, in a South African context (cf. Luyt). Refer in this regard to the online journal Viewpoint:

“Homogeneity reflects the intercultural dominance of the Western model; hybridity reflects the creative contributions and resistances to intercultural exchanges by the cultural artists and audiences... Likewise, the international success of MTV, network game shows, pop music, and other homogeneous cultural products indicate the subordinate, yet aspiring, classes around the world find pleasure, comfort, and assurance in a Westernized homogeneity of consumption.”

This link with the literary genres is the point of interest in order to capture the attention of the intended target market but also to help establish a personality for the brand. This includes poetry, comic strips, fairy tales, folklore, historic novels, biographies, drama, children's literature, and religious stories.

## **10. EXAMPLE: ADVERTISEMENTS WITHIN EACH GENRE CATEGORY**

A list of examples and sources of the advertisements used for the analysis within each genre category are included here; these examples were published in the media and are also obtainable from the authors.

**Comic strip:**  
*Nedbank,*  
*Men's Health,*  
 April, 2008



**Folklore:** *IQ*  
 hand cream  
 and *Clicks,*  
*Cosmopolitan,*  
 June, 2009



**Fairy tale:**  
*Bournville,*  
*Comopolitan,*  
 October, 2009



**Historic novel:**  
*Glenfiddich,*  
*Good Taste,*  
 January 2012



**Poetry:**  
*Clover,*  
*Huisgenoot,*  
 2011



**Children's literature:**  
*Yumchums, Sarie,*  
 February 2008



**Biography:**  
*Ormonde,*  
*Good Taste,*  
 August 2011



**Drama:**  
*Virseker, Rooi*  
*Rose,*  
 May  
 2012



**Religious story:**  
*Renault,*  
*Destiny Man,*  
 June 2010



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