



**Web  
Advertising**

Anja Janoschka

## Web Advertising

# Pragmatics & Beyond New Series

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## Volume 131

Web Advertising: New forms of communication on the Internet  
by Anja Janoschka

# Web Advertising

New forms of communication on the Internet

Anja Janoschka

University of Zurich

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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

At present we are witnessing an information revolution whose significance parallels and perhaps even surpasses that of the information revolution caused by the printing press in the fifteenth century. (Jucker 2003: 129)

The Internet is not only the most recently developed mass medium and communication tool of the 21st century, it has also given rise to new dimensions of communication. Its scope is global, and services such as the World Wide Web are easily accessible from all over the world. Since the early 1970s, the number of users has increased steadily. According to Global Reach (2004), worldwide 729 million people had Internet access in March 2004, 35.8% of which access the Internet in the English language.

It is characteristic of most people to use the Internet as a communication platform. Several studies (e.g. ComCult Research 2003; PEW/Internet 2004) found that the sending of e-mails, searching for information and news are the most attractive online features used on the Internet apart from entertainment activities. Heavy usage can be observed in the private sector, as well as for business transactions. Apart from established business models like online auctions, portals or e-procurement platforms, ongoing innovations may still indicate confidence in a constant growth of the net culture and a variety of usage. It is no wonder that on this global marketplace, advertising quickly caught on.

The Internet is a network of computers which allows message transfer from the server of one computer network to the server of other networks. The interaction of mostly non-spoken data is realized by just one medium which is completely new in the transmission of information. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) on the Internet facilitates the reciprocal exchange of digital information and allows users to communicate in a real-time and time-shifted mode. This new form of interaction is one of the most important landmarks in the information revolution. Of course, this has some influence on the roles of the communication partners and their communicative power, because they now become mutual senders and receivers in different types of communication.



Chats and e-mails, for instance, are two forms of online communication that arise with the development of the Internet. For both types, the exchange of information is dialogue-orientated between a restricted number of communication partners, i.e. in the relation one-to-one, one-to-few, or one-to-many. Although both forms use mainly written language as a means of communication, the technical capacity of the medium can generate a very fast interaction. Chats tend to be synchronous or live interactions. They are characterized by a real-time mutual exchange of written information, made possible by the programming that runs the chats. In most cases, chat users communicate with two or more interlocutors or they just follow the conversation of other communicators. Since this type of interaction is synchronous, participants have less time to conceptualize their text message than in asynchronous e-mail communication (e.g. Kötter 2002: 46).

E-mail communication is usually a time-shifted exchange. This depends on the service itself, which is basically not programmed for a synchronous exchange. Also, it relies on its users, the communicators, who decide when to check, send, or respond to e-mails.

Digital communication on the Internet is not only the mutual exchange between individuals, but also the transfer of messages that are addressed to a large audience. Online advertising<sup>1</sup> is an asynchronous form of communication. This way of disseminating information corresponds to characteristics of monologue-orientated mass communication. The message transfer is accomplished in the relation one-to-many. The online advertising message provided by the sender can be activated by various receivers at different moments. It consists of written language and/or graphics which are carried by web ads.<sup>2</sup> These web ads are very common new forms of interactive communication or interactive hyperadvertising. They are small, digital, graphic images which are either located on a web page or jump out of the screen when a site is called up. Web ads are supposed to be activated by a user's click. This activation of online advertising is the user's generated feedback to the message sent. As in chat and to some extent in e-mail communication, the language used in web ads reflects the interactive functions of the new medium. This means written communication is often carried out to achieve conceptual orality (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985, 1990).

This analysis will reveal the new interactive capabilities of the Web with a special focus on online advertising.

## Purpose of the book

The Internet is an interactive mass medium of communication. The overall aim of this study is to explore the new forms of communication that have emerged with the launch of this new medium. These new forms have had some effect on the language used to communicate on the Web. The analysis will concentrate on the linguistic means that are employed in web ads and restrict its investigations to the written language therein.

This is an interdisciplinary study of online advertising in three main areas – communication, language, information structure. These have been selected because they seem to be exposed to major changes by the development of the Internet. It is important to mention that they are not to be understood as independent areas, because they collaborate with each other. As a part of the complete analysis, each field is devoted to one major aim which will be examined in detail.

The first aim is to describe and explore the new dimensions and forms of online communication. This type of communication is not just another channel which makes use of new technological capabilities, but rather develops new forms of communication for the interaction between communication partners. For this reason, it is necessary to look at the process of communication first. Dependencies and differing features, which are based on traditional models of mass and interpersonal communication, will become clear and will help to develop a model of online communication. It is my aim to show that communication on the Internet is not only interactive, using different levels of user integration, but it is also individualized through the way in which information is produced and perceived. Users do not receive information passively, but select it actively by clicking on different types of hyperlinks.

Advertising is a discipline within a company's marketing strategy, but it can be viewed from various perspectives. In this book, advertising is described from the point of view of its communicative function, thus basically neglecting economic factors. The analysis of written language used in online advertising communication is the second aim. I will describe in which way these new communicative conditions have had an effect on language. Since web ads are aimed at catching the users' attention and luring them away from the web site they are visiting, I am interested in the linguistic means web ads use to achieve their goal. For this purpose, the study concentrates on linguistic means of persuasion and on motivation strategies. There are various forms and ways of personal user addressing which give the users the impression of being personally ad-

dressed and integrated in the interaction with the web ad. We will see that the language used is a kind of “written speech” (Crystal 2001:25).

The third aim focuses on the new structure and functions of online information which is realized by hypertexts. Hypertexts are decentralized, open-ended, and multi-linear. Their text structure is accomplished by hyperlinks which connect different textual units. It will become clear that hypertexts change the way in which information is organized and perceived, particularly in the online message in hyperadvertising. It is the interaction, i.e. the selective activation of information units by the user, which is characteristic of the new online text structure and of the way of communication. Users create their own paths through the Web.

In short, it is the purpose of all three research areas to elucidate the fact that new forms of communication are not only technically achieved, but also functionally accomplished. These innovations affect not only the language use, but also its users. They are actively involved in the interaction process in various ways. However, it is important to mention that these novel ways of communication, language use, and hypertext construction have been developed within the existing frameworks of traditional forms, structures, and functions. Any study on new forms of communication on the Internet needs to be based on traditional models.

## Data

The data analyzed is restricted to different types of web advertisements. I have decided to focus mainly on web ads since they are new forms of written online communication and make use of the new hypertext structure from two perspectives. First, web ads are themselves types of hyperlinks and thus part of a hypertext. Secondly, their advertising message is an open-ended hypertext which first of all connects the message on the web ad with a page of the merchandiser’s web site. Due to this open-endedness, the advertising message might be continued endlessly. The selection of hyperlinks, therefore, is an act of individually different message constructions which are controlled by the user. This kind of interaction shows the most important differences to traditional advertising, and influences language use, as we will see in this study.

In this qualitative analysis I have not chosen a special area, topic, or quantity from which I selected the web ads. I preferred to use different characteristic, decontextualized examples which exemplify online advertising in terms of its communication process, its structure and function, and its use of linguistic

means and strategies. If users activate a web ad, they have been convinced or persuaded somehow by its advertising message. Since this user persuasion is mainly realized by the advertising instrument itself and not by the context in which it is placed, I am particularly interested in the pure advertising message and not in its carrier medium, the web page. However, I will not completely disregard the ads' context. There are few examples for which it is essential to include the web site on which the ads are located. In order to explain the construction of an ad's advertising message, its environment has to be considered.

The data has been predominantly collected in a period from November 2000 to August 2002. In order to keep the study up-dated, only a few additional examples are of a later date.

Much research has been carried out by different institutions on online advertising, for example with regard to its effectiveness, its structures, its use of web ads, and its advantages, weaknesses, usability factors and so on. For years, however, web ads, in their various forms have been a typical means of online advertising. Increasing usage has turned them into a standard repertoire on web sites. This forces web ads to be more appealing to catch the users' attention. Meanwhile users might be too familiar with or even overloaded (e.g. Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:13f.) by them. Some users simply disregard web ads, a phenomenon called "banner blindness". This is, for instance, a reason why some scholars (e.g. Nielsen 2000a) call for a greater incorporation of the communicative potential of the Internet in online advertising. This claim about the Internet's communicative deficit in the literature is what prompted me to choose online advertising as the focus of my analysis. Is it true that web ads tend to ignore the interactive component and possibilities that the Internet medium provides? Or do they incorporate this potential in their communication process?

Multimedia elements (e.g. Bucher 1999:9), such as sound and video sequences will not be considered in this book. Moreover, the analysis mostly neglects the discipline of visual semiotics. Only some examples take up the use of images or key visuals, which are visual markers in advertising and which mediate the basic advertising idea, although extending the research on this topic might be a fruitful task for future examination.

## Structure of the book

Defining typical features of online advertising presupposes the definition of characteristics of traditional advertising first. Thus, Chapter 2 is the descrip-

tive basis for the following analysis. It starts with a brief historical outline of the development of mass media advertising. To understand the concept of advertising in today's terms, I define what advertising is and describe the main types and instruments of traditional advertising. Whenever the term "traditional advertising" is used, it refers to both "conventional advertising", which covers mass media, such as print, radio and television, and "direct advertising" which includes direct mailings and coupon ads. Due to my focus on written language, I will concentrate primarily on print ads as counterparts to digital web ads. Television commercials are mentioned marginally, radio is not treated. Direct advertising correlates with web ads in terms of providing several ways of response with which both try to promote the interactional exchange with their addressees. The characteristic features, structures and functions of conventional and direct advertising will be described, and a brief analysis of the language used will be included.

From the advertising perspective, the often used cognitive marketing concept "AIDA" ('Attention', 'Interest', 'Desire', 'Action') is discussed and also applied to some examples of traditional advertising. Although several major characteristic features work as a differentiating basis to online advertising, this is generally not a comparative study. Moreover, it will become apparent that some of these new features derive from traditional ones. I refer to aspects of traditional advertising throughout the book whenever it seems useful for the characterization of online features.

Chapter 3 begins with a description of the world wide web as an advertising platform. Different types of web ads are introduced along with a definition and classification which will clarify their main characteristic features and functions. There are static, animated, and interactive web ads and two special forms, web ad traps and pop-up windows.

Web ads mainly have three functions. First, they need to attract the user's attention. Secondly, they aim to persuade the user to activate them, and thirdly, they need to meet the user's expectations provoked by the advertising message. It will be shown that the structure of the advertising message in online advertising is a hypertext. It is, therefore, necessary to differentiate between a web ad's "initial advertising message", which is conveyed by the web ad itself and the "linked advertising message", which refers to the information given on the linked web site. The "extended advertising message" is realized by the user's further path through the Web. This book concentrates to a major extent on the initial advertising message.

There are further requirements for a web ad's effectiveness. In the last part of the chapter, I will look at psychological, cognitive, and formal aspects, such

as the rules of attention, or the position of web ads on a web page. A user's path through the web site and the effectiveness of online advertising can be measured by different tools with which I will finish off this chapter.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the process of communication. It focuses on two types of traditional communication, i.e. mass and interpersonal communication. The former describes the uni-directional process of communication in mass media. The latter is the mutual exchange of information between communication partners. Apart from some restrictions such as transfer media, this model can be also applied to the process of communication in direct advertising. By comparing traditional forms of communication with online communication, one may be able to discern those elements of online communication that are unique to the medium and those which have been transferred from traditional communication methods. What we will see is that traditional forms still play an important role in creating a relevant frame for the Internet.

With the birth of the Internet, the roles of interaction partners have changed. There is a shift from a former passive information receiver to a more actively involved communicator which requires the development of a new model. This model describes interactive mass communication on the Internet. In this, certain features of mass and interpersonal communication are combined. They are the basis for the investigation of new forms of communication on the Internet which define online communication as an interactive message transfer. I will especially concentrate on the message construction, the search for and the selection of information, the way of individualizing messages, and on aspects of interaction, feedback, and interactivity.

Even if attention is often achieved by graphic aspects like animations or blinking elements, it will become apparent that language has a major influence on web ad activation. Chapter 5, therefore, concentrates on the linguistic means and strategies employed by web ads. It starts with a description of the language that is generally often found in advertising before focusing particularly on the language used in hyperadvertising. The examination of the meaning of the advertising message is mainly pragmatically orientated. Web ads try to persuade users to click on them. From the perspective of linguistic persuasion, the analysis is divided into two parts. The first part is basically devoted to different forms of user addressing. This direct addressing is often accomplished by personal pronouns, imperatives, and questions. In terms of speech acts, the most frequently applied forms of getting users to act are directives.

The second part focuses on the linguistic means of emotional appeal. Here, persuasion is realized by certain motivation strategies and the use of particular vocabulary, namely powerful "trigger words" and special types of language

simplifications. The latter are, for instance, acronyms and signs which are typically used in chat communication. Other linguistic means like deictic terms, abbreviated sentences, modality, and orthographic methods of emphasis, e.g. unusual spelling and capitalization, are also included in the analysis.

Chapter 6 focuses on the structure of hyperadvertising. Deemer (1995) describes hypertext as “a new kind of text”. To substantiate this definition, I will have a brief look at the structure and function of conventional text, in particular, at the text in traditional advertising. These findings will serve for the definition and development of a model of a hypertext in online advertising with its most distinctive features.

In the main part of this chapter, I will show how a hyperadvertising message exemplifies the new approach to advertising on the Web. I will outline how this message is structured through the implementation of hyperlinks and examine the way in which it creates message cohesion and coherence. We will see that hyperadvertising integrates new dimensions of communication, not only by persuading users to be active and/or by communicative immediacy, but also by the incorporation of users in the message construction process.

Chapter 7 provides a short summary of the main results gained in this book and pinpoints further research suggestions which arise from this analysis.

Since the Internet is subject to continuous change, it is impossible to guarantee any permanent validity for the Internet addresses used in the examples, or for an illustration of certain ideas in the study.

## Traditional advertising

### 2.1 Introduction

In our daily lives, we are confronted with advertising almost everywhere. More or less every single item can be advertised and it seems practically impossible to escape or ignore it. The main locations where traditional advertising can be found are in print media, on television, and on the radio. However, the sometimes unexpected appearances of advertising might catch our attention, since it can be seen on objects which do not primarily function as advertising instruments. There are bags, hot-air balloons, tickets and vouchers, shopping carts or buses and trains in the public transport sector which carry advertising.

The following brief historical outline will show the development and different stages of orientations and shapes of advertising which are transferred by advertising media such as print, radio,<sup>1</sup> television, and the Internet. The term “advertising medium”, in German *Werbeträger* ‘advertising carrier’, is synonymously used for “medium” or “carrier medium” (e.g. Beißwenger 2000: 37, who uses the term *Trägermedium*), since they all refer to the means with which different types of information are transferred. With respect to advertising, magazines, television, and web sites are types of carrier media for print ads, TV-commercials, and web ads. Advertising, in its current occurrence and usage, will be substantiated by some relevant figures from the advertising market at the end of this section.

The subsequent part defines advertising first and then concentrates on the early developed concept of advertising, *AIDA* (‘Attention’, ‘Interest’, ‘Desire’, ‘Action’) by Lewis (1898) (Munoz 2002). *AIDA* explains how an advertising message is created and how it basically works. It will be continually applied throughout this study.

This chapter provides some background information for the later following functional and linguistic analysis of online advertising. There is a noticeable similarity between conventional advertising and even more between direct and later, online advertising – although online ads tend to apply a more



interactional-conversational language approach. However, differences occur with regard to language use, message flow, and types of direct user addressing.

## 2.2 Brief historical outline and current situation of advertising

### 2.2.1 History

In medieval times, advertising was accomplished by so called “town criers”<sup>2</sup> (Wissen Erleben n.d.) who loudly announced their goods to potential customers. With the invention of the printing press in 1445, Johannes Gutenberg (Mainz) established the basis for mass media communication. In the 18th century, trade cards and flyers proclaimed their products. The invention of the printing press resulted not only in the creation of flyers and other printed mass media, but also in the expansion of readership and the development of a system for distribution. Since that time, the production of newspapers has constantly increased. The first English newspaper, the “Oxford Gazette”, renamed in the same year “The London Gazette”, was founded in 1665 (Fries 2003: 18).

Newspapers are the oldest existing traditional mass media. Early news publications were called “corantos” or “newsbooks” (Fries 2001). According to Wilmshurst (1991:4), during the period between 1700 and 1800, there was an increase in newspaper titles from 25 to 285, with a combined increase in circulation from 1,500,000 to 16,085,000. In 1830, America’s advanced role in media communication became visible with the advent of the boulevard press, the so-called “penny press” (Kleinstauber 2001:35). With this expansion, the first print advertisements were placed in the press,<sup>3</sup> accompanied by a wider distribution and larger access to target groups. Early print ads were mainly written language based (Gieszinger 2000:90f.).

Meanwhile, advertising became an applied discipline of marketing. The AMA (American Marketing Association 1985, in Meffert 2000:9) defines marketing as

the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

Advertising as such is part of a company’s communication policy within its marketing-mix<sup>4</sup> in which it decides what kind of communication instruments are to be applied to communicate with the public. Historically viewed, economic developments of markets and the social situation affect the orientation

of marketing and advertising accordingly. There are four stages which influence the development and conception of advertising. According to Meffert (1989:29f.), these stages begin with production-orientated advertising, proceed to sales-orientated, then to consumer-orientated marketing, and finally act as strategic marketing.

Modern advertising began in the second half of the 19th century (e.g. Pope 1983). In 1870, the first mail order catalogues were used and the first steps towards broadcasting became apparent. Industrial progress was characterized by mass production which was typical of the first stage. In this production-orientated period, the sales market was dominant. Since demand was higher than supply, sales were easily achieved (Meffert 1989:29–30).

On the threshold of the sales-orientated stage, advertising “tipped the balance (...) from information to persuasion” (Pope 1983). The persuasive factor in advertising is an important part of today’s definition of advertising, as will be discussed later. The “reason why”, which is a copy strategy, has been developed. It is the rational explanation about products and their beneficial qualities which are employed in advertising texts. This argumentative advertising should give addressees a “reason why” to buy a product. Today, product guarantees or test results are some techniques advertisers apply to establish a reason why to purchase a product. With this method of advertising, a new orientation towards sales developed and this was evidence of entering the second stage. Between the mid 1920s and the early 1950s, sales marketing achieved the best results in a saturated market and advertising measures increased (Meffert 1989:30). During this period, the AIDA formula as a sales-orientated advertising concept was basically applied. However, AIDA is still used in today’s advertising, in addition to other concepts (e.g. Niepmann 1999).

A continuation and improvement of first developments of broadcasting showed technological progress, so that in 1922 over 500 licensed stations were operating in America, but less than 2 million households owned a radio (Boyd 1999). Due to the decreasing costs of radios, fifteen years later, 2 out of 3 homes possessed radio sets, and in 1940 more than 4 million homes owned a radio. Programs covered news, drama and comedy. The period between 1935 and 1950 is often called the “golden age of radio” (Schoenherr 2001).

Although the term *television* was first used in 1900, television as mass medium only evolved in the early 1950s (Television History n.d.). In 1941, commercial black-and-white television began broadcasting (ibid.) and seven years later, the first television news program “CBS TV New” was produced. The narrow connection to advertising was characteristic of broadcasting during this era:

(...) broadcasting and advertising have become virtually synonymous for American listeners and viewers, taken for granted as being fundamental to both the structure and function of radio and television. If one were to isolate a single event that marked the birth of commercial broadcasting in America, it would probably be the radio program emanating from the station WEAJ in New York City on August 28, 1922, a ten-minute advertisement for suburban apartment housing. (Mashon n.d.)

Today, radio and television commercials are much shorter. They mainly last from 10 to 30 seconds and are broadcast during commercial breaks, which interrupt program time. Commercial breaks are of different lengths, i.e. from some seconds to a few minutes, in which one commercial follows another. The more frequently a commercial is broadcast, the higher the costs of advertising placements become. However, the probability of its being noticed by the target group also increases (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 176). Satellite and cable television were launched during the early '50s and '60s.

In America, the post-World War II era was marked by economic growth which resulted in the conversion from a war to a peacetime economy. Credit was given to European countries which invested money in the American economy. A satisfied society with a high standard of living was the basis for the change of advertising orientation in the third stage. Consumer-orientated marketing was launched on the US market as a reaction to the affluent society, characterized by increasing income and goods, internationalization of markets and the information explosion. Supply was higher than demand and consumers became the focus of advertising interest. Advertising aimed to influence attitudes and behaviors in favor of the company and its products (Meffert 1989: 30).

In 1973, the first oil crisis led to a recession. Markets were saturated or stagnating, accompanied by unemployment and increasing competition. Due to these changes, a new marketing and advertising orientation was needed. The fourth stage of strategic marketing reacted to these new circumstances. Strategic marketing is a long-term leading conception aimed at a company's market partners and environment (ibid.).

Since the early 1970s the Internet has been primarily used by the US government as a main information network between the ARPANET, a research-based network between universities, and the military MILNET. In the 1990s, the Internet entered the communication market. As a public global platform open to all kinds of information, entertainment, and communication, one of which is online advertising, it has become the latest mass medium.

Today, advertising must employ a variety of strategies in reaction to new conditions of communication, diversified markets and customers. According

to Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2000:9ff.), the current media situation is characterized by information overload. Information overload means an excess of information for interpreting or processing. The quantity of information offered by the media to their audience is so comprehensive and wide-ranging that it is impossible to retrieve it all. Consequently, only a small quantity of what is mediated is processed. The part of the information which has not been noticed is called information overload. Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2000: 12f.) claim that electronic media is intensifying the already existing overload. According to them, for example, in Germany, the total information overload is about 98%. In terms of media, it is set at 99% for radio, 97% for television, 94% for magazines, and 92% for newspapers. The information overload through print advertising is about 95%, which means that only 5% of the advertisements get a message through to their addressees. Additionally, the emergence of the Internet, presumably the world's most comprehensive information source, has further increased this overload. However, or perhaps as a reaction to this, advertising expenditure has been rising persistently. Millions of dollars are spent on advertising campaigns. Some relevant advertising and media figures are presented in the following section.

### 2.2.2 Advertising figures

The importance of advertising's ubiquitous presence can be framed in terms of its expenditure. ZenithOptimedia (2003) indicates the situation of the advertising expenditure of the seven largest advertising markets. Together, they cover 73% of the world's advertising expenditure. Although a general decrease in expenditure figures can be observed from 2001 to 2002, the estimations for 2003 to 2005 predict a more positive trend (Figure 2.1).

ZenithOptimedia's figures contain all major media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cinema, outdoor displays, and Internet. While the US market shows a certain growth, the European figures point out a rather flat to negative growth, and so does Japan. This decrease is continued in the first quarter of 2003 when advertising placements declined.

Many other studies and figures indicate further moderate expansion of total advertising expenditure. Due to an increasing market segmentation and product variety, advertising instruments have diversified more and more. This fragmentation of media goes hand in hand with smaller and more selected target groups, which are, for instance, addressed in special interest magazines. Table (2.2) shows the total advertising expenditure of the US market by

	2001	2002	2003*	2004*	2005*
USA	141,636	143,552	146,671	153,335	158,319
Five-country Europe	60,624	59,333	59,556	61,463	63,984
of which:					
France	10,532	10,281	10,416	10,707	11,027
Germany	20,146	19,323	19,147	19,819	20,910
Italy	8,349	8,053	8,098	8,337	8,634
Spain	5,710	5,787	5,828	6,062	6,339
U.K.	15,888	15,889	16,067	16,538	17,074
Japan	37,650	35,089	35,359	35,906	36,578
Seven-country total	239,910	237,974	241,586	250,705	258,882

\* estimations

Figure 2.1 Advertising expenditure in US million dollars from 2001–2005 by Zenith Optimedia (2003)

YEAR	TOTAL	NEWS-PAPERS	MAGS	RADIO	TV	INTERNET	OTHERS (Outdoor)
1999	136,833	43,697	15,593	18,581	49,797	4,600	4,565
2000	153,110	48,700	17,700	20,819	54,981	6,000	4,910
2001*	151,701	48,213	16,992	19,659	54,525	7,500	4,812
2002*	159,868	50,413	18,348	20,116	57,032	8,906	5,053
2003*	168,409	52,613	19,794	20,585	59,296	10,688	5,433

\* estimations

Figure 2.2 US advertising expenditure in US million dollars by medium from 1999–2003 by Media Life Magazine (2001) (source quoted: Zenith Media)

medium from 1999 up to estimations in 2003. Advertising investments remain a long-term stable growth factor, a continuous trend of the past years.

What can be seen is that there is a co-existence of different types of media. Traditional media are still as relevant as the new medium might be in the near future. The increasing importance of the Internet can be explained by the steadily growing investments which range from 4,600 to approximately 10,700 million US dollars. The investments in radio commercials are more or less stagnating. Nevertheless, expenditure is still relatively high, on average, almost 20,000 million US dollars.<sup>5</sup>

After print, television, and radio, the Internet is the fourth biggest advertising medium. Fritz (2000:101) confirms the importance of new online communication with the ubiquity of Internet presence of companies:

Eine besondere Anziehungskraft besitzen (...) die neuen Medien, vor allem die Internet-Kommunikation. Es gibt kaum ein Unternehmen, das nicht im World Wide Web einen Shop eröffnet hat, ein Full-Service-Portal entwickelt oder zumindest über die eigene Homepage den Dialog mit der stetig wachsenden Surf-Gemeinde sucht.

New media possesses (...) a special appeal, especially Internet communication. There is almost no company which has not opened an Internet shop in the world wide web, developed a full-service portal or which is seeking dialogue with the steadily growing surf-community via its own homepage.

(translation: AJ)

Online advertising continues to grow. Very important aspects of its appeal are the comparatively low costs when placed on web sites and the increasing number of people using the Internet.

## 2.3 The concept of advertising

The concept of advertising is divided into two parts. The first part defines advertising as a certain kind of communication and provides a categorization of it. The second part describes how advertising works with a principal focus on the AIDA concept.

### 2.3.1 Definition of advertising

Advertising is a company's external communication. Given the existence of diverse kinds of advertising and instruments that are characterized by different usage, functions, and perspectives, there are various definitions of the term "advertising". Here, it will be treated from the perspectives of communication and marketing. In very common terms (Dyer 1990:2), advertising means

to inform a large number of people about something.

However universal, Dyer's definition incorporates a range of essential aspects by which one can deduce that advertising is a type of communication. By paraphrasing this definition in terms of its most salient quality, that is, its informative nature, advertising can be described as "communication" since communication fundamentally means "information communicated" (Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary 1994:199).

Even lexical usage shows correlation. Today, in English and German, the notion *advertising* is often replaced by the term *communication*. There are

terms such as *integrated brand communication* (e.g. Russell & Lane 1990), *communication instruments* (*Kommunikationsinstrumente*), *communication strategy* (*Kommunikationsstrategie*) (e.g. Dahlhoff 2000; Cuntz 2000) which function as synonyms of the terms *advertising instruments* and *advertising strategies*.

The infinitive construction *to inform a large number of people* implies that there is someone who has created the information and transferred it. This is the “sender”.<sup>6</sup> *A large number of people* is the object of the sender’s message, i.e. the “receiver” or the “audience”. *About something* refers to the “message” of the sender. Sender, message, and receiver are the major components in the advertising definition, likewise within the communication process. In advertising, the sender can be the advertiser, the advertising agency, or rather, the advertising company. The message is embedded in the advertising instrument, such as print ads, TV and radio commercials, or web ads.

However, to be successful in the communication process, advertising needs to be more than just informative. It needs to be persuasive which is one of its most important functions. A strategy employed to persuade potential customers is, for instance, the already mentioned “reason why” or the insertion of a “USP”<sup>7</sup> (abbreviation for ‘Unique Selling Proposition’). The advertising message, or body copy, often contains a “USP”. The USP concentrates on a product’s advantages and tries to contrast it with competitive products in order to turn it into an exclusive and thus desirable product. Since many products are exchangeable in function and use, it can be difficult to create such USPs. In this case, marketers establish propositions that are called UAPs, (abbreviation for ‘Unique Advertising Proposition’). They are brought into play if no product exclusiveness can be found, for instance, products in saturated markets or “me-too products” which are comparable with other products. UAPs are artificially created arguments which are often emotionally loaded.

A marketing-orientated definition elucidates some aspects of advertising which are also relevant for the communicative perspective. Dibb et al. (1991:400f.) use a more complex formula to describe the meaning of advertising:

Advertising is a paid form of non-personal communication about an organization and its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, public transport, outdoor displays, or catalogues.

The two new relevant components incorporated in this definition are “non-personal communication” and “mass medium”. Both are closely related. Obviously, mass media are used for mass communication. For the current purpose,

mass communication is characterized by three aspects. First, it is directed from a single source to a large audience, i.e. there is, for instance, one print ad for many readers. Secondly, mass media follow the principle of one-way communication, i.e. there is only one direction in which the message flows, from the advertiser to a large audience. Basically, there is no feedback intended and no exchange between the communication partners takes place. Thirdly, it is consequently non-personal. It is not the individual in the mass who is personally addressed, but the entire target group. This is characteristic of mass media like television, radio, newspapers, and magazines since it is impossible to address the single receiver individually as in face-to-face communication. Direct mailings function primarily as instruments of mass communication, but try to individualize their advertising message for the single receiver and offer limited feedback channels, as we will see in Section 2.4.3.

Although online advertising is not mentioned in Dibb et al.'s definition, it is also a type of mass communication. Online advertising can contact a wide target range, too. However, the mode of communication differentiates online advertising from traditional advertising. Online advertising can be non-personal or personal, imitate interpersonal communication on a written language basis and make users' feedback possible.

The categorization of advertising (Figure 2.3) into its different types is the basis for the analysis in this book. Different types of advertising, conventional, direct and online advertising, are differentiated and characteristic advertising "instruments" or "means" are incorporated. The classification is not a complete listing of all instruments that belong to one category, but a selection of the most common types. Those elements in bold type face are part of the study, others in brackets are just mentioned. A restriction of data that is merely based on written language, such as print ads, direct mailings and online ads, is efficient in order to demonstrate that online advertising is based on traditional forms of advertising, but develops its own communication strategies in correlation with the new technical and medium-based requirements. Since TV-commercials use both written and spoken language, apart from sound and motion pictures like animated online ads, they have an extra position. Currently, the integration of sound in online advertising or the display of short video sequences are still infrequently applied although this might change in the near future, once technical development has further advanced. Then, the similarities between television and Internet are likely to be closer. Online trailers, for instance, are such new forms of advertising on the Internet.



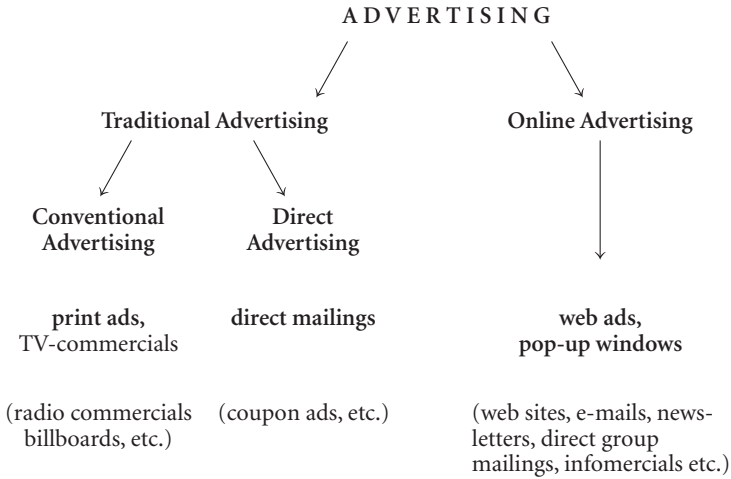


Figure 2.3 Categorization of advertising

### 2.3.2 Functions of advertising

The economic aim of advertising is to achieve higher profits and to benefit from increased sales of advertised products. Its basic function is to persuade the audience to make this purchase. Russell and Lane (1990:22) give an explanation of the way in which advertising fulfills its function, defining advertising as follows:

Advertising is persuasive communication; it is not unbiased (...).

This means advertising is purposeful. Some advertising campaigns are intended to create a favorable image of the company or its products, which should also have a positive effect on profit figures. To achieve this goal, advertising messages try to influence or change the audience's attitudes. Consequently, advertising can be biased. It tries to induce customers to make a purchase or alter their purchasing decisions. Therefore, Dyer's information-based definition must be additionally modified, for example *to inform in preference to the sender's objective* (...) because

[t]he object of advertising is usually to change or influence attitudes. It aims to persuade people to buy product A instead of product B (...).

(Jefkins & Yadin 2000: 15)

However, these are not the only functions of advertising. Some advertisers just want to inform, to warn or to seek support<sup>8</sup> (Cook 2001:10). One

way in which advertising tries to influence its audience is explained by the AIDA concept.

### 2.3.3 AIDA

The acronym *AIDA* stands for the keywords ‘Attention’, ‘Interest’, ‘Desire’, ‘Action’. In 1898, Elmo Lewis developed this widely known advertising formula (Munoz 2002). Despite its age, the AIDA concept is still in effective use by advertisers and copy writers, perhaps because of its precise simplicity in covering the main aspects and functions of advertising communication. For this, AIDA is not only useful, but is also a modern concept. Although there are newer, more recent concepts which are also beneficial, and that explore advertising effectiveness (e.g. DAGMAR by Colley 1961; FCB Grid model by Vaughn 1986;<sup>9</sup> the above mentioned USP formula), AIDA is the most functional formula for the current purpose of advertising analysis. AIDA can be applied to the examination of the communication process and, as well as explaining the linguistic means used in the advertising message, it additionally shows how advertising functions.

AIDA operates in a linear hierarchy (Figure 2.4). It belongs to the “*Theorie der kommunikativen Beeinflussung*” ‘theory of communicative influence’ (Meffert 1989:454) and explains the different stages and effects which individuals experience within advertising communication. The AIDA concept describes a consecutive mental process in the person addressed in which the successful achievement of one stage initiates the next. That means, first of all, it is the aim of advertising instruments and messages to attract attention. Addressees should be made aware of the existence of a product or service. In a second step, it is important to awaken interest in the object in a way which establishes a desire for it. This is the third step. Desire is one of the emotional appeals responsible for the buying impulse which leads to a purchase or some other intended reactions in the consumer or audience, i.e. the action.

All these steps can be accomplished in different modes, linguistically and by means of graphic elements. Persuasion can take place through rational information and emotional appeal. For instance, arguments that contain a “reason why” try to rationally persuade customers to act. This technique, similar to USPs, is meant to increase people’s willingness to buy because customers can be more easily persuaded when they have a reason for doing something. Emotional appeal is also an important means of persuasion and an advertising goal. Its implementation in the advertising message depends on the type of product

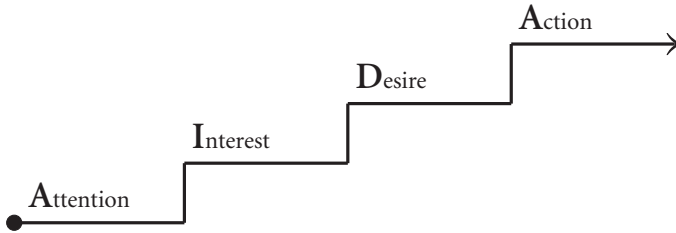


Figure 2.4 AIDA concept

and the addressees' open-mindedness towards such an influence (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 38f.).

## 2.4 Types of conventional and direct mass advertising

This section introduces briefly some advertising carriers, such as newspapers, magazines, and television. It exemplifies certain characteristic elements of print advertisements and TV-commercials. The rather comprehensive treatment of typical features of traditional advertising, language use and message structure will provide necessary background information for the later analysis of web ads and the distinctiveness of the digital medium.

### 2.4.1 Print media and print advertisements

#### *Newspapers and magazines*

Print media are very old carriers of mass communication and advertising. They reach a large and geographically dispersed audience. With regard to print advertising, newspapers and magazines are the media most frequently used. Together, they take up to 43 per cent of the whole advertising sector, compared to television, radio and Internet in the US market in 2001 (see Figure 2.2).

Newspapers are periodically published, i.e. they are, for example, available in daily, weekly, and monthly issues, or on certain days like Sundays etc. They can be circulated regionally, nationally, and internationally. Newspapers provide their readership with more or less comprehensive accounts of recent events and news, entertainment, and other columns and categories. Due to this regular interval of publication and subjects, readers can both expect their newspapers at a certain time and rely on certain contents. There are also free sheets which only exist because of the abundant paid advertisements placed

in them. Because they are freely available, they attract a large but specific readership, which in turn makes them attractive for advertisers to invest in. Most of them are weekly, some of them are circulated daily within a regional distribution area.

Printed newspapers can be re-read and stored. Reported situations can alter in a short time, but print media cannot react to these changes. Once a text is printed it is fixed and no more alternations are feasible, apart from handwritten scribbles or comments made by readers afterwards. However, these notes do not belong to the original text and are clearly apparent as such. Newspapers and magazines can be taken almost everywhere because of their low weight and compact format and can be easily shared with and passed on to other readers.

This aspect also restricts the amount of information newspapers and magazines can cover. Although a variety of topics or sections are treated, standard paper size and technical capacities allow them only to inform on a finite number of pages, determined by the medium.<sup>10</sup>

Magazines are also periodical publications and are generally issued quarterly, bimonthly, monthly or more frequently with regional, national and international distributions. They also offer their audience restricted information and entertainment, but according to the frequency of publication, this is often less recent and, thus, with a different focus. Magazines, like newspapers, can be divided into “general interest” and “special interest” publications. The former appeal to a mass audience of readers with more general or wider interests, while the latter treat special fields of interest such as women’s magazines, life-styles, medical sectors, sports, etc. Special interest magazines address a special audience. Consequently, they attract, on the one hand, smaller segments of readership but, on the other hand, readers with high involvement.<sup>11</sup> Special interest magazines and newspapers are therefore very useful for advertisers as they can be reasonably sure of reaching their target audience with less “coverage waste”.<sup>12</sup> Today, a tendency away from mass media towards special interest media can be observed (Schürmann 1999: 87).

### *Print advertisements*

Print advertisements are a means of conventional advertising, transported by print media, such as newspapers and magazines. The creation of advertisements and their advertising message basically depends on two main aspects, namely conceptual conditions and the medium’s specific realization capabilities. Conceptual factors refer to important issues that have to be considered in the planning stage. First of all, a company’s objectives have to be defined. In order to fulfill these aims, which affect the content and form of advertising,

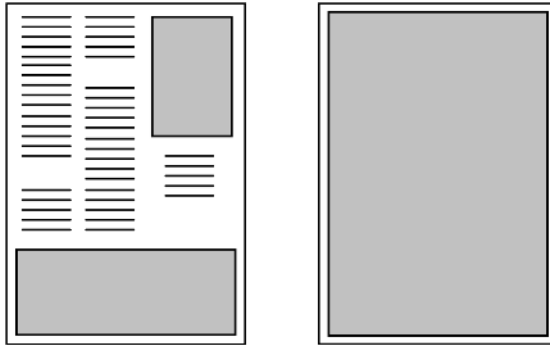


Figure 2.5 Different sizes and positions of advertisements

certain information has to be brought together. For instance, collected data may describe the product or service to be advertised, the target group and its characteristics, e.g. demographic information, like sex, age, income, and psychological information, such as attitudes and interests etc. And last but not least, the advertising budget determines the advertising realization. The kind of carrier media must be decided upon (television, print, radio, direct advertising, Internet), in combination or on its own, on the basis of which advertising instrument is most likely to achieve the defined marketing goals.

Once the form of advertising has been fixed on, the final realization is limited to the media's technical capabilities. For instance, print media are restricted to a static presentation of advertising. Sounds and animations or multimedia elements cannot be realized in print ads. Print media consist of written language and graphics. With regard to their position in the medium, print ads do not belong to editorial sections and are, therefore, formally set apart. They can be positioned on several fixed areas on the page, covering  $1/4$ ,  $1/3$ ,  $1/2$  or the full page, as the illustration (2.5) shows.

A print advertisement consists of basic components which make up the advertising message. These include written language, such as headlines, in some cases sub-headlines, a body copy, a slogan, a signature and graphic elements like key visuals, pictures, symbols, icons, or illustrations. Print ads can combine multiple graphic and written elements or may use only a few of them. The following example illustrates how an advertising message can be conceptualized (Figure 2.6).

The headline is a crucial element in an advertising message. Basically, it summarizes the body copy or gives the most important aspects of the message. Since most of the readers might only read the headline, it is clearly responsible

Open a checking account and earn money while you spend it.

headline

illustration

body copy

Relationship Rewards. Open any personal checking account and you get extra interest on your First Rate Money Market account and CDs. Call 1.800.760.BANK or visit firstbank.com.

Bank First. Be First.

signature

slogan

Figure 2.6 Example of a print advertisement

for the fulfillment of at least two factors of the AIDA concept. First, it should catch the readers' attention and secondly, create sufficient interest so that the audience starts reading the copy. Moreover, appeal can be achieved by using emotional or informative reader-addressing strategies, in a subliminal or direct way. Graphically, advertisers can achieve attention, for instance, by setting apart the headline from the body copy and emphasizing it. Letters and words can be capitalized or stressed by using larger and bolder letters, as in the example (Figure 2.6). The headline (1) creates attention through certain linguistic strategies:

- (1) Open a checking account and earn money while you spend it.

First of all, strategies of direct reader addressing are applied by the imperative usage of the verbs *open* and *earn* as well as the personal pronoun *you*. The

headline (1) subliminally encloses the condition that if you open a checking account you can earn money. In terms of speech act theory (Searle 1969), this directive focuses on future actions, but also functions as a promise. However, the condition keeps open the way and amount of earning money which might create interest. This also applies to the semantic contradiction of the concurrent use of the verbs *to earn* and *to spend*. How can someone earn money while spending it at the same time? An answer or solution to the headline is given in the body copy (2) and (3):

- (2) Relationship Rewards. Open any personal checking account and you get extra interest on your First Rate Money Market account and CDs.
- (3) Call 1.800.760.BANK or visit [firstbanks.com](http://firstbanks.com).

The body copy contains a unique selling proposition (USP), an *extra interest*. In sentences (2) and (3), the imperative and conditional use of language is continued with the verbs *open* and then you *get* (. . .). The use of the personal pronoun *you* as a term of address can frequently be found in spoken conversation when people directly address their conversation partner. In terms of Oesterreicher, its usage in a written advertising text can be understood as a way of simulating orality characterized by linguistic immediacy (Koch 1999:403). The body copy gives a fractional answer to the subliminal question in (1), i.e. the money that can be earned comes from an extra interest rate the bank pays if an account is opened. I used the term *fractional* because it remains open how much this extra interest will be. Moreover, the possibility of getting some additional money is emotionally anchored. Both the strategy of imprecise information and the probability of prosperity are used to create desire, the third stage of the AIDA concept, and to keep readers interested. The advertising message ends with a final imperative order (3), with the verbs *call* and *visit*. They simultaneously offer two different feedback channels, a telephone number and an Internet address (see also Figure 2.8).<sup>13</sup> From the functional perspective, this final instruction is a direct call to a specific action, the last step of the AIDA concept.

The illustration of the woman is an additional emphasis of the advertising message. She confirms the bank's offer with her agreeable smile. The message ends with the slogan (4) and the signature (5),

- (4) Bank First. Be First.
- (5) First Bank.

The slogan (4) is a word play with the name of the advertising company or the sender (5). The term *first* is part of the bank's name, *First Bank*. Semantically,

the notion *first* describes at least two aspects, i.e. an ‘initial situation or process’ and a ‘very optimal position.’ This means for (4) and (5), under the condition that someone opens an account at the *First Bank* (5), this person will be treated first and exclusively. It might also mean that you will be at the top of the branch, i.e. successful, perhaps wealthy.

The perception of an ad is visually orientated (e.g. Kroeber-Riel & Weinberg 1999:76). Specific features used in an advertisement have an effect on a recipient’s perception and are responsible for the successful practice of the AIDA concept. In addition to linguistic strategies, like those used in Figure 2.6, graphics play an important role. In terms of getting attention, the size of an ad, its format and color scheme are key elements. For instance, the bigger an ad, the more attention it can attract (*ibid.*). Concerning the sequence of visual communication, pictures are perceived before text and their content is easier to remember and to learn. Pictures increase the effectiveness of an ad, as they have a higher activating potential<sup>14</sup> than texts (*ibid.*). After images, big headlines and sub-headlines are recognized. Wirth (2002:144f.) explains that there are certain “rules of attention” which perception follows. These mean, for instance, that colored ads attract more attention than black-and-white ones, although today because of their infrequent use, black-and-white ads also establish some appeal to their audience, as in Figure 2.7. This is a black-and-white advertisement accentuated with red elements (*FF, Fisherman’s Friend*).

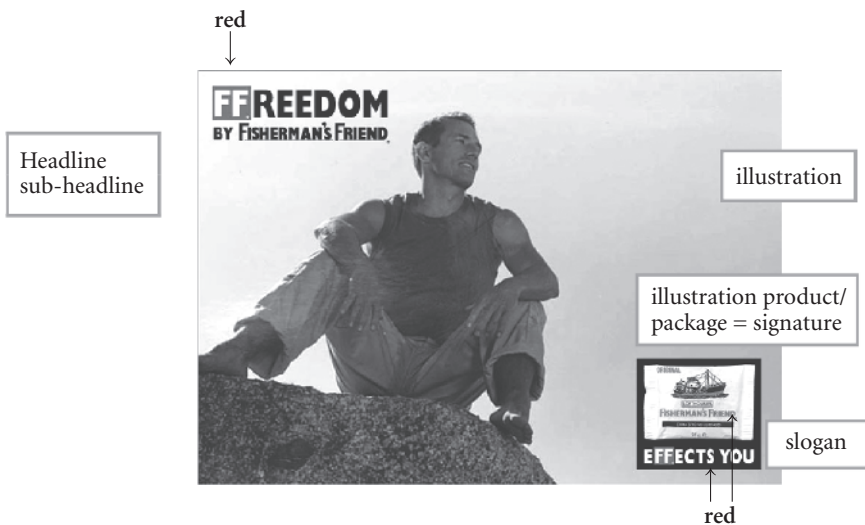


Figure 2.7 Picture-dominated print advertisement



Pictures enable fast reception and processing of information. Advertisements are usually viewed superficially and very quickly. On average, the attention that is paid to an ad lasts about two seconds, yet 35–40 seconds are needed to grasp all of the information provided (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:13). As a consequence, presumably more than 90% of the given information is not perceived. In a narrow connection with the short fixation on an ad and the existing information overload, advertising shows a tendency towards picture-dominated communication and less written information (*ibid.*), as in Figure 2.7. The advertisement consists mainly of a black-and-white illustration that shows a sporty man in outdoor clothing sitting on a rock and gazing into the far distance. There is a picture of the advertised product package, the signature of Fisherman's Friend. The only written information that is given can be subsumed in the headline (6), the sub-headline (7), and the slogan (8):

(6) FFfreedom

(7) by Fisherman's Friend

The encoded message is emotionally directed and results in an interplay of first, the illustration, and then, the headline. Under the topic *freedom* (6), the interpretation of the illustration becomes clearer. The transfer of freedom is metaphorically expressed by the man who seems to be satisfied with himself, just sitting on his own on a rock. The frog-perspective, from which the viewer looks at the photograph, shows the man from a lower towards the top level. From the addressee's point of view, this perspective makes the man look bigger, superior, and adds dynamic to him. This is what the picture suggests. The man has climbed to the top, successfully. The close verbal connection between (6) and (7) should express that freedom is explicitly brought by Fisherman's Friend. Fisherman's Friend is also graphically strengthened by the two capital letters *FF* in red color which are set apart at the beginning of the headline (6). As alliteration, they stand for the initials of the brand's name, Fisherman's Friend, and they are repeated in the first part of the term freedom, in the sense of 'Fisherman's means freedom'. Repetitions and alliterations are a means of emphasis, to increase recognition and enhance the memorizing effect (e.g. Leech 1966:29). The slogan (8)

(8) Effects you

even expounds the reason for freedom caused by Fisherman's Friend and stresses the relation between the product and the recipient by the personal pronoun *you*. The word *effect* exists as noun and verb. Used as a transitive verb

in (8), it means figuratively that Fisherman's helps to achieve one's goal or to fulfill one's tasks. The viewer leaves the ad having recognized the advertiser's signature, which is the product illustration of a package of Fisherman's Friend.

The advertising message in Figure 2.7 is clearly dominated by illustrative information and supported by lexical information. It is up to the viewer to discover the meaning of the message and decode the symbolism of freedom. Visual decoding requires less effort than the decoding of written information. Illustrations, therefore, are preferred by more passive recipients, who make up the majority of the addressed advertising audience (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 16). Nevertheless, the importance of language is apparent. Only by the use of written language does the meaning of the picture and, therefore, the whole advertising message become clearer.

#### 2.4.2 Television medium and TV-commercials

##### *Television*

Television is – historically viewed after print media and radio – the third mass medium which reaches a large audience with public broadcasting services, satellite and cable programs. These programs are broadcast internationally, nationally, regionally, or locally. The main functions of television are to entertain, to inform, and to educate. Although Dyer (1990:57) claims that after the Second World War, British “television replaced radio as the major broadcasting medium”, it still exists, not only in Britain, but all over the world in coexistence with other mass media (see e.g. Figure 2.2). When this mass medium entered the communication market, its acceptance grew quickly. From black-and-white to colored television programs, flexible transmission of information is characteristic of television. It combines spoken and written language, sound, music and pictures or illustrations in a static or animated mode. Thus, television is audio-visually conceptualized and received, which means it attracts two sensory stimuli, in contrast to mono-sensory print media and radio. These multi-sensory characteristics turn television into a very catchy medium. If one compares the historical development of the media television and Internet, the latter was accomplished noticeably faster, perhaps benefiting from familiar structures and manners of perception. Moreover, computers had already been in use for many years.

##### *TV-commercials*

A television commercial can be described as a visualized advertising message of animated pictures, and is often of short length, averaging 10–30 seconds or

less.<sup>15</sup> TV-commercials are able to stimulate their audience through the combination of audio, visual, and animated message components. This can make advertising on television very captivating and appealing, although television viewers might not always be motivated to concentrate on commercials. Some reasons for this might be the flood of advertising information, especially during primetime, on cable or satellite television which finances programming with commercial ads. Television commercials are broadcast consecutively during a particular time period which is called a “commercial break”.

Nevertheless, viewers can decide to avoid television advertisements by “zapping”. Zapping describes the process by which viewers switch programs when a commercial break occurs. They might return and continue watching the program when they presume the break has finished. Or they might even decide to watch another program which they have found while zapping. Zapping behavior shows some significant parallels to the activities on the Web. Due to the high level of interactivity, users can *zap* from one link to another. There is no link restriction as there is in the limited available television programs. Hence, the freedom of zapping choice is even higher on the Internet. Online zapping, similar to television zapping, can be described as a reaction to different incidents on the Web or on television. In the case of online advertising, users can interrupt and click away ads while downloading. They might even avoid visiting special web sites which they regard as too overloaded by advertising. The same avoidance strategy applies to television programs or channels that are known for their high amount of advertising.

The historical development of an increasing advertising impact through more commercials and longer commercial breaks affects its receiving audience in at least two ways. First, as information overload, the impact and thus the recall of single commercials decrease. Secondly, viewers might become more and more annoyed by advertising. The advertising sector reacted to this. For instance, reminders, which are shorter versions of the original commercial, are placed to increase the advertising impact. Similar reactions can be observed on the Internet although its advertising history is much shorter. The first banner ad attracted attention only because of its first and unique appearance on the Web. Shortly afterwards, the amount of web ads increased enormously and Internet advertisers had to find different ways of attracting their target groups since users were already familiar with them. As outlined in the next chapter, after the first static web ads, animated ones followed, and new formats and sizes were invented. Technically more advanced ads like pop-up windows and multimedia web ads were created as a reaction to up-coming banner blindness.<sup>16</sup> These developments can be regarded as a reaction to changing conditions of

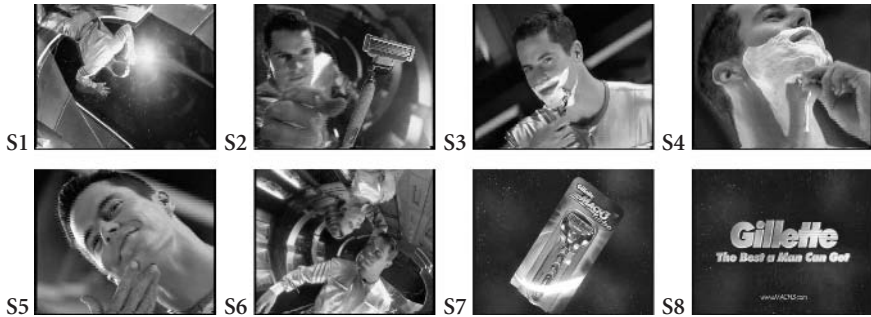


Figure 2.8 Sequence of main scenes (selected by AJ) from the TV-commercial “Gillette”; on MTV, 05/24/2003

the environment. Further innovations will presumably be continued not only on the Internet, but also on television.<sup>17</sup> However, it seems understandable that there is a growing concern in the advertising branch about zapping, as well as the substitution and emergence of other media, since viewers’ ignorance or avoidance is not favorable for future advertising expenditure.

Storyboard (2.8) is a sequence of major scenes (S) of a commercial that advertises razor blades. It was recorded during a commercial break on MTV (05/24/2003). The story mediates the possible effects that might occur when using these blades. It is set in a spaceship which is traveling through space when the male protagonist suddenly discovers an unidentified, approaching bright and luminous flying object (S1). As it gets closer, the object turns out to be a razor, which the man reaches for (S2). With a contented smile, he uses the razor (S3, S4). This passage is emphasized by lengthening it in comparison to other scenes of the commercial. In scene (S5), the man examines the result of his shave with satisfaction, stroking his face. The final result is approved by a space woman who also strokes his face (S6). The commercial ends with the fade-in of the packed product (S7) and the signature (brand name), a slogan and an Internet address (S8):

- (9) Gillette  
The Best a Man Can Get  
[www.MACH3.com](http://www.MACH3.com)

Figure 2.8 is a TV-commercial which shows the promoted product in use to visualize its benefits to the viewer. The Gillette commercial is set in an unusual context, viz. space. From the pragmatic point of view, space connotes future, technological progression and improvement. In terms of visual realiza-

tion, space and the bright light are meant to capture the viewers' attention. After fading-in the product, and presenting its purpose of shaving, the desire (AIDA) for the razor is supposed to be awakened by the triple-blade razor, which is meant to give "the cleanest and smoothest shave you've ever experienced" (<http://www.MACH3.com>). This is the rational USP. The high technical standard is linguistically realized by the superlatives the *cleanest* and the *smoothest* in a unique and exclusive statement. Technical advancement is also expressed by the slogan (9), *The Best a Man Can Get*. The proposition behind the advertisement is that men who shave their skin with the triple-blade razor have a smoother skin than others who do not use this product. The physical result is approved by the woman. Sexual appeal and attractiveness might also play a subliminal role in the persuasive advertising strategy.

The slogan (9) also refers to a superior shaving system which Gillette ([www.MACH3.com](http://www.MACH3.com)) claims to be the "best-performing shaving system (...)". The term *MACH3* is also the name for the triple speed of sound which creates the correlation to the advertising story in space. The number 3 relates to Gillette's *triple*-blade razor which suggests that it is technically superior to razors with just one or two blades, and hence, it ensures a smoother and more carefully shaved skin. Transferring the triple speed of sound, which stands for very high speed, to the product an additional USP of fast shaving is attributed to Gillette *MACH3*. Although *MACH* is the surname of its inventor, the Austrian physicist Ernst Mach, in German *mach* is the imperative form of *machen* 'to do'. This commercial was also broadcast on German television. For those viewers who were not aware of the origin of the term, *MACH* might have an additional impact. The URL, [www.MACH3.com](http://www.MACH3.com), is a supplementary source which provides viewers with further information, but also with a possible feedback channel.

### 2.4.3 Direct mailings and coupon ads

Direct advertising is mass communication like conventional advertising, too, but it differs in at least one essential aspect. Direct advertising is aimed at the direct feedback of the addressees which should be made possible by separated or included response elements of the mailing. The restricted interaction with an addressee in direct advertising shows some parallels with online advertising.

The returning function of coupon ads basically follows the same principle as direct mailings. Both are written language based. As a very common means of direct advertising, mailings can be personalized and customized or anonymous, whereas coupon ads are anonymously addressed to a mass

audience. Other instruments of direct marketing, such as telephone marketing or personal selling,<sup>18</sup> will not be examined here since they are based on spoken language.

### *Direct mailings*

Direct advertising usually addresses a large audience, though smaller target groups can also be contacted. Likewise, it can be conducted nation-wide or regionally. Demographic information about the addressed audience is more important than geographic aspects. With this demographic data, direct advertising is even able to reach its addressees individually by name and particular needs. Following Stone et al. (1995: 1) direct marketing is

(...) about making direct (...) contact with individual customers, and receiving responses directly from them.

Direct advertising works through contact with individuals and it is aimed at customers' direct response. This is another crucial point where direct advertising clearly differs from conventional advertising, i.e. the personalized way in which the sender contacts its mass audience.

Stone et al. (1995: 14) point out that

[t]he medium most readily associated with direct marketing is mail. This medium gave birth to direct marketing and it still dominates direct marketing expenditure.

Direct mailings are printed advertising letters that contain response elements. Response elements are, for instance, return cards and envelopes, fax numbers with conveniently prepared return fax sheets, but also telephone numbers or e-mail and Internet addresses. They may include additional supplements like brochures, catalogues, free gifts, vouchers etc. which are meant to have a positive impact on the person addressed.

However, there are various barriers which can reduce the rate of response. A lot of mailings are ineffective for reasons aside from the previously mentioned problem of information overload. Mailings are simply thrown in the trashcan because they do not appeal to readers, are just annoying, or achieve no response for reasons of unpleasant creation and conception. In Mattmüller's (2000: 261) words:

Viele Umworbenen [sic] neigen dazu, "Werbebriefe" – zumindest schlecht gestaltete – ungelesen oder nicht vollständig gelesen wegzuwerfen.

Many addressees tend to throw away “direct mailings” – at least the ones which are badly designed – without reading them or only after glancing at them.

(translation: AJ)

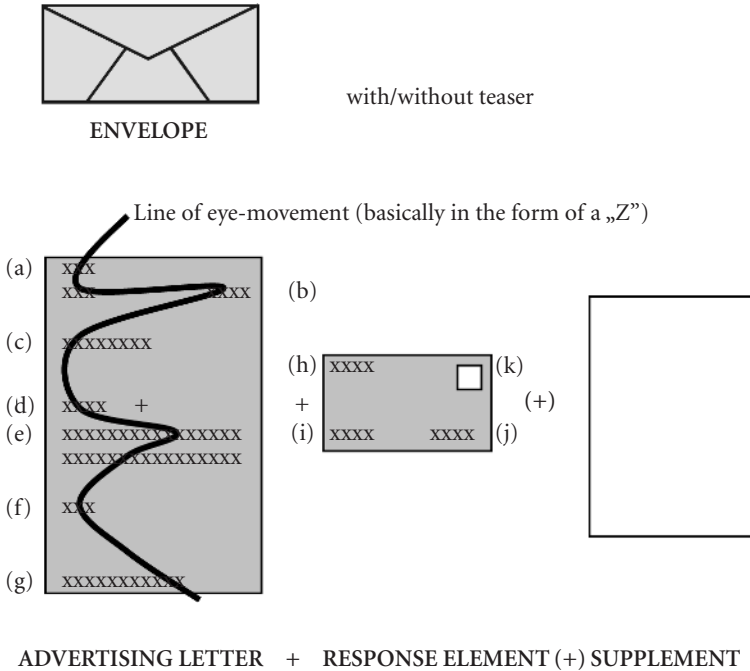
It seems impossible to ascertain a definite percentage of response through which a mailing campaign can be calculated as profitable. In some cases, only a small percentage of direct mailing returns might be sufficient for a campaign to be evaluated as successful, depending on the kind of returns and objectives of the mailing campaign. For instance, if only a small percentage of addressed customers respond to a mailing by purchasing the advertised product, the production costs, including conception and data mining, as well as postage costs, could be met, plus profit. This, of course, depends on the product, the addressees’ involvement and the number of potential customers contacted.

Response should be structured in a way which makes feedback as easy as possible and avoids answer barriers. Vögele (1996: 80f.) calls these barriers “*Filter*” ‘filters’. Elements that favor an answer are “*Verstärker*” ‘intensifiers’. Filters (F) are, for example, missing or wrong response elements. For instance, private persons prefer response cards instead of fax numbers. Private households are not always equipped with fax machines, whereas companies can respond by using both fax and response cards. Wrong telephone numbers or misspelled names of the persons addressed also are negative response signals.

Intensifiers (I) are, for instance, easy to respond to, convey simple, understandable messages, special offers emphasized for a fast grasp of information with e.g. graphically stressed bold or underlined aspects, personal signatures or correctly spelled addressees’ names. In the model on page 33 (2.9), general components of a direct mailing (i.e. envelope, mailing letter, and response element) are illustrated. Its intensifiers (I) are marked by a cross (x). Optional supplements are indicated by the plus sign in brackets “(+)”.

Envelopes can be designed with or without a teaser. Teasers are advertising elements that are aimed at attracting attention to get the addressee to open the envelope. Catchy words, or “trigger words”,<sup>19</sup> like *free*, *save* or appealing illustrations can function as a teaser. To be effective, advertising letters should contain as many intensifiers as possible. Some of them are listed below from (a) to (g) (e.g. Vögele 1996):

- a. **Name and address**  
of the reader to personalize the letter.
- b. **Date**  
for reasons of topicality.



ADVERTISING LETTER + RESPONSE ELEMENT (+) SUPPLEMENT

**Figure 2.9** Illustration of components of a direct mailing

**c. Reference or headline**

to supply the main point(s) and attract positive attention.

**d. Personal addressing**

The name of a person attracts him/her most since it makes the letter as personal as possible. If there are no personal names available, a simulated personalization can be used by a characteristic general addressing of the target group, like *Dear customer*, *Dear Internet user*. Online web ads use personal pronouns to address users directly.

**e. Text or body copy**

It contains the advertising message and should get the consumer interested, and finally, to respond. Short, simple sentences enhance faster understanding. This sentence structure is also regarded in web ads where the spatial room for the advertising message is very restricted and fast understanding is extremely important.

**f. Signature**

The signature is often printed with blue ink to let it appear as if it were



personally signed by the addresser and not printed as a mass letter. This lets the reader feel more personally addressed and not one of many.

g. **Post script**

It should summarize the main advantages and often includes a direct or indirect imperative instruction to respond. Directives are also frequently used in web ads.

(a)–(g) function as intensifiers if they are employed appropriately. If graphically emphasized, they are also points of fixation for the readers' eyes and are, therefore, responsible for a first impression and information perception. Eye-movement is visualized by the bold line (Figure 2.9). The sequence in which information is perceived also follows the already mentioned rules of attention (e.g. Wirth 2002: 144f.). Eye-catching elements like pictures are viewed first, followed by headlines and underlined or bold words or phrases. Direct mailings are often perceived in a "Z-form", starting at the top left corner and finishing at the bottom right corner. Different studies have analyzed viewers' eye-movements (e.g. Vögele 1996; Nielsen 2000b) to observe in which order and what types of fixation points are viewed first.

The response element itself functions as an intensifier, even more than the integrated ones if they are separately included as response cards, for instance. The following elements favor response (Vögele 1996):

h. **Name and address of addressee**

which are often already printed.

i. **Simple ordering part**

this could be already filled in or just need to be checked off, such as

*O Yes, please send me the new catalogue free of charge*

j. **Address of the sender**

k. **Postage already paid**

Not all direct mailings are personalized. There are also mass distributions of mailings for a large range of dispersed households where no personal data is available or desired. However, the more personalized elements are used, the higher the rate of response. The International School of Management (Dortmund) (Absatzwirtschaft 2001) analyzed the response rate of approximately 1400 mailings. They compared highly personalized mailings to conventional mass mailings. The personalized mailings, which were addressed to different business customers of an energy branch, contained various customized information and personalizing elements, such as the current gas or electricity

consumption of the company, personal addressing, concrete saving models for the individually addressed company, and a response element. These components were not included in the conventional mailing which only consisted of a personalized letter and general brochures. The institution found that the rate of response to the personalized mailings was nearly three times higher (15,5%) than to the conventionally created mailings (5,4%). They interpreted this difference as resulting from the exclusion of response elements and missing personalization and customization.

Not only printed mailings, but also direct e-mailings benefit from this way of personal user addressing. *Yesmail* (Absolit 2002), a US e-mail marketing company, analyzed the impact of personalization on the response rate in 90 million e-mails. The click rate achieved by e-mails without personalizing elements (4,7%) was approximately three times less than in e-mailings which contained seven or more such elements (14,8%).<sup>20</sup>

Direct advertising that is not personalized or customized is similar to conventional advertising. In both types, addressees are part of an anonymous mass and might therefore tend to pay less attention to the advertisement. However, direct mailings and conventional advertising differ to some extent in reception and in the amount of information. Mailings can provide more detailed information, transferred by the letter itself, as well as by included supplements. This information can be read whenever and how often the reader feels like reading it, and is received on its own, without any other competing information. The room for information provided by conventional print ads is more reduced and restricted to a fixed format, as part of a newspaper or magazine. Like television commercials, print ads do not only compete among each other within the same medium or the commercial break in which they are positioned, but also with other editorial contents or programs. Television commercials can only reach their audience during a specific, reserved and limited broadcasting time of some seconds.

In direct advertising it is also very important to catch the addressees' attention, establishing their interest and desire for the promoted issue which should finally lead to an action, in this case, the response given by the single recipient. The following example (Figures 2.10, 2.11) of a personalized direct mailing expounds the methods direct advertising applies. This mailing combines letter and response elements (card) – separated by the dotted line. That is to say, the top part of the mailing is the advertising message. On the one side (Figure 2.10), there is the letter to the reader in which the described product is offered, and on the other side (Figure 2.11) the product, namely the magazine "Art & Antiques", is introduced and illustrated. The bottom part is the response element.

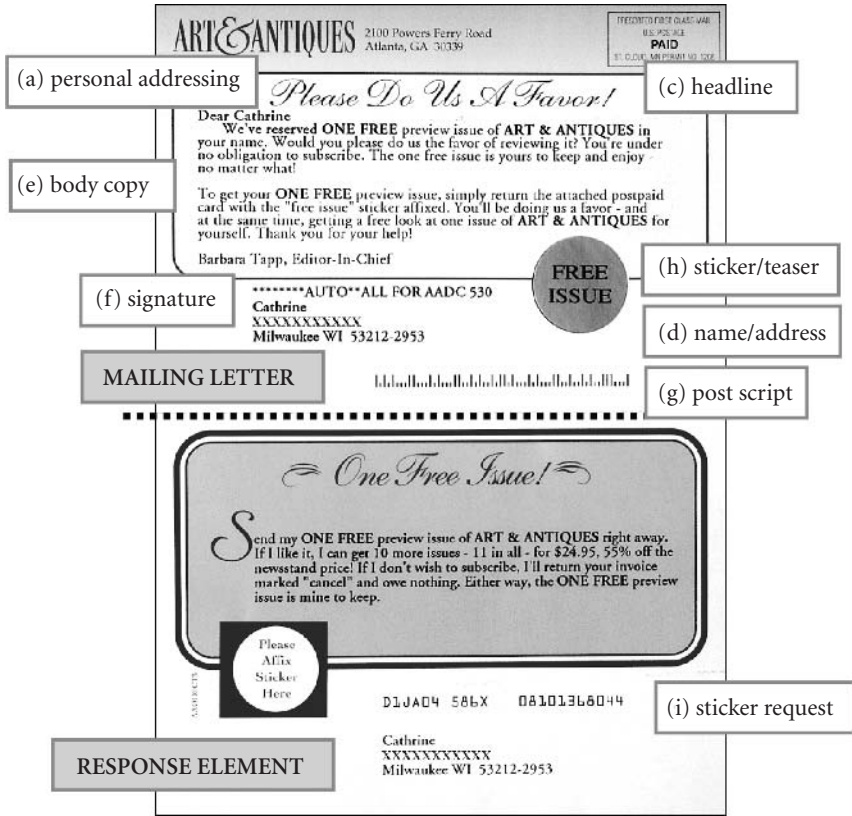


Figure 2.10 Example of a direct mailing (letter and response element)

It contains the instruction to post the card in order to receive a free issue, and then it turns the respondent into a subscriber to the magazine (Figure 2.10). A teaser, free postage and the sender's address are on the reverse side of the answer card (Figure 2.11). The response card is already prepared for immediate reply, so that the only work the addressee has, is to take it to the letter box.

The headline (c)

(10) Please do us a favor!

is partially repeated twice, *do us a favor*, in the body copy (e) and asks in (c) politely, *please*, for an act of kindness. The reader is directly addressed by the use of the imperative verb form *do* and by her first name, *Cathrine*, and surname (a).<sup>21</sup> The use of the full name (I) is a respectful way of personal addressing which establishes proximity, but it is not as intimate as merely using the first

name. It functions as an intensifier like the whole address (d), which is printed twice, in the letter and in the response card.

In the body copy (e), which offers the addressed person the magazine being promoted and explains how to receive it, additional linguistic means of personal addressing can be found. The personal pronoun *you* like the possessives *your/yourself* are repeatedly used. The sender's name (I), Barbara Tapp, as signature (f) at the end of the letter takes the anonymity out of the mailing, even though it is not a handwritten signature, which is an omitted intensifier (Vögele 1996:229ff.), like the missing post script (g) usually placed at the end of a letter. A reminder (Figure 2.11) is used which could replace the function of the post script:

(11) Enrich your artful life with Art & Antiques!

This last sentence is a final direct call to enhance the addressee's life, using the imperative verb *enrich*. It is supposed that the addressee's life already has or will have something to do with art because it is described by the adjective *artful*. The noun *art* as part of the adjective *artful* is even more highlighted by its repetition in the first part of the name of the magazine *Art & Antiques*. The term *artful* has an additional meaning. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1992:46) defines *artful* as "cunningly clever at getting what one wants". In combination with the possessive pronoun *your*, the addressed person is supposed to be clever. This cleverness can be enhanced, i.e. *enriched*, by the subscription to magazine.

Creating an uncomplicated response element is not sufficient to motivate a response. Readers need to be attracted by additional arguments which entail a clear benefit (USP) or a "reason why". Throughout the whole first page of the mailing, the expression *one free* is graphically marked in capital letters. It occurs six times in total, one time in the headline *One free issue* (Figure 2.10) and another time in a slightly different wording, but semantically with the same meaning, in the sticker (h) which says *free issue*.

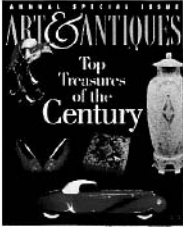
The sticker has three functions. First, it is a teaser which stresses how the reader will benefit. Secondly, it linguistically emphasizes that the addressee will get something *free*. The trigger word *free* functions as a motivator to respond. Thirdly, the request in the response element *Please affix sticker here* (i) is meant to initiate a physical action which puts a double emphasis on *free*. Addressees have to deal actively with the sticker when following the call to affix it because then, they cannot avoid reading the information on it. On the reverse side (Figure 2.11), the teaser on the answering card, emphasized by the capitalization of each word, combines the mailing's offer, i.e. a preview issue, and a polite call

*A Special Invitation...*

TRY THE WORLD'S MOST WIDELY READ MAGAZINE DEVOTED  
TO FINE ART AND BEAUTIFUL ANTIQUES — FREE!

**A**RT & ANTIQUES is the magazine for people like you who have a passion for collecting art and fine antiques.

Each issue is brimming with the best sources of further information—the best places to shop, how collectors spotlight their treasures, introducing you to brilliant, creative people, and highlighting new talents in “Emerging Artists,” our exciting new department.




Discover a magazine that understands part of the satisfaction of being an owner of art and fine antiques is looking at your treasures, touching them and living with them.

This is your one opportunity to share the passion and sample *ART & ANTIQUES* with no obligation. With so much to enjoy — and nothing to lose — won't you take a free look?

ENRICH YOUR ARTFUL LIFE WITH *ART & ANTIQUES*!

---


*One Preview Issue  
Please Rush*



NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 170 MT. MORRIS, IL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE



*ART & ANTIQUES*

P.O. BOX 626  
MT. MORRIS, IL 61054-8290




Figure 2.11 Reverse side of the mailing

to an immediate action which is linguistically expressed by the word *please* and the imperative verb form *rush* (12):

- (12) One Preview Issue. Please Rush.

All these elements are linguistic motivators (a-i) or intensifiers that also go along with the AIDA concept and are aimed at achieving the addressee's response. In Chapters 3 and 5, we will see what kind of motivating elements are used in online advertising and how web ads linguistically persuade their users to meet advertising objectives.

Mailings like conventional advertising in general can be scheduled exactly. For instance, the North German lottery, NKL (*Norddeutsche Klassenlotterie*), combines a conventional television commercial with its nation-wide mailing campaign. They announce via a TV-commercial that on the subsequent day, addressees will receive a participation coupon of the NKL in their letter box. With this advertising concept, two effects are realized. First, it tries to attract attention by its general and anonymous announcement, and secondly, it informs the recipient about what will happen on the next day. Then, recipients are not surprised to get mail from the NKL and remember the commercial from the day before. This advertising campaign of two different media is meant to emphasize attention and interest and tries to prevent the mailing from being thrown away before it has been opened.

The combination of different advertising instruments and media to address one's target group depends basically on the construction of the target group and the promoted product or service.

### *Coupon advertisements*

Coupon ads are print advertisements in magazines or newspapers which contain a response element. This can be part of the ad (Figure 2.12a), or a return card which is added to the ad (Figure 2.12b). The response elements here have the same function as in direct mailings, i.e. they encourage the readers' feedback and facilitate a response.

In contrast to personalized direct mailings, the addressee is unknown. Methods of addressing are more general, covering a whole target group in the advertised field. Thus, coupon ads are seldom to be found in the form of personal letters, but are closer to the creation of conventional print advertisements. However, coupon ads differ from them in the inclusion of separate response elements.

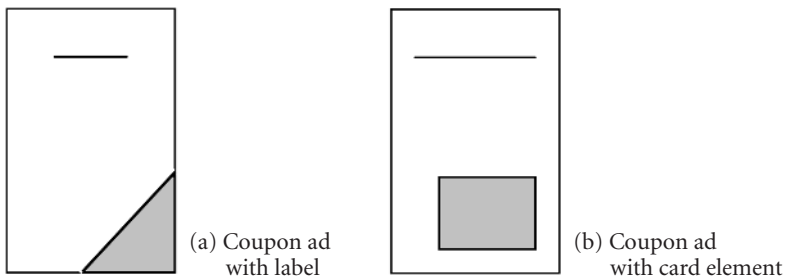


Figure 2.12 Illustration of coupon ads with different response elements

The response elements in coupon ads and anonymous direct mailings are often marked by an indicator. The indicator is a numeric code with which the addressee's answer can be traced back to the magazine in which the ad had been placed. It provides the advertiser with additional data about the effectiveness of placements and the ability to reach the target group. Using the information on the indicator, advertising success can be measured and data evaluated by the rate and medium of response. In addition, new addresses of potential customers can be generated. Generally, direct marketing is based on customers' data and this is substantially responsible for its effectiveness. The more accurate the information on a company's customers, the more precise the addressing and customization of an offer according to the addressees' needs and wants can be. Consequently, a response or customers' action is more probable and effective.

Direct advertising also aims to establish and maintain product loyalty so that customers are more likely to stand by the offered product instead of others. In direct marketing terms, personal data of customers is very important for the advertiser as it can turn a former anonymous addressee into a transparent client. Currently, there is an increasing tendency to observe that traditional advertising integrates the Internet in their communication. TV-commercials include their Internet addresses and consequently provide new feedback possibilities, TV programs offer live online participations such as voting e.g. in music shows, or they allow chatting with people who are in the show etc. The response in direct print mailings is no longer restricted to postal mail reply, but can also be conducted via e-mail or web site.

A study by Gartner Group (NUA Internet Survey 2002b) found that currently US companies favor the use of e-mailings instead of traditional direct advertising. One reason for this trend is the money saving aspect. Production and postage costs can be saved.

## 2.5 Summary

Over a long period of time, the orientation of advertising has changed as a reaction to economic development. Various formulas of advertising explain how advertising is conceptually structured and how it functions. Despite this variety, the AIDA formula is applicable to different types and instruments of advertising. Conventional advertising is characterized by a uni-directional message transfer to a mass audience, whereas direct advertising focuses on a mass audience and addresses individuals. And in contrast, direct advertising aims to

Types/criteria	Conventional advertising		Direct advertising	
	Print*	Television	Direct mail- ing	Print*
Carrier medium				
Advertising instrument	print ads	TV-commercials	mailings	coupon-ads
Message realization	written text, graphics	written and spoken language, sound, graphics	written text, graphics	written text, graphics
Technical basis	print	electronic	print	print
Graphic mode	static	motioned	static	static
Audience	mass	mass	individual/mass	mass
Message flow	uni-directional		two-directional	
Message flexibility	weak		stronger	weak

\* The term "print" refers to newspapers and magazines

Figure 2.13 Comparison of conventional advertising and direct advertising

achieve the addressees' feedback by integrated response elements in the advertising message. Table (2.13) summarizes the main characteristic features of traditional advertising by separating conventional mass advertising from direct advertising.

With regard to the realization of the advertising message, all printing based instruments are fixed. Linguistically, they are characterized by written language usage and graphically, by static pictures. Electronically based instruments can make use of merely spoken and/or written language, sound and motion pictures. The message flexibility, i.e. the ability to personalize or customize the advertising message is weak for conventional advertising, as well as for coupon ads, but stronger for direct mailings.





## CHAPTER 3

# Online advertising

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the means of online advertising used on the world wide web. According to their historical and technical occurrence, I will categorize the most frequent online advertising instruments, namely “web ads”.<sup>1</sup> The main spotlight is given to web ads or banners, pop-up windows, and web ad traps and their advertising messages. Other types of online advertising such as e-mails, newsletters, screensavers, different types of e-sponsoring, asynchronous and synchronous chatgroups, infomercials, online games, and web sites will not be examined here, since it is my primary aim to provide a better understanding of web ads.

The description of the web ads’ structural and functional features is accompanied by a pragmatic content analysis which looks at the linguistic means web ads use when communicating with their target audience. A wider look at attributes that are significant for the effectiveness of web ads finishes off this chapter.

### 3.2 The world wide web as a platform for advertising

#### 3.2.1 The world wide web

The Internet is the latest developed electronic mass medium of the 20th century. It is a decentralized, internationally operating network of computers that share a communication protocol which facilitates the exchange of information. One major service it provides, apart from e-mail, is the “world wide web”. Crystal (2003:426) describes the world wide web as “a full collection of all computers linked to the Internet which hold documents that are mutually accessible (. . .).” The vast number, structure and content of those documents and web sites are constantly alternating and increasing.

Web sites can be accessed basically in three ways. These ways describe how users search for certain data. First, users type in the address of the web site, the URL,<sup>2</sup> into the appropriate browser field. This is a rather concrete search since users need to know the precise URL. Secondly, they make use of search engines. Search engines enable users to search autonomously for keywords on the Web. Matching results in the form of hyperlinks<sup>3</sup> are then provided. This is content-based searching. Thirdly, users draw on hyperlinks such as text links or web ads. This search can be directed or non-directed “browsing” with or without a “serendipity-effect” (cf. Kuhlen 1991: 38, 128ff.).

Web sites have a number of functions. Being informative in various ways, working as communication and entertaining devices or operating for commercial purposes are only some of the relevant tasks. In addition, web sites are used as advertising instruments. However, due to their dual advertising role, they will not be treated in this study. On the one hand, web sites are advertising media that carry advertisements like web ads and pop-up windows in different places and sections of their pages. On the other hand, they are advertising instruments themselves. This is why I disagree with Strauss and Frost (1999: 200), who argue that web sites themselves do not advertise, but act solely as a carrier medium for advertising, like magazines for print ads. Web sites are clearly means of advertising. For instance, as corporate sites, they promote companies, and as online shops, they advertise products and try to sell them. Therefore, it is the complete web site that functions as an advertising instrument. Besides, web sites or pages are the linked source of web ads, i.e. they are part of a web ad’s advertising message, and this is what will be addressed in the following section.

According to Armstrong (2001: 19), for most people the world wide web seems to be the only part they use on the Internet, which may be the reason for a rather synonymous treatment of the terms *Internet* and the shortened name the *Web*. There are additional terms and abbreviations that describe the Web on a metaphorical level such as *cyberspace* or *virtual world*. Both notions refer to a digitized simulation of a three-dimensional zone in the global network (Münker 1997: 108). Other terms for the *world wide web* are the initialism *www*, which is also part of the web site address, or the version *W3*. Marshall McLuhan created the well-known term *global village*. In his opinion, the electronic age decentralizes life, turning the globe into a village (McLuhan 1964; McLuhan & Fiore 1967). He created this metaphor to show that as a result of electronic mass media, an extension of people’s visual and auditory senses had taken place, which allows them to act and react accordingly, at the same time, in the same space. Due to electronic media, it is possible to observe events that happen any-

where in the world. For instance, the drama of September 11th was broadcast and could be watched on television in real time and in the same space.

Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. (McLuhan 1964: 19)

Although there is a difference between experiencing an event at the location where it happens and observing it from somewhere else, electronic communication allows a decentralization of the world and turns it into a global village.

This seems also applicable to the Internet. Today, the metaphorical meaning of the global village has been commonly conveyed to the Internet or the Web. Apart from decentralized information, it allows synchronous communication within its virtual world. Once information is online, it can be downloaded by whomever, wherever and whenever. For instance, web cameras can film home-stories, can show the current weather situation at any location, and are ubiquitously accessible.

The world wide web is multimedia based and as such serves the exchange of text, graphics and sound data. These data and documents are connected by hyperlinks. All computers with Internet access can communicate on the Web. In March 2004, over 729 million people worldwide had Internet access (Global Reach 2004).

The Web basically works as an entertainment, information, and communication platform. The following table (Figure 3.1) by PEW/Internet (2004) illustrates some of the main activities carried out on the Web by 63% of American adults who go online (approximately 128 million people).

Main Usage of Online Media in the US in %	
Send e-mail	93
Use a search engine to find information	84
Get travel info	73
Get news	72
Send an instant message	42
Listen to music online at a web site	34
Download music files to your computer	20

Figure 3.1 Main online usage in May–June 2004 by PEW/Internet

Electronic interpersonal communication, mainly by e-mails<sup>4</sup> (93%) and by sending an instant message (42%), is as dominant as the search for information. Search engines are the most frequently applied tools (84%) for highly individualized lexical searches, followed by other ways of gaining information, i.e. news (72%), travel information (73%). Searching for information is also a form of communication, as is chatting,<sup>5</sup> sending e-mails, or browsing web pages.

Entertainment activities include, for instance, the download of music files (20%) and listening to music online (34%). According to NUA Internet Surveys (2002a), which quotes Ipsos-Reid, more than “one-quarter of the American population aged 12 and over, had downloaded a music file from the Internet” by the end of 2002.

Another major activity on the Web is in the online porn industry where high profits are made worldwide (3satBörse 2002). Moreover, there are many web sites which are specified for web games. Global access to games transcends space, providing a situation once only plausible for participants located in a single proverbial *village*.

With regard to the Web as an information platform, it clearly differs in some decisive points from other information-providing media. These are, for example, the quantity of information, the available content, the relevant time factor, aspects of operating for individuals and reaching masses, and storage capacities. For technical reasons, the Web is more comprehensive, i.e. there is quasi no data limitation. It combines uncountable, continuously changing and up-dated sources from all over the world in one medium. There are two methods in which this information can reach its audience. With the “push-strategy”, information is automatically sent to users such as in e-mail advertising (e.g. Döring 2003:62, 123). The activation of hyperlinks on web sites and the participation in newsboards, for instance, are characterized by an active recall and self-determined access to information. This method of information retrieval is called “pull-strategy” (e.g. Döring 2003:62, 70).

Generally, the Web allows faster access to these sources than traditional media can do. Users can retrieve any information in which they are individually interested. This is different from printed newspapers, which report on events and news within predetermined sections, in a limited space and which are directed to a particular readership or target group(s). News on television, radio, and print media is bound to broadcasting time or a publishing date. That is to say, readers or viewers of traditional media can only receive that information pushed by the publisher at a definite point in time, to a defined extent, and with a particular content. The Web offers a comprehensive storage

of digitized data on a computer. To store the same amount of data in printed versions would require much more space and effort. Similarly, searching for and accessing archived printed data can be much more difficult than archived, digitized records.

### 3.2.2 Web advertising

Web advertising generally follows the same principles as traditional advertising. It is a paid or unpaid form of promotional communication through a medium, used in order to “increase the number of sales of the advertised product” (Armstrong 2001:28) and an awareness of the product. To achieve its goals, online advertising also tries to favorably persuade addressees using primarily written language, graphics, and to a lesser extent, sound. With regard to its presentation, digital web ads, like print ads, are transferred by a carrier medium. For technical reasons, the whole monitor screen cannot be used as an advertising surface. Thus, only parts of a web site serve the advertising purposes.<sup>6</sup> This spatial limitation is identical to traditional media advertising. Print ads also have limited sizes within their carrier medium.

Nevertheless, there are remarkable differences. Online advertising is a new form of communication. There is always a sender who posts some kind of information on the Web and there are users who feel addressed by some part(s) of this data. Online advertising is interaction-orientated. Digital ads are meant to be directly activated. This activation of advertising is a form of interaction, a kind of user response which provides evidence for the novel role of addressees. But not only the communication process is interaction-orientated. Different types of web ads allow different degrees of interactivity.

From the commercial perspective, the early stages of online advertising seemed to predict a profitable future (e.g. Zeff & Aronson 1999; Armstrong 2001), which might explain the worldwide enthusiasm that had been set in motion and the economic boom around the turn of the century. It is not surprising that advertisers investigated the Internet as a new medium to communicate easily and quickly with a wide audience penetration. Online advertising is available 24 hours a day and up to 365 days a year at very low cost, compared to traditional media communication.

In the 1990's, the first web sites were presented on the Web as corporate sites or information platforms. Most of them were more or less one-to-one realizations of printed counterparts (e.g. Pensberg 1997; Rada 1999). For instance, many corporate sites simply integrated their printed image brochure or ads as HTML<sup>7</sup>-formatted copy onto the Net. The Internet's communica-

tive potential was practically neglected. Later, subsequent web generations have identified and adopted this practice. Currently, different forms of one-, two-, and multi-way communication are realized on the Internet.

Web sites quickly carried the first web ads. Due to technical capabilities, these appeared initially in a static mode, but soon web ads were animated and employed interactive elements besides other technical formats. Today, all three types are used in variations and different sizes. However, compared to other existing advertising media and instruments, online advertising is still in its infancy. As the most modern type of advertising, it is just a decade young. According to Hyland (2001),<sup>8</sup>

internet advertising began in 1994, when the first banner ads were sold (Hotwired, October 1994) and the first commercially available Web browser, Netscape 1.0, was released (November 1994).

Messages on the Web are primarily text and picture based. Web sites or web ads may transfer their content by just written information or in combination with pictures, animations, illustrations and even short films or commercials, and sound. Far-reaching and exhaustive wide-band cable connections are still not frequently found, but are becoming more common. They would permit faster transmission of immense sizes of digital data. Hence, online video and film techniques are currently not very frequently applied.

The AIDA formula also works for the explanation and structure of on-line advertising, although with a slightly different polarization. Great emphasis must be placed on the first step, getting attention, which results in the competitive environment of various other elements on a web page. Comprehensive information that might show a product's advantages and users' benefit cannot be given on that small space of web ads. Often, the linguistic strategy of persuasion follows the principle of simplicity and uses imperative instructions to initiate action, supported by graphics to create interest and desire. Nevertheless, it seems almost impossible to draw a line between defining which elements are accountable for the initiation of each AIDA step.

### 3.3 Types of web advertisements

Users have a particular reason for being online, even if they only want to surf aimlessly to pass time, and they are actively engaged in controlling where to go. Hyperlinks and search engines enable this interaction with information units. As such, they have to fulfill certain criteria and functions.

### 3.3.1 Definition and functions

#### Definition

Web ads, such as banners, buttons, and pop-up windows etc., are instruments of online advertising. The term “web ad” is used to subsume different types of web ads that are composed of small text and graphic-based advertising places, formatted as four-sided figures and are located on or jump out of a web page. Web ads contain a short advertising message or body copy and often an instruction to click on them. They are aimed at informing users about the existence of certain web sites and persuading them to visit these sites. Web ads are hyperlinks which enable activation through their users. Once users have clicked on them, they take their initiators to another connected web page, the linked target source. As hyperlinks, they consist of three elements, i.e. the web advertisement (a1) which is located on a web page (a), the link (b) which connects (a1) and (c), the target (Figure 3.2).

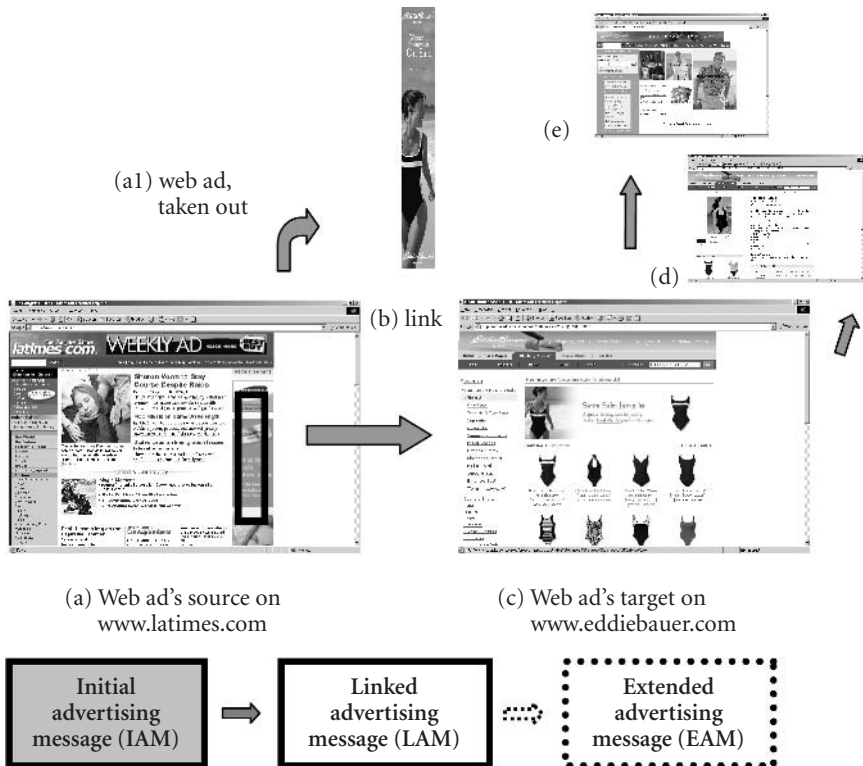


Figure 3.2 Example of a web ad as a hyperlink and parts of its advertising message



Using this example, it becomes apparent that there is a difference between the advertising message of a separated web ad and that of an ad in the linked context. The ad itself (a1) contains a limited amount of information, which I shall call the “initial advertising message” (IAM), highlighted in the gray field. A web ad’s target (c) is also a component of the online advertising message. It enlarges the initial advertising message with the information given on the linked web page. I will call this part of the advertising message “linked advertising message” (LAM), which is presented in the white field. On the web page, the user is faced with additional links which lead to further internal or external target pages and sites (d) and (e). Since all these links are directly accessible to the user, they belong to the ad’s advertising message. I will refer to this even more comprehensive message part as the “extended advertising message” (EAM),<sup>9</sup> illustrated by the white field with the dotted frame. The amount of consecutive links can be unlimited.

The web ad (a1) in Figure 3.2 offers a good deal on swimsuits for women, saying in the body copy of its initial advertising message:

- (13) Women’s swimwear  
On sale  
Shop now

It is linguistically mainly addressed to female users, referring to the product’s users and usage, i.e. *women’s swimwear*. This is graphically supported by a woman who wears a swimming costume. A “reason why” purchasing the product is given by the special offer, *on sale*. The final imperative order *shop now* is a directive for immediate action. If users activate the link (b), which connects the ad (a1) to its target (c), they arrive at the web site of EddieBauer.com. Here, the users are directly in the advertiser’s shop, where diverse models of swimwear appear, which can be selected and purchased. Apart from other internal links that lead to a more detailed description of selected swimsuits (d), there are also external links which take users, for instance, to the Japanese web site of Eddie Bauer (e).

Web ads employ different types of technical structures and graphic designs. This categorization is based on scholars such as Strauss and Frost’s (1999: 206–207), who classify web ads according to their historical development and technical improvement, from static to animated, and later to interactive ones (Figure 3.3).

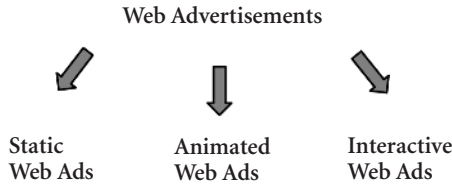


Figure 3.3 Classification of web ads

### *Web ad sizes*

Web ads can come in many different sizes. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), <http://www.iab.net>, evaluates and proposes different standard ad sizes, measured in pixels. One standard format, which is called “full banner”<sup>10</sup> size, is 468 pixels wide and 60 pixels high (Figure 3.4).<sup>11</sup>

According to AdRelevance (2000), these have been the most frequently used during the past years of online advertising, “the full banner is still the most widely used (...) ad format”. The trend has continued. The International Herald Tribune online (2003) notes that according to Nielsen NetRatings, 92% of the top traditional advertisers of the United States prefer this size. Full banners provide the most horizontal space for simplified reading and gives advertisers more room for textual or graphic information than e.g. half-size banners. In addition, following a study by the Stern Bibliothek (Bachofer 1998:75), which analyzed various aspects of web ads, the perception and recall of online ads increase with their size.

Other formats like “half banner” sizes of 234 to 60 pixels, vertical banners of 120 to 240 pixels, or so-called “buttons” of 120 to 90 pixels are also common. In 2001, the IAB recommended voluntary guidelines for additional online ad formats of larger and different sizes, such as “rectangles” (180 to 150 pixels), “square pop-ups” (150 to 150 pixels), and “skyscrapers” (e.g. 120 to 600 pixels) (see ad in Figure 3.2) etc. With 87% (IHT online 2003), skyscrapers are the second most chosen types with regard to the frequency of placements. Even if they are harder to read than horizontal banners and presumably, may be less

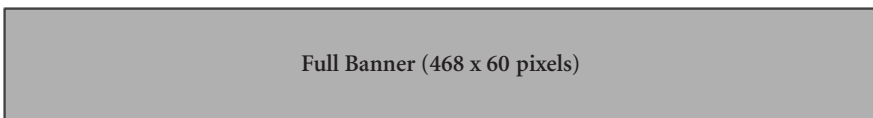


Figure 3.4 Full banner size

completely seen, unless the scroll bar is moved, their size and position offer the possibility to frame the content of the web page with their messaging.

It is important to mention that the average noting time for a web ad is 1.1 seconds (Bachofer 1998:75). Taking this into consideration, web ads must be set up as simply as possible to facilitate easy and fast comprehension.

### *Functions of web ads*

Web ads need to fulfill at least three important functions in order to be effective. First, they should attract the users' attention. When web ads try to appeal to users, they compete with other elements and contents like articles, headlines, illustrations etc. that are also placed on the web site. Thus, web ads need to distract users from the actual content of the web site. Secondly, they aim to motivate users to click. This motivation might incorporate a "reason why" or a users' benefit for activation. Thirdly, web ads should meet users' expectations. They transfer a message which contains a kind of announcement or prediction about what users may expect on the target site, the linked advertising message. With this expectation, persuaded users arrive at the connected web page.

There are different ways which attract attention and call to action, providing a reason to click-through. Language and graphics are essential to the success of web ads. For this, certain linguistic means and strategies, such as trigger words, certain motivation strategies, or activation instructions are employed. Some web ads place more emphasis on graphics, others more on language, many operate with a combination of both. In my data, I have not found any web ad which makes exclusive use of graphic elements to convey its advertising message, but many text-based ads, which underlines the importance of linguistic means in online advertising.

From the linguistic perspective, the attractiveness and effectiveness of web ads depend on the simplicity of linguistic content and the selection of words and phrases with which they captivate and motivate their audience. The following web ads (Figures 3.5–3.11) will exemplify characteristic features within their class and visualize different prioritization of language and graphics.

### 3.3.2 Static web ads

In the short history of web ads' development, static banners are considered to be the first banner types on the Web. These first-stage web ads are called static since they cannot implement animated graphics, but are fixed images. This means there is only one possible visual appearance of the web ad. Static web ads attract users' attention only through their textual information and static

graphic design. Due to the limited space, only the most necessary information can be given.

The three following static ads serve to give an idea about the different emphasis of web ad components.

The first static web ad (Figure 3.5) makes use of language and illustrative elements. It offers ringtones for mobile phones. Graphically, it is separated into three components. The left part and the section underneath are mainly text-based – except for the small illustration of a ringing mobile phone – whereas the right element is completely image-based. The illustration of the ringing mobile phone is a visual clue for the ringtones. The most relevant information for interpreting the initial advertising message of the ad is transferred by a listing of easily comprehensible, written words. They imply what users will receive, i.e. *ringtones* for brands like *Nokia, Ericsson, Motorola . . .*, and what they have to do, i.e. *click here*.

The web ad, however, does not specify either linguistically or by image, if you can only purchase ringtones, or if you can also hear them on the linked web site or when activating it. Perhaps this is a way to lure addressees to the site who are not really interested in purchasing the product, but are attracted by the possibility of hearing ringtones. The textual information is visually supported by the display of two photographic images, a generic mobile phone, and an illustration of a ringing mobile phone.

The second static web ad (Figure 3.6) is also based on textual and illustrated information.

In contrast to the previous static ad, this ad is graphically not clearly separated, but consists of an illustrated background. There are bright stars and a Santa Claus with a sack filled with gifts. The written elements are the name or



Figure 3.5 Static web ad “Tiscali” with simple language and graphic elements



Figure 3.6 Static web ad “Argos” with reduced textual information

brand of the merchandiser, *Argos*, and a direct user instruction to click, *click here*. Since there are no further written clarifications, it is presumably taken for granted that the target users know Argos as a company. In fact, Argos is a well-known company in England. The web site of Argos is an online shop where you can buy goods from furniture to toys, to games, personal care products, jewelry and more.

Further information is connoted by the image of Santa Claus. It displays the initial advertising message and what can be expected at the linked web site. Due to his implied image of giving presents and his full sack, it seems that at the linked web site, <http://www.argos.co.uk>, you can expect toys or other gifts. As a Christmas-time web ad, Santa Claus is meant to remind people of the season. Thus, decoding the message takes place through the meaning transferred by the name Argos and the graphic of Santa Claus. I suppose that due to Santa Claus, users expect some kind of online shop or gift proposals to be bought for Christmas on the connected web site, even if Argos,<sup>12</sup> as company, is not known by the user. In this case, the ad focuses crucially on the graphic transfer of information.

The directive *click here* is the only written text used in the ad. It functions as a literal instruction which tells the user to activate the ad, perhaps in order to gain more information on the target site or to solve the implicit meaning of Santa Claus – but in any case, to make a purchase.

The third solely text based static banner ad (Figure 3.7)<sup>13</sup> was the first banner on the world wide web, placed by the Internet magazine HotWired in 1994. It seems plausible that just because of its first appearance and, hence, its innovative character, this banner attracted users' attention.

The question used is set in slightly colored letters on a black background. The initial advertising message is exclusively transferred by lexical items. They are responsible for getting attention and persuading users to act, asking them (14),

- (14) Have you ever clicked your mouse right HERE?



Figure 3.7 The first banner ad

Sentence (14) makes use of various linguistic strategies that integrate their addressees communicatively in order to encourage them to act. First, it addresses their viewers directly with a question. Obviously, this must be negated by the addressees since it was the first banner on the Web, and evidently no user had ever clicked any advertising banner before. Secondly, it uses the personal pronoun *you*, and the possessive *your*. Both emphasize personal addressing and create “communicative immediacy” (Koch & Oesterreicher 1990: 12) since they imitate dialogicity as in interpersonal communication. Direct *you*-addressing is a device typically found in interpersonal communication<sup>14</sup> as a reference to the communication partner(s). Chafe (1982:46) classifies the first and second person pronouns, used as referring expressions in conversations, as the speakers’ involvement with their audience. Transferred to the ad, it involves its users in the advertising conversation. Thirdly, the question implies a description of action, i.e. how to handle the banner. That is to say, of what to do, *to click*, how to do it, by using *the mouse*, and where to execute the action, *here*. In this context, the spatial deictic expression holds an unambiguous referential meaning. *Here* is typographically marked by capitalized letters which indicate exactly the local point on the online ad to which it refers.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of the question (14), an arrow guides the user to the right-hand corner to a phrase (15) in which the banner ad even predicts the user’s reaction, by saying

(15) YOU WILL.

In white typography and capital letters for emphasis, it also makes use of the direct *you*-addressing to the single user. With this phrase, the banner foresees the users’ reaction drawing on the future tense with the auxiliary verb *will*. Pragmatically, sentence (15) motivates users indirectly to act because it implies a sort of curiosity. Remembering that no-one has ever clicked before, the fascination of what would happen after activating the banner might have been high.

From the AIDA point of view, attention is generally created by the graphic and functional innovation of the ad, confronting users with something new and unusual. It is intended to arouse the users’ curiosity and interest, and to awake the desire to experience what is behind this new technology. Pragmatically, the performative effect would be the action.

### 3.3.3 Animated web ads

Animated web ads are online images that use the graphic format GIF.<sup>16</sup> This format enables the presentation of a sequence of pictures which creates the impression of movement. The elements of animated web ads can be repetitive, changing or can stop at a certain point. Having more than one static image at their disposal, animated web ads can enlarge their advertising message by exploiting additional space. In other words, they can provide more information than static web ads.

Following the rules of attention, graphic elements like blinking or moving images generate more attention than static images. Nevertheless, even with animations, a web ad must have a strong, convincing message to be activated and to call for action at the expense of the site on which it is placed.

The animated web ad (Figure 3.8) consists of three different moving images (1), (2), (3). Once the web ad has been loaded, the images appear one after another, repetitively, in a fixed sequence. Technically, the images are rotating endlessly or, at least, as long as the web page is called up. Textually, animated web ads often transfer a coherent advertising message with a beginning and an end. The comprehension of the online ad above depends mainly on the textual elements which are supported by illustrations. The initial advertising message starts with an image (1), continues with (2) and ends with an image (3).

The web ad refers to a widely-known game that is often used by magicians who challenge their audience to find a hidden object under cups. The information (16) about what can be found is also given in the first image:

(16) The right mortgage is under one of these cups.

Thus, users can expect something under one of the five illustrated cups, as a sign for *the right mortgage*. There is not just any mortgage but the *right* one.

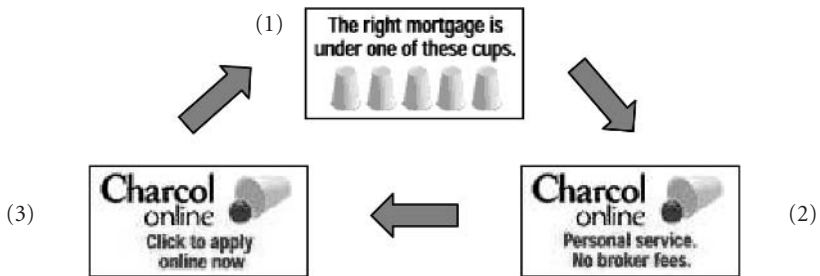


Figure 3.8 Animated web ad “Charcol”

The adjective *right* dissociates this mortgage from other rates and implies that there are also *wrong* or *improper* ones. The web ad image (2) unwraps and presents the solution in a graphic and verbal manner,

(17) Charcol online

discovering a red ball under one cup. This arbitrary sign stands for Charcol online and is synonymous for the right mortgage. Moreover, the use of this game in the initial advertising message connotes that looking for the right mortgage is an uncertain business, but picking Charcol is a safe bet. There is also a specification in the abbreviated sentences (18),

(18) Personal service.  
No broker fees.

that outline two USPs of Charcol online. These “reason whys” emphasize the users’ benefits and might work as motivating factors. *Personal service* connotes that there is someone who takes care of the clients personally. *No broker fees* is rather unusual and means that the potential client can save money. Both benefits are reasons why Charcol online is the *right mortgage*, and consequently, an indirect call to action. A direct instruction of the activation of the ad is given in (19), where the graphic design of images (2) and (3) is identical, but the textual information changed,

(19) Click to apply online now.

Linguistically, there is an explicit imperative *click* order for performing an action, even immediately by the time expression *now*. The purpose for an activation is given in the phrase, *to apply online*, which also explains what could be done at the web site, the linked advertising message, LAM. Here, interested users presumably can check whether or not it is the right mortgage.

The following web ad (Figure 3.9) also uses graphics and written language with interdependent message meaning.

The banner ad consists of several different consecutive images, I have picked five of them. It shows two cabs driving towards each other, one from the right hand side, the other from the left part of the banner ad (2), crashing into each other head-on (3). The emotional advertising strategy behind this banner ad is humor. It takes a cliché and gives it a spoof explanation which insinuates that taking a cab could be dangerous. While doing so, the first faded-in text (20) disappears (2):

(20) There’s never a cab when you need one.



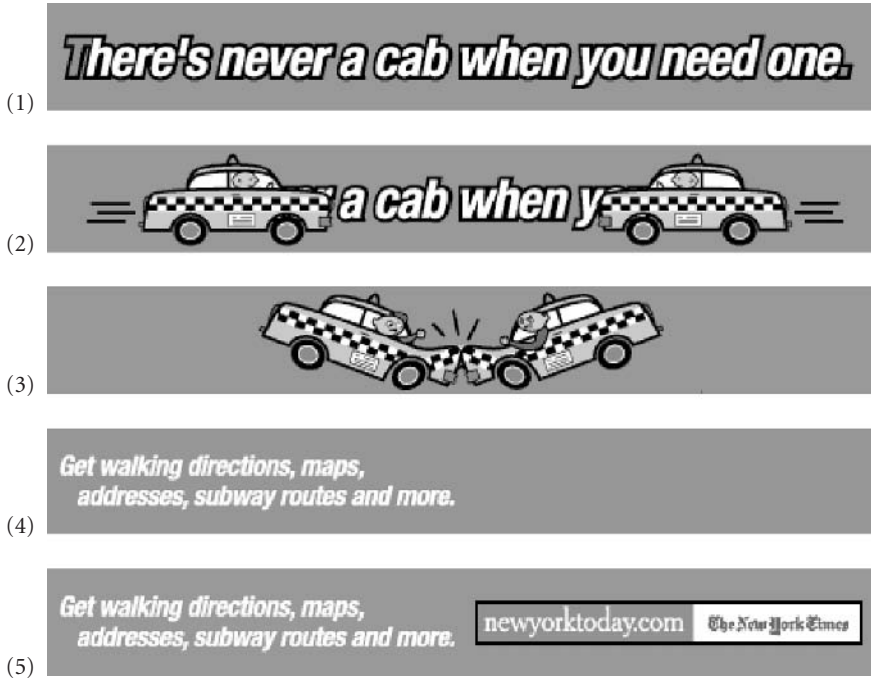


Figure 3.9 Animated web ad “The New York Times”

Linguistically, the sentence makes use of direct user addressing with the personal pronoun *you*, where the addresser complains about the continual absence of cabs. This complaint (20) is graphically emphasized by the two cabs colliding on top of the text. As a solution to the unfavorable traits of cabs, the ad proposes inquiring about alternative transportation, as expressed in the directive (21), images (4) and (5):

- (21) Get walking directions, maps, addresses, subway routes and more.  
Newyorktoday.com. The New York Times.

The web ad offers diverse maps and transportation information. For the signature of the sender, a separate image (5) is given at the end of the initial advertising message, appearing as the web address *newyorktoday.com*,<sup>17</sup> and the company, *The New York Times*.

Since static and animated web ads are activated by a mere click, I will refer to them in accordance with their trigger function as “single-click web ads”. Interactive web ads are necessarily activated by a single click, but also allow

interactivity, as outlined in the following section. I will call them “multi-click web ads.”

### 3.3.4 Interactive web ads

Different types of interactive web ads emerged in the third stage of web ad development. Almost per definition, interactive web ads seek interaction with users, but this is more than a mere click. Interactive web ads employ another communication strategy. They persuade users to click by offering an individual information search based on the users’ decision.

Interactive web ads implement elements which enable users, for instance, to type in data (Figure 3.10) or to select predetermined issues (Figure 3.11).

The following web ad (3.10) is an advertising instrument of the auction portal Ebay.com, where numerous items, services and goods from the very modern to the antique can be sold and bought online. This ad allows users to type in individually-selected keywords in the search field. Once activated, the link leads to the category or item which has been chosen. If there is no appropriate match, users arrive at a page which explains the reason for the unsuccessful or inappropriate search. The elements of written language are *Searching for...*, *Find it here!* and the activation button, *Go*. The wording *searching for* is a help device for users, explaining to them what they can do, i.e. search for items. With the three dots, the phrase symbolizes the beginning of a truncated sentence which has to be completed in the field of entry. The *Go*-button expresses an imperative call to action and initiates the search.

The next banner ad (Figure 3.11) of an insurance company allows both a free individual entry, like date of birth, and a predetermined selection with four pull-down menus, defining insurance coverage, state, tobacco use, and gender. To calculate the personal amount and appropriate insurance coverage, users are asked to specify all items personally. In the following, I will call any personal specification of information or products by the individual user “customization”. Linguistically, the banner tries to persuade its users appellatively



Figure 3.10 Interactive web ad “Ebay” with individual keyword entry

Figure 3.11 Interactive web ad “Life Insurance” with pre-selected search and individual keyword entry

by instructing them to *save* money, under the imperative condition, *Quote It*. “Saving money” is a motivation strategy (cf. Figure 3.24) which implies the benefit that users have to spend less money than usual for life insurance (22).

(22) Save 50–70% on Term Life Insurance

Graphic elements are restricted to search and type-in boxes and the separation of the two different web ad units for the interactive section and the directive for users’ benefit in the advertising message (22).

The effectiveness of web ads with pull-down menus has been analyzed by a copy testing approach at the Griffith University (Brown 2002). It was observed that users who are exposed to web ads with pull-down menus find them more appealing, novel, and persuasive than the same web ads without a pull-down menu. A reason for this might be the greater informational appeal and the customization options of pull-down menus.

The following screenshot illustrates a text-based interactive web ad integrated in the top part of a web page (Figure 3.12). It offers users precisely and very briefly the opportunity to *find* immediately any *music* and *movies* they are looking for (23).

(23) Find music and movies. Fast.

In this context, the term *fast* denotes two meanings. It can be interpreted in technical terms, referring to the short duration of search and as an indirect instruction to start the ad’s activation right away.

In order to find music and movies, the banner ad has two search fields. The first one, already opened, encloses fixed search options like *Artist*, *Title*, *Song Title*, *Record Label*, *Movie Title*, *Actor/Director*. The second search box can be used for individual entry, for typing in the corresponding information that has been selected in the first box. For example, when looking for an artist in the first box, presumably the artist’s name or some stylistic feature is typed in the second search field.

To summarize, seeking information via interactive web ads allows for directed and individual searches. With predetermined searches, advertisers can



Figure 3.12 Interactive web ad placed on a web page “Lycos”

direct users on a predefined path to certain areas; with keyword searches, users can search for data individually. Like the previous web ads, the information provided is mainly written-text based. Both methods customize a search; even if it is to a different degree, it is always more individual than the mere “single-click web ads”, i.e. static or animated web ads. For this purpose, different interactive elements are implemented like pull-down menus, search boxes or even small built-in games. They require the users’ interaction and activity. In contrast to activated static or animated web ads, interactive ads are designed to guide their activators directly to their selected section. Interactive web ads allow for different levels of interactivity<sup>18</sup> than just a click.

### *Summary static, animated, and interactive web ads*

Directed at a mass audience, static, animated, and interactive web ads have the same functions. They are aimed at distracting users from the content of the visited web site in favor of the ad. This is done with the initial advertising message. Web ads need to persuade users to activate them. A final call is often realized by an explicit or implicit user instruction to click. All web ads use graphics and written language, each to a different degree. The most relevant characteristics are summarized in the following table (3.13).

Type/criteria	Online advertising		
Carrier medium	Web site		
Advertising instruments	static web ads	animated web ads	interactive web ads
Message realization/ Media richness	written and spoken text, graphics, (sound)	written and spoken text, graphics, (sound)	written and spoken text, graphics, multimedia elements, interactive elements, (sound)
Graphic mode	static	animated	static, animated, interactive
Technical basis	digital hyperlink	digital hyperlink	digital hyperlink
Perception	low	high	low-high
Message flexibility	fixed	fixed	flexible, individualized
Level of interactivity	low	low	high
Possibility of customization	none	none	high

Figure 3.13 Characteristics of static, animated, and interactive web ads

Due to rules of attention, animated elements in web ads create more attention than static ones. They also have technically more room for the presentation of an advertising message because they consist of more than one image. Interactive web ads differ from static and animated ones in their message flexibility, i.e. users participate in message customization, which results in a higher level of interactivity.

### 3.3.5 Special types of online advertising: Pop-up ads and web ad traps

There are other types of online advertising that do not form a category on their own, but share some features of the three types of web ads classified above. This means they do not exclusively stick to one or another type. The focus will only be on two of them, pop-up windows and web ad traps. I have decided to treat them separately because of their different perception and strategies of appeal, which affect the communication process with the users. Pop-up advertisements pop open when users enter a web page. Thus programmed, it is impossible for users to avoid pop-ups on their screen. Web ad traps imitate technical instructions or help devices for users or pretend to offer interaction. These promotional hyperlinks are basically static, animated, or interactive

online advertising instruments which also provide different degrees of user interactivity.

### *Pop-up advertisements*

“Pop-up advertisements” or “pop-up windows” or “pop-ups” for short are on-line advertising instruments that jump out of the screen. A separate browser window opens automatically as soon as some particular web sites are called up. The appearance of pop-ups interrupts the users’ navigation, comparable to TV-commercials which also break up a film or a program. As such, pop-up ads have a high attention-getting potential. They leap in without any signal beforehand and thus, attract the users’ attention right away, in a positive or negative respect. Due to their technically appealing structure, they cannot be ignored. A corresponding phenomenon to banner blindness,<sup>19</sup> which could be called “pop-up blindness”, cannot therefore exist. The content, however, can be disregarded, but its appearance on the screen cannot. Pop-ups affect a reaction in any case on the part of the users.

Pop-ups are independent of fixed places on a web page and vary in size. As for all digitized elements, their size determines the downloading time and potential appeal. Technically, as hyperlinks, pop-ups can be directly activated by a click. They can offer a high degree of interactivity, i.e. they might permit a customized search with pull-down menus (Figure 3.14), a selection of features (Figure 3.15) or ask for certain information etc.



Figure 3.14 Interactive pop-up “Screensavers”

The interactive pop-up in Figure 3.14 instructs users by simple directives, repeated twice, to download screensavers:

- (24) download screensavers now!  
 DOWNLOAD FREE SCREENSAVERS

In the two typographically opposed lowercase and uppercase sentences, the two terms *free* and *now* are linguistic elements for persuading users to act. The trigger word *free*<sup>20</sup> is a motivator for saving money (cf. Figure 3.24), *now* puts some pressure on the reader to act immediately. In the lower area, an interactive pull-down menu with an activation button, *Go*, is integrated. In the selection field, the order to act (25),

- (25) browse screensavers

is entered. The ad offers individual selection with items that are already defined in the pull-down menu. It tells viewers what to do, i.e. *to browse*, which implies that there are different screensavers to choose from.

In the following web ad, advice on creating a web site is offered. The grouping of three consecutive interactive pop-up windows allows a customized search and interaction with the ad (Figure 3.15).

Users not only answer questions (26, 28) by clicking pre-selected options (27),

- (26) What is the purpose of your web site?  
 (27)  personal use  
        business use  
 (28) What do you want to do with your web site?

but can also switch back and forth with the *continue* and *back* buttons. Like many other web ads, pop-ups also address the users personally with the pro-



Figure 3.15 Grouping of interactive consecutive pop-ups with back and forth buttons

noun *you*. Once an option has been activated, users are taken to the next window where another question is asked and various alternatives for marking are offered. However, here this only creates the impression of further customization because it does not matter which item is selected; the continue-button leads to the third window anyway, which announces

(29) Based on your responses we recommend the 5-Page Web Site Package.

Therefore, sentence (29) only makes a pretence of giving an individual feedback to the users' selection.

Unlike web ads that are integrated in the web page, pop-ups can be closed immediately when the new browser window opens, even before the advertising message becomes completely visible. This, basically, is in complete contrast to traditional advertising. Television viewers are able to change TV programs, but they have no chance to stop the commercial in order to return immediately to the program. They have to wait until the commercial break has finished.<sup>21</sup>

The possibility of annoying users with pop-ups is a risk for advertisers which might result in lower response rates. Kane (2003) quotes a study taken by GartnerG2 which discovered that 78 per cent of participants found pop-ups 'very annoying', but only 49 per cent of respondents felt the same about web ads. Nevertheless, although "everyone claims to hate them" (Kane 2003), pop-ups are very effective. Kane refers to another study by AdRelevance (2003) which indicates that pop-up impressions<sup>22</sup> increased from 1.2 billion to 4.9 billion between January 2002 and September 2002. GartnerG2 assumes that these high rates result from users not knowing how to close pop-ups. GartnerG2 predicts declining rates as soon as users become familiar with these ad types.

### *Web ad traps*

**Am I missing something?** (5:10pm EST Thu Apr 26 2001)

Since when is it good advertising technique to trick or annoying users into visiting you page? I make it a point to NOT support any company that resorts to that kind of foolishness, even if they have a pdocut I want. . . I'll just go to a competitors site and get it there. Don't treat me like I'm a stupid consumer that really has a lot of money and time to waste by clicking on a floating banner that claims "You have 1 new message!"... etc. Please...let's hopw this goes away quickly. . . and in the meantime, let's support those companies that do not use such methods. – *by Whyze*

User comment on web ads, literally quoted from the original:<sup>23</sup> <http://www.geek.com/news/geeknews/2001apr/gee20010426005595.htm>; 020710



During the short time of the development of web ads, new creations have occurred which can irritate users because of their appearance. I will call these “web ad traps”. There are two different types of web ad traps. The first category is comprised of web ads which graphically imitate technological advice or applications for computers (Figures 3.17–3.20). I call them “faked application web ads” because they pretend to be computer applications, graphically, technically (if realized as pop-ups), and linguistically. Graphically, they use, for instance, typical signs of technical operations like the OK-button or small buttons for minimizing, re-establishing, and closing a window in the top right-hand corner. If users click on these, even for closing, then they are directly linked to a web site instead of the expected function being carried out. From the perspective of language use, these ads employ characteristic computer specialized vocabularies, such as *alert*, *security*, *download*. By using these features, faked application web ads are, at first, not recognizable as advertising instruments.

The second category consists of web ad traps which can be clearly identified as advertising instruments, but which seem to have certain interactive functions, like pull-down applications, games to participate in, but which do not work as such (Figures 3.21–3.23). Instead, if the users click on them intending to customize their search, they are immediately connected to the linked web page. In most cases, it is unimportant where to click because clicking means getting connected. I will call these web ad traps “faked interactive web ads”. In this case, it is not the web ad as a technical device which is faked, but its interactive elements. In fact, web ad traps are classical online ads. Figure 3.16 illustrates the classification of the two types of web ad traps.

The screenshot on page 67 (Figure 3.17) shows an integrated faked application web ad. The web ad trap is placed at the top of the page, appealing through the caution sign and the headline *Internet ALERT*. *Alert* is emphasized by capital letters. However, designed as an application, the ad camouflages its function as an advertising instrument, even though a small element to the left declares the faked application to be an ad.

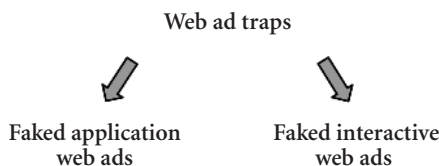


Figure 3.16 Classification of web ad traps

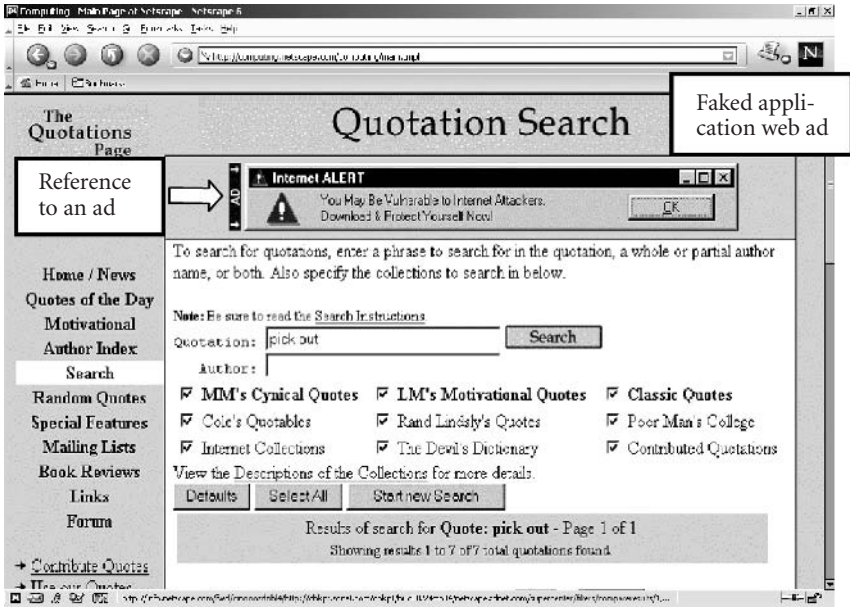


Figure 3.17 Faked application web ad integrated on a web page “Netscape”

There are two crucial points when implementing web ad traps. First, users might be annoyed when realizing that they have mistakenly activated an ad that forces them to leave the web site they initially wanted to visit. Secondly, the more users become familiar with this kind of advertising instrument, the less likely it is that they will activate such ads again.<sup>24</sup>

The strategy behind the subsequent web ad trap (Figure 3.18) seems apparent. Masked as a typical application, it creates attention linguistically by its warning and tries to persuade unsure users to follow its *message alert* (30).

- (30) Message Alert  
Your Current Connection May Be Capable of Faster Speeds.  
Download InternetBoost Now.

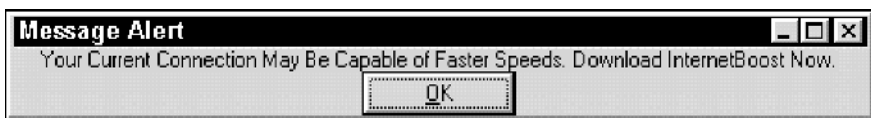


Figure 3.18 Faked application web ad “Message Alert”

Although the whole body copy (30) pragmatically is not a warning, but an indirect offer to download software, InternetBoost, for faster web surfing, the web ad strongly resembles a computer alert. Many computer users might have seen such an application. The fact that they appear while users are surfing can cause an even greater impact. Some users might consider it as a kind of indication for a computer threat. The meaning of the initial advertising message is realized by a selection of lexical items, *connection, faster speed, (...) Boost, download* which lend the text a technical appearance and might catch the eye of a surfer who is skim-reading the page. The literal meaning of the message, however, is identifiable as an advertisement for a software program.

Faked application web ads intend to unsettle users, exploiting an emotional reaction in the hope of inducing them to be interested in the product behind the ad. Some users might be tempted to activate the web ad in the hope of repairing assumed damage to the computer. The web ad trap plays on the gullibility of the uninitiated user, provoking a reflex reaction. The deictic time expression *now*, which is embedded in the final speech act, refers to a user's immediate initiation of the downloading process.

The subsequent web ad trap (3.19) follows the same principle as the previous one, but attracts even more attention as it is technically a pop-up window. The unexpected appearance of pop-ups designed as an application warning and the use of the term *current* (likewise in Figure 3.18), bring about the impression of a computer problem which has suddenly occurred. While interrupting users' surfing or reading behavior, it induces a reaction, such as the closing of the pop-up ad, a spontaneous click on it which activates the same, or a click on the web page to continue the previous activities.

Linguistically, both web ad traps (3.18, 3.19) make use of personal deixis realized by the pronoun *you* which is characteristic in face-to-face commu-



Figure 3.19 Faked application pop-up ad “Security Alert”

nication (Verschuereen 1999:20) and also creates a sense of communicative immediacy<sup>25</sup> and personal relation. Both use vocabulary such as *Internet Address, to attack* which is technically denoted in this context, but Figure 3.19 goes even further with its scare tactics (31),

- (31) Your Computer is Currently Broadcasting An  
Internet Address. With This Address, Someone  
Can Begin Attacking Your Computer!  
OK.

*To attack someone or something* is closely connected with *destruction*. This destruction is attenuated by the use of the modal verb *can*. On the one hand, it expresses the possibility of an impending computer attack. In this case, the pragmatic meaning of (31) can be paraphrased by replacing the modal with the expression ‘it is possible that’ (e.g. Groefsema 1995:54) such as in sentence (32):

- (32) It is possible that someone begins attacking your computer.

On the other hand, *can* in combination with the verb *begin*, which stresses the initiation of an action, might function as a prediction of an upcoming event. In this case, the illocutionary force (e.g. Searle 1969; Verschuereen 1999) of (31) implicates a kind of warning which requests an action on the part of the user, *your computer* (...). The same noun phrase, *your computer*, frames the advertising message with its double usage at the beginning and the end of the speech act. The creation of a personal concern can be resolved by clicking which is the intention of the indirect speech act. The OK-button confirms the implicit meaning of the ad’s advertising message to avoid computer problems by providing a predefined positive user answer. Only attentive users will recognize the small-displayed term *advertisement* in the bottom right-hand corner which refers to it as an ad. If these users still click on the OK-button, they will expect that the pop-up will connect them to the advertiser’s web site. Other users might take the information given by the faked application ad seriously. To confirm the message as noticed, they click on the OK-button and are surprised by the result.

The typographical capitalization of the first letter of all the words gives each term emphasis, although advertising English often capitalizes words or “(...) allows spelling modifications” (Crystal 2001:8), such as the spelling of the company’s name *Toys R Us*. This web ad trap (3.19) uses the same strategy as the ad before, i.e. presuming to “give support”, which is meant to work as a motivator for activation (see Figure 3.24).

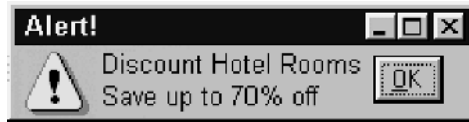


Figure 3.20 Faked application web ad “Alert!”

Figure 3.20 uses graphic elements of a computer application program with the integration of a top frame that announces *Alert!*. The only recognizable feature which dissociates it from an application and allows a web ad perception is its initial advertising message:

- (33) Discount Hotel Rooms  
Save up to 70% off.

The content of this *Alert!* web ad does not meet users’ expectations of an application. The function of the web ad as an advertisement only becomes clear when the text (33) is read. The juxtaposition of the *Alert!* web ad and its message of *discount hotel rooms* is unusual and even humorous. In this case, the importance of language for the deconstruction of the advertising message is striking. The inherent content makes it apparent as an advertisement for low-priced room rates. Users who recognize this web ad trap as advertising might comprehend the humoristic strategy of the alert that publicizes discount hotel rooms. For users who understand the web ad trap as an application, the way of interaction is primarily characterized by deceiving users and, therefore, triggering a response which they might not make after thinking about it.

Only the users’ learning process, which makes them aware of this kind of web ad, will preserve them from involuntary clicking. This raises the question of what kind of reaction this might provoke, taking into account the way of persuasion and how users, potential customers, arrive at the merchandiser’s web site. There is an inconsistency in (33) caused by the combination of the two phrases *Save up to 70%* and *Up to 70% off*. The violation of syntactic, grammatical, or orthographical rules in advertising language is not infrequent (e.g. Sauer 1998: 87).

The following traps are examples of the second category of faked interactive web ads. Mised users might click on the right arrow to open the pull-down menu on the following web ad (Figure 3.21) only to find that there is no menu at all. Moreover, this click, like any other click somewhere on the ad – will activate the web ad and will take users directly to the sponsor’s web site. The impression of selecting a fabric is created by the integrated directive (34):



Figure 3.21 Faked interactive web ad “Ben Raymond”

(34) Choose your fabric.

The verb *to choose* implies that there is a selection of items once the designed pull-down menu has been opened. However, this is merely an impression.

This is also true of the next web ad trap (Figure 3.22). With the second person pronoun, the ad uses a question (35) that addresses its readership directly in this situation:

(35) How FAST do you want your credit decision?

This speech act gives special emphasis to the term *fast* which is the only word capitalized in the question. Literally, *fast* refers to the speed for a credit decision. It might also connote a certain pressure on the user to act without delay. The instruction to act is expressed by the following directive speech act (36), introduced through the imperative verb *pick*. The same method of direct addressing, using the possessive pronoun *your*, is continued and even emphasized with capitalized letters. It denotes a customized speed that can be individually chosen:

(36) Pick YOUR Speed.

A predefined answer, as a first option for a credit decision, is already inserted in the search field, i.e. *30 seconds*. Graphically marked as a pull-down menu, users could and are led to expect that there are further speed alternatives. If users decide to use the faked interactive element, they are directly connected with the linked web page. The presumed flow of interaction is, thus, violated.

Web ad (Figure 3.23) is an animated web ad with a rotating clock hand and blinking cursor in the search field. The blinking cursor even enhances the impression of interactivity and message customization because it appears that



Figure 3.22 Faked interactive web ad “VISA”



Figure 3.23 Faked interactive web ad “Hoover’s”

an individual key search is being offered. Actually, it is also a faked interactive web ad which does not allow any individual word entry. Instead, any click on the ad connects the user to the target web site.

The use of the time limit of 30 seconds in both web ads (Figures 3.22 and 3.23) might increase the pressure on the user to act.

Web ad traps are a form of miscommunication. That is to say, when clicking on such an ad, users start an interaction process in order to get more information at the linked web site or to customize the search of information. However, the decision of activation has been made under misleading conditions. Generally, the assumption and reality do not tally in web ad traps. In terms of the Gricean “cooperative principle” (Grice 1975) web ad traps violate the “maxim of quality” by giving wrong information or by not being sincere. As a result, users might be surprised and irritated when the presumed functional element turns out to be a faked element which links them to a web site against their intention.

### 3.4 Effectiveness of online advertising

The description of the effectiveness of online advertising is divided into two parts. This distinction is useful for later analysis of linguistic means and functional aspects (AIDA) in the online advertising message. In the first part, I will focus on some cognitive issues, making a brief excursion into the psychology of perception and motivation research, reading behavior, users’ involvement, and banner blindness. I have already used some motivation methods in examples of traditional and online advertising in this and the previous chapter in order to explain users’ motives for acting. The second part shows some technical criteria which are responsible for effective web ads and measurements of online advertising.

### 3.4.1 Psychological aspects

Perception and motivation play an important role in the comprehension and deconstruction of the online advertising message. Perception covers not only visual and acoustic experiences, but also the evaluation and decoding of environmental information. This means perception is a process of experiencing objects and events (Zimbardo 1995:159). With reference to advertising, the deconstruction of an advertising message depends on the users' perception in correlation with their background knowledge. Consequently, as perception and knowledge differ from user to user, message interpretations and comprehension can differ, too. Successful advertising should try to reduce misunderstandings or multiple interpretations. One method is the "KISS-principle" meaning 'Keep it simple and stupid' (e.g. Wirth 2002: 180; Vögele 1996: 119). This principle is applicable to both pictures and language. The simpler a message is, the more likely the interpretation and understanding of its intended meaning will be. This might be even more important on the Web, where communication is very fast and competition between different elements is high.<sup>26</sup>

In the previous chapter, I have already outlined some rules of attention, referring to the appealing potential of size and color, which are generally as applicable to traditional advertising as to online advertising. A separation between background and foreground information can be perceived (Wirth 2002: 142), corresponding to the concept of motivators and filters in direct advertising. Especially on the Web, the aspect of getting attention is crucial to an ad's effectiveness because of the new reading situation. In contrast to printed texts, screen reading requires more effort by users who have to select relevant information and to separate it from less interesting issues within a very large amount of data. Users start reading if their interest has been caught by something. According to Wirth (2002: 209), reading behavior or style also depends on factors like quality of information, interest or motivation, the time readers have to surf on the Web, and personal habits. For advertising, it seems favorable to attract users' attention as soon as possible; for this, web ads use certain devices, like animations or other eye-catching elements. The more appealing ads are and the closer they are to the center of interest, the more likely they are to be read and activated.

However, the tendency towards picture-dominated messages in print ads does not seem to be as relevant for web ads. Naturally, pictures are important, but I argue that language often has a priority in the online advertising message (e.g. Figure 3.20). This might technically result from the minimized space which web ads have at their disposal. Web ads are generally much smaller than



print ads. The online advertising message must, therefore, be concrete in fewer words and must use smaller images in order to mediate the intended meaning. The intended message deconstruction of web ads is especially important. It is the trigger for activating the web ad. The initial advertising message is also responsible for creating the expectations users have when they enter the linked web page.

Users' motivations and involvement play an important role in the effectiveness of web advertising. Like perception, both differ from user to user, but there are certain general features which drive users to act and they are, therefore, often applied in advertising. The *Lexikon der Psychologie* (Städtler 1998:698) defines motivation as “*was das Verhalten bewegt oder verursacht (...)*” ‘what drives or causes behavior’. Hence, motivation is an activation of behavior. This function also applies to web ads. Motivations are associated with factors like goals, needs, wishes and intentions (Zimbardo 1995:407). In the following table (3.24), I have extracted some of the motivations from Wirth's list (2002:221) which explain users' motives for behavior.

I will use this table to explain the strategies of the AIDA concept and its linguistic realizations found in examples of online advertising throughout the book.

Motivations	Explanation of behavior / Implication – goals
Curiosity	Variety, novelty, inquisitiveness, broadening one's horizon
Contact	Building and extending relationships
Safety	Risk prevention, avoidance of failure, pain, disease
Giving support	Supporting, helping, protecting, caring
Receiving support	Being supported, directed, protected
Ease	Saving time, avoiding exertion
Order	Simplicity, comprehensibility, predictability of environment
Entertainment	Games, distraction
Gain	Earning and investing money, good bargains, accumulating wealth/ possession, saving money
Sex	Real and fantasized sexual activities
Emotions	Excitement, sensation seeking, avoidance of negative and incitement of positive emotions
Prestige	Esteem, admiration of oneself, admiration by others (real or imagined third persons)

Figure 3.24 Motivations and explanation of behavior (translation: AJ)

Users' involvement also gives an explanation for their activity. The level of involvement may well correlate with the probability of a web ad being clicked on. Zaichkowsky (1985:341) defines involvement as

a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests.

Highly involved people look actively for detailed information about the object in which they are interested and form an opinion. Their final opinion depends on relevant information about the object which has attracted the "*zentralen Wege der Beeinflussung*" 'central ways of influence' (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 140), for instance, a rational description about a product's advantages and benefits. This is also confirmed by a study by ComCult (2002) which observed that in the textual matching between web sites and web ads, the involved user is motivated to extensively process information and appreciates comprehensive and argumentative advertising messages.

In contrast, the stimulation of low-involved persons is characterized by peripheral mechanisms. Since low-involved persons are not actively interested in an object and might have only little knowledge about it, other features apart from factual information will attract their attention. Therefore, advertising tries to attract them, for instance, by emotionally appealing aspects such as trigger words, attractive pictures and eye-catching designs, innovative packaging or technically advanced realizations.

### 3.4.2 Banner blindness

Banner blindness is defined as "the tendency of web visitors to ignore banner ads, even when banners contain information visitors are actively seeking" (Marketingterms.com n.d.). According to the dictionary of Marketingterms.com, the notion derives from a study by Benway and Lane (1998): By giving their participants a specific search task (targeted searching), Benway and Lane found that this group missed a significant number of web ads.

A more recent study (Pagendarm & Schaumburg 2001) looked in a slightly different way at users' behavior with respect to the perception of web ads. The participants were divided into two groups. One group had to search for particular information, the other group did not have any specific search task, but were asked to surf aimlessly through the pages. For the first group, the results correspond to the results of the study by Benway and Lane (1998). Users followed their interests and needs instead of big and flashy graphics. The second group, however, could recall web ad information to a much higher degree.

These results match the superficial reading behavior on the Web as outlined in Section 4.5.2 on searching and selecting information. It seems, therefore, important to mention relevant information in a striking, simple, comprehensible, and appealing way.

### 3.4.3 Contextual, formal and technical aspects

Apart from psychological factors which clarify and influence the effectiveness of online advertising, technical and formal aspects contribute to this subject.

In conventional advertising, the selection of a carrier medium for print ads basically follows the structure of readership related to a defined target group (Pawlenka 1997:5). For instance, print ads that promote expensive luxury goods, like automobiles, can be placed in all media with a wealthy readership who can afford such items. These are diverse magazines which do not necessarily deal with automobiles, even though it seems plausible that a high number of target readers would be addressed in these magazines. It would make no sense to place such a product in magazines which are primarily read by readers with a lower income, even if the subject matter might seem apt. In traditional advertising, the selection of media depends on the correlation between a specific demographic target group and the nature of the products being advertised. To a certain degree, targeting (Jucker 2003:136) is also applied to web ads, but here, it is more important that they fit the contextual environment. According to Forrester Research (quoted by Webreference.com n.d.), web ads are more effective if they are closely related to the editorial context:

An internet ad is most effective when it is integrated into an environment.

One reason for this might be the way in which web users look for certain information. There are different ways of receiving the information wanted. Often users seek a specific content, using search engines which allow a keyword search in web pages and which provide the matching results as hyperlinks. For instance, a keyword search for *computers*, *IBM*, *Netscape* might lead to a web site dealing with computing (Figure 3.25).

Netscape.com places textually related web ads that match the different segments on the site. For instance, in the computing section, there are two web ads. The first one (A) offers computers, the other one (B) promotes a new browser on CD. A change of section, like, for instance, the health area, follows this principle, too. This means the content of web ads changes accordingly. In this case, a dentist web ad offers dental hygiene. From the perspective of brand awareness, the market research institute ComCult (2002) found that the



Figure 3.25 Web ads in a corresponding environment

awareness increases if web ads are placed in a corresponding editorial environment. In their online experiment,<sup>27</sup> textually matching web ads achieved a 40 per cent higher brand awareness than web ads with missing textual correlation. This means that close topic relation is a crucial factor for effective advertising. If such a placement is not feasible, the content of the advertising message will also decide a web ad's effectiveness. In a comparison of web ads with comprehensive and argument-based messages and image-based web ads with short messages and less argumentative content, ComCult (2002) found that image web ads, in a textually non-matching environment, achieved a 62 per cent higher advertising effect concerning brand awareness than argumentative web ads did. This is an additional argument for linguistic simplicity and emotional attraction.

In the following, I will list some aspects which influence the click rates of web ads. The Ad Placement Study (Doyle et al. 1997) ascertained that web ad locations affect click rates. In their study, they compared different placements of web ads and came to the conclusion that users are more likely to click on web ads which are located next to the scroll bar than on ads at the top of the page or in places on the page which are not visible before scrolling.

Above, I have already referred to the downloading time. This is also a very crucial point for the effectiveness of web ads on the fast Web. The more complex the presentation of an ad or web page, the bigger its digital size and the longer its downloading time. The downloading time is closely connected to a site's attractiveness and the number of user visits. According to a survey by Nielsen in 1999 (2000a:46) in which he compared the traffic of twenty major web sites with long (on average 19 seconds) and short (on average 8 seconds) downloading times, Nielsen came to the conclusion that the sites with less downloading time are more frequently visited than their counterparts.

Other studies, like the one conducted by Hewlett-Packard, found that downloading times of around 10 seconds "encourage users to believe that an error has occurred in the processing of their request" (Bouch et al. 2000). Downloading times of less than 10 seconds, on average 8.57 seconds, are tolerated (*ibid.*). This means users might cognitively stray from their currently intended search after approximately 10 seconds. At worst, users become impatient and presumably more likely to interrupt loading and leave the site in favor of another web site. The same is true for web ads and pop-up windows. The longer their downloading time, the more likely initially gained attention will be lost in favor of other skimmed elements. In the case of pop-ups, they might just be deleted while the user waits for loading. It goes without saying that if web sites are not downloaded completely, the web ads placed on them will also not be viewed in most cases, although it is possible to program the sequence of loading elements on the page, for instance, in favor of web ads which are then visible first.

#### 3.4.4 Measurements and evaluation

The effectiveness of online advertising can be measured and analyzed in various forms and ways. Methods of advertising evaluation and effectiveness focus on possible and actual results, both of a single advertising instrument and of a whole advertising campaign. On the large scale, evaluation starts with the advertising idea, the selection of target groups and continues to the course of advertising action and the objectives to be achieved. On a small scale, evaluations can be applied to an ad and its structural and linguistic elements, like headline, body copy, or general linguistic strategies.

Media agencies, advertisers, and companies might have their own self-serving definition and objectives of successful advertising but nevertheless, there are some factors that can provide a general guideline. I will focus on aspects like click-through rates, log-file analysis, and cookies.

### 3.4.5 Click-through rate

In conventional advertising, the profitability of a carrier medium is estimated. It is calculated by the costs of reaching one thousand persons, homes, or other audience units.<sup>28</sup> Unlike conventional advertising, the effectiveness of web ads can be measured fairly precisely by the click rates they achieve. This special feature, only feasible in online advertising, is called “CTR” and means “click-through rate”. It describes the percentage of “click-throughs” in comparison to “banner views” and illustrates the relation between “page views” and “ad clicks”. The term *click-through* commonly has the same meaning as the single notion *click* and accordingly expresses the number of users who have clicked on a web ad. For instance, a 3% CTR signifies 3% of each 1000 web ad views, or 30 visitors have activated a web ad. There are still a variety of terms used for the same concept and meaning. For instance, terms like *ad impressions* and *ad views* or *banner views* denote the same content, i.e. the number of ads that have been viewed. *Ad clicks* are synonymous with *click-throughs* or just *clicks*. “Page views” and users’ “visits” are parameters of web sites as advertising carrier media. The number of ad clicks illustrates the ad’s perception rate by users and their interest in the web ad. It functions as a verifying parameter for the AIDA formula.

### 3.4.6 Log-files and cookies

On the Internet, each user access is documented automatically on the computer or rather the server.<sup>29</sup> In online advertising, there are tools or software programs for web site analyses that quantify advertising figures by tracking a user’s path through the pages. Up to a certain degree, companies and advertisers can find out who, when, where, and how long the users visit their site. The data gained serves as a basis for further evaluations. For instance, so-called log-files record every user request. They inform about general data like the number of visits, the most popular usage time, and follow the users’ paths through the site, entry and exit page. This is data which is useful for understanding users’ navigation behavior, evaluating a favorable and unfavorable content of the web site in order to improve the effectiveness of the site or its advertising. Log-files recognize users’ identification through the computer’s IP-number<sup>30</sup> which the browser uses. Such programs can only identify computers, but not individual persons. Reasonably, the IP-address cannot represent the person(s) who use(s) the computer, even less any demographic or personal data. In addition, there

can also be different people, e.g. a computer shared by a whole family, at school etc., who use the same device and browser preferences.

The placing of cookies is another way to get more detailed information about users' activities on the site. For some special transactions like online shopping or banking, these digital identifications are placed. Cookies are small files of information which are downloaded automatically to the computer when a user is browsing particular web sites. They remember the data that has been given by the user and recognize returning users. Cookies help to create a user and usage profile because they track behavior on web pages. They can be programmed with an expiration date so that they are simply deleted after a period of time. Their acceptance can also be rejected by browser preferences. There are web sites that ask users for their permission of cookie placements. As motivation drivers, these requests are often combined with the promise of special user advantages. The collection of all this data for the creation of user profiles is very helpful information for the advertisers in their further activities and the treatment of their addressees. This data-based marketing complies with the users' increasing need for more individual addressing by the advertiser. This need is also reflected in the shift from mass media to special interest media, since in mass media, coverage waste is high for reaching certain target groups (Schürmann 1999:87).

However, in hyperspace users can take on different identities, pretending to be other persons. Thus, click-through rates, log-files, and cookies predominantly provide information about online behavior and usage, but less about the individual user. Online questionnaires might establish more about users' demographic profiles. Nevertheless, although it is certainly more accurate than traditional media, the measurement of online advertising is also lacking to some extent. The non-existence of standardization, not only in terminology, causes difficulties in interpreting and comparing data. For instance, some web ad server programs do not count web ad or page views until downloading has been completed, whereas others do.

For understandable reasons, advertisers are afraid of ad blocking software that allows advertising to be deleted. There are users who turn off graphics in their browsers or use advertising-eliminating programs like Web-washer.com. These software programs reduce the downloading time of a web site enormously because users receive only the content of the page and are not disturbed by any additional advertising messages. Browsing through pages becomes faster.

### 3.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have focused on online advertising. I have defined web ads and classified them not only according to their historical and technical appearance, but also to their communicative functions. I have used some examples to elucidate how web ads are structured, how they function and linguistically address their audience, and have shown what kind of elements they employ. In the analysis, I have begun to explain that web ads tend to use some linguistic means towards conceptual orality, such as the second person pronoun *you*, short imperative constructions, simple sentences and less abstract vocabulary etc. This aspect will be developed more explicitly later on.

Interactive web ads, or multi-click web ads, offer a high level of user integration and interactivity. They are activated by a free keyword entry or pull-down menus. Static and animated web ads are single-click web ads. From the user's perspective, the interaction between the web ad and addressee is reduced to a single click.

Web ad traps and pop-up windows are two special forms of online advertising, which share certain features that characterize web ads, but which differ in their method of getting attention and persuading users to click. I have shown that graphics can attract attention and also transfer meaning, but for the conveying of an ad's advertising message, the use of language plays a crucial role. The functions of web ads – ranging from getting attention, to calling to action and to meeting developed expectations on a linked web page – are basically accomplished by linguistic means and strategies. The transfer of meaning and explicit user instructions like *click here*, are more effectively realized through language in a very reduced space. The requirement to appeal and to make information easy to grasp in competition with other elements on the page within a very short noting time, 1.1 seconds, calls for precise and simplified language.

I have pointed out further requirements for the effectiveness of web ads, such as the rules of attention and motivation strategies which are closely connected to the users' involvement, possibilities to measure web ads' click rates and methods of tracing back the users' paths on the web site.





## CHAPTER 4

# Communication

### 4.1 Introduction

The focus of the fourth chapter is on communication patterns in traditional and online communication. It is my overall aim to show that communication on the Internet is hybrid, i.e. it makes use of traditional communication forms, but also develops its own communicative features that have not been previously used. However, the boundaries between traditional and new forms of communication are not clear-cut. For this reason, it is first necessary to define what is meant by communication before concentrating on mass and interpersonal communication in general, and in particular, on their application to traditional advertising communication.

Based on this description, the second part of this chapter explores how online communication functions, exemplifying major findings of online advertising. I will elucidate the process of online communication by establishing a communication model which describes the flow of communication. This concept of communication on the Internet is called “interactive mass communication”. The new process of communication has had some effects on the language used to communicate. To some extent, written language in online advertising can be characterized by conceptual orality.

A major part is devoted to the most essential communicative characteristics of the new digital medium. Here, my main focus will be on individualization through the medium, message construction and text properties, new abilities of interactivity and feedback in their various levels and forms, and the users’ interaction with the medium and its message conveyed.

### 4.2 Defining communication

The English term *communication* derives from the Latin noun *communicatio*, meaning ‘conversation’, ‘announcement’. Today, *communication* is also synonymously used with the words *exchange*, *contact*, *interaction*, *transfer*, etc. (e.g.

Merten et al. 1994). Its elementary meaning can be associated with a process in which some kind of information or message is exchanged between communicators. Basically, there is a sender who transfers a message to a receiver. This message transfer can be, for instance, verbal or non-verbal, oral or written, printed, electronic and digital. My focus is on digitized written communication applied to online advertising.

Currently, we are faced with various approaches and models that deal with the communication process from different perspectives (Maletzke 1998: 17f.). Studies of communication have been part of the classical rhetoric (e.g. Corbett 1990) and are also treated in disciplines like information science/cybernetics (e.g. Shannon & Weaver 1998 [1949]; Krippendorff 1994), psychology (e.g. Maletzke 1963), culture and sociology (e.g. Carey 1989; Luhmann 1996), communication and media science (e.g. McLuhan 1964; Burger 1990; Merten et al. 1994) and political propaganda and advertising (e.g. Schmidt & Spieß 1996). There are various branches of linguistics such as discourse analysis (e.g. Schiffrin 1994), communication and gender (e.g. Tannen 1991), or with a focus on computer-mediated communication (e.g. Herring 1996, 1999, 2001). Problems sometimes occur because of the use of communication in so many fields, which makes it difficult to define communication generally. Fiske (1990: 1) describes this multi-viewed situation as a “lack of agreement about the nature of communication studies”.

However, communication can be divided into two basic forms (Rusch 1998: 274): first, “mass communication”, and secondly “interpersonal” or “face-to-face communication”. The former is uni-directional, from a single sender to a mass audience, the latter describes the reciprocal interaction between individuals. The differentiation between mass and interpersonal communication has been relevant for the development of communication theories (Rusch 1998: 274). Both types of communication will be the basis for the discussion of communication on the Internet.

Due to the variety of definitions, communication can be viewed from different perspectives. The following aspects are important to the focus on online communication and advertising. First, communication is the transfer of information on the Internet, largely in written form. With regard to online advertising, web ads carry this information as their advertising message.

Secondly, online information is transferred uni-directionally as a kind of monologue and two-directionally as a kind of dialogue. In online advertising, the manner of exchanging information or the users’ feedback takes place at different stages, depending on the level of interactivity of the advertising instrument. That is to say, users’ feedback includes everything from the single

click on web ads to individual customization by pull-down menus or free keyword entry. This exchange is usually time-shifted as in e-mail communication where message production and reception are asynchronous. The activation of web ads is a reaction to the message that has been sent and, therefore, represents the user's response. This method of feedback differs from the action of purchase or non-purchase which is a main reaction to conventional advertising, such as TV-commercials or print ads. Feedback on the Internet is realized through the same communication medium, in the form of an action which exchanges explicit and implicit information. Thus, I define the click on web ads as a communicative feedback, whereas a purchase is an outside reaction to what has been communicated.

Thirdly, communication always has a certain purpose: to inform, to entertain, to persuade, or to create a relationship between the communication partners. Persuasion and relation are keywords in the communication purpose of online advertising. Like advertising in general, online advertising is also persuasive communication. It aims to convince users to click on the ad. One way of achieving this goal is to create an interactional relationship between the web ad and its addressees. The choice of linguistic means plays a major role here.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, providing information or influencing attitudes and behavior are intentions that originate from the sender to which receivers react in some way. In online advertising communication, the impact of influencing the behavior and attitudes<sup>2</sup> of others and the force of action (AIDA) are very crucial functions. Since the role of addressees has changed on the Internet, the ways and means of communication have changed, too. Communication partners are actively involved and, therefore, decide whether to give a feedback or not. It is not a case of being passively informed when the feedback possibilities consist merely of purchase reactions. This influences message production and message perception, i.e. the sender and the receiver.

Fifthly, communication can be intentional or unintentional. Both of these create a certain reaction or impression. Online advertising is always intentional communication with a certain goal and effect. Of course, this is not always achieved since not all users who find a web ad appealing will activate it.

In his "organon model"<sup>3</sup> Bühler (1999 [1934]:24) focuses on communication from a psychological point of view, emphasizing the phenomena of language use. In this sense, language is a means of communication. For Bühler, the purpose and function of language is communication. To describe communication in his organon model, he (Bühler 1999 [1934]:28) uses three constitutive factors, i.e. "symptom" (in German: "*Ausdruck*"), "symbol" (in German: "*Darstellung*"), and "signal" (in German: "*Appell*"). The "symptom" corre-

sponds to the “expressive” function of the speaker’s intention; the “symbol” refers to the “representative” function for things and topics; and the “signal” is related to an “appeal” function to influence the hearer’s behavior. This tripartite model describes the communication between the sender and receiver and includes a symbol, i.e. the object or topic of conversation. Bühler’s description of language functions will suit the investigations of communication in online advertising.

Depending on the context and necessity, communication can be observed in different ways. An emphasis can be placed on the intentions of the sender when a message is produced. The sender may have intentions regarding the way in which the message will be transferred to the receivers. A second method of viewing communication is the analysis of the components and the meaning of the message. In other words, it focuses on the linguistic and non-linguistic means used to communicate. The description of communication includes both the type of medium through which a message is transferred and the meaning of the message. The carrier medium is not only responsible for the message transfer, it also determines the mode in which information is produced. The interpretation of a message can take place on a semantic or a pragmatic level, focusing on its literal meaning or on the context and the speakers’ intentions that are mediated. Message production<sup>4</sup> and perception or construction, i.e. the encoding and decoding of a message, might have different results. Dissimilarities can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication when the message sent is not the message received, i.e. the intended meaning does not come across. In online communication, users construct a message, for example, when they download a web site or activate a hyperlink, as well as when they contact other users. Thus, various ways of constructing a message are possible.

Although there are so many perspectives to take into consideration when describing the process of communication, at least these four basic elements of the communication process, viz. the sender – medium – message – receiver, have been included by most scholars, yet with different emphasis. I will also use these four elements to describe online advertising communication. However, my emphasis will be on the production and perception of the message which is closely connected to the function of the Internet as a carrier medium and the changing roles of communicators.

### 4.3 Two basic forms of traditional communication

Traditional forms of communication can be subdivided into mass media and interpersonal communication. Both forms are found in traditional advertising communication, but also in online advertising.

#### 4.3.1 Mass media communication

Although there is no widely accepted and comprehensive theory of mass communication (Große 1998: 344), mass communication is generally characterized by one sender who principally transfers one message to a wide and anonymous audience (Rötzer 1999: 53) of dispersed individuals. Maletzke (1998: 46)<sup>5</sup> adds that mass communication is public, technically transferred by a medium, indirect and uni-directional. In other words, there is no limitation or personally defined audience. There is an interconnecting carrier medium (e.g. newspapers) which makes the message transfer possible. The reception of a message is asynchronous to its production and takes place in the absence of the sender. Mass communication is basically uni-directional, meaning that there is no direct feedback channel for audience response. Nevertheless, in terms of advertising, it is not correct to say that there is no customer feedback. An increase or decrease in sales figures is a reaction, even if this kind of response is significantly time-shifted. As stated before, this kind of feedback to the advertising message does not take place on the communicative level.

From the diachronic point of view, various models have been developed to describe the process of mass communication. At the beginning of the development of communication models in the late 1940s, Lasswell (1948: 37) defined five components which describe the process of mass communication by answering the formula,

Who says what in which channel, to whom with what effect?

In other words, the elements that are part of the communication process are a “sender” (who), a “message” (says what), a “carrier medium” (in which channel), a “recipient” (to whom), and a certain “result” achieved (with what effect). Many formal models of mass communication still basically draw on this model (Maletzke 1998: 58).

Merten et al. (1994) expand the definition of communication by including the aspects of the receivers’ perception and the cognitive conditions with which they have to decode information. This cognitive turn reflects on the addressee who is decisively responsible for message interpretation and understanding.

At the beginning of his book, Luhmann (1996:9) stresses the importance of mass media in relation to knowledge and society when he says that everything we know about our society, and even about the world we live in, is due to the mass media. Shortly afterwards, Luhmann qualifies his statement about knowledge, claiming that these mass media sources are not reliable and are even suspected of manipulation.

Maletzke (1998:86) includes some more aspects about information and knowledge. According to him, mass communication affects individuals in four areas, i.e. mass media influences our knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and emotions. A person's knowledge can be expanded by the perception of new information which can affect a person's or a group's attitudes and might influence their behavior. "*Daß Emotionen durch Aussagen von Medien beeinflusst werden, ist eine Binsenweisheit*" (Maletzke 1998:87) means that media has a strong persuasive power over its addressees.

This is similar to advertising. Often, mere information about a product is not sufficient to trigger a consumer reaction. An additional emotional appeal to their needs is, therefore, integrated in the advertising communication (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:38f.). For some exchangeable products and services information is less relevant because these are already well-known and available on a saturated market. In this case, advertising communication tries to affect the consumers' attitudes basically on the emotional level (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:42). Advertising is then closely connected with the experiences that should be realized by the product. One reason for this large quantity of homogeneous products is the launch of "me-too products" which imitate brand articles, but which are available at a lower price. In contrast to brand products, manufacturers do not invest that much money in constantly high product quality, packaging, advertising for product launches and in strategies of brand establishing, identification, and recognition, etc. The last three aspects mentioned are often accomplished by the creation of a specific brand image, i.e. certain associations, feelings and thoughts that are not only aimed at differentiating products from one another, but also at appealing to the buyers' needs. Mineral water, for instance, is a quite generic product apart from the different concentrations of minerals and carbonic acid. In addition, due to their reliable quality through governmental regulations, most mineral waters are basically exchangeable for consumers. Hence, it becomes more and more important to create a particular image or profile for experiencing a product in order to attain a certain preference for it in the consumer (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:72). Advertising, therefore, tries to attract attention and to initiate an action by presenting an additional emotional benefit (UAP). For example, mineral wa-

ters might be positioned as drinks which give the consumers special power for sportive exercises or help them to recover faster. A cookie which glorifies its ingredients, such as the extra portion of milk, might associate a release to mothers from the feeling of guilt when allowing their children sweets because the natural product milk is a healthy ingredient. For various products, advertising tries to anchor emotional images in the consumer (*ibid.*), to motivate an action, not only in means of traditional, but also of online advertising.

The use of emotionally motivating strategies in my data, such as “humor” (Figures 3.9, 3.20), “saving money” (e.g. Figures 3.11, 5.8), “play-instinct” (Figure 5.4), “curiosity” (Figures 3.7, 3.8) can be quite often recognized. Motivators of emotional stimuli as a presumed impetus for audience action are realized by images and language. In terms of web ads, linguistic means, such as the use of particular trigger words, is striking.<sup>6</sup>

There are further aspects which have to be taken into consideration when describing communication. Based on Maletzke’s definition of mass communication,<sup>7</sup> Kübler (2000: 15) modifies it with regard to current new technologies and media requirements. Kübler defines communication as the technical transmission of signs (texts, images, sound, and pictures) in an analogue or digital way, i.e. with or without an electronic data basis, private or public, decoded, anonymous, or explicit, simultaneous or time-shifted, in a spatial distance, one or two-directional to single persons, and smaller or bigger groups. Kübler mingles the characteristics of mass and interpersonal communication, incorporating new developments of the media. On this basis, he states that a separation of mass and interpersonal communication is no longer viable because the borders between opposing features are blurred. Höflich (1996: 18f.), in contrast, not only makes use of these two types of communication, but also stresses that they are not satisfactorily differentiated in research. For the current analysis, it will also be useful to differentiate between mass and interpersonal communication in order to develop, on this basis, a description of online communication.

Communication is intended by the sender, even if the intended effect is not always achieved. This is applicable to advertising, too. For online advertising, the activation of the ad is the first major goal, then perhaps the purchase, recognition, image aspects etc. In order to achieve these goals, advertising has to differ from other kinds of information. For these purposes of audience activation and differentiation, advertising not only uses emotional stimuli, but also sometimes violates common expectations. This can provoke mental contradictions, surprise, or conflicts (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 169). Benetton, for instance, was widely discussed when the company used images of war to



attract attention. As shown in the previous chapter, web ad traps also violate this contextual background.

The aspect of information overload must be considered, regarding the quantity of information provided by the mass media and the amount of knowledge which can be acquired. In the worst case, information can be too comprehensive so that addressees might be confused or even overwhelmed and perhaps lose interest. This is particularly possible on the Web when users are overloaded with information. Although the possibility of getting information quickly through the Internet is higher and the information itself is probably more up-to-date than in other mass media, web users might have problems searching for and selecting information, far more so than in other limited mass media sources. This means mass media provides a lot of information, but this does not automatically expand knowledge, especially not on the Internet where users need to be active information searchers and selectors.

The previously quoted formula by Lasswell is a “verbal version of Shannon and Weaver’s original model” (Fiske 1990:30), which is based on a mathematical theory. Shannon and Weaver (1998 [1949]) focus on linear communication from a technical point of view. They analyze the process of information transfer from machine-to-machine. For instance, the message transferred in a telephone call must be transmitted and encoded into a “signal” before it reaches its destination where it is decoded. Due to its simplicity and abstraction from the social context and semantic content, their model is applicable to all types of media communication (Kloock & Spahr 2000:10), even though its linearity has found many critics (Fiske 1990:6).

The context in which communication is discussed can be widely or narrowly interpreted. Since most formal models are still more or less based on Shannon and Weaver’s and Lasswell’s formula (e.g. Maletzke 1998:58; Fiske 1990:31), in the following abstracted model (4.1), I want to illustrate how mass media communication works. The model makes use of the four basic core components, but also includes an additional time factor to signal time-shifted and restricted response reactions (dotted arrow). It shows the uni-directional flow of mass communication from one sender (S) to a mass audience (A) with an indirect message (ME) transfer through a carrier medium (CM). For conventional advertising, this model of mass communication and the roles of constituents can also be applied. There is one sender (S), i.e. the advertising agency – usually instructed by a company or institution – which creates an advertising message (ME) for a large audience (A). This message is transferred through a certain carrier medium (CM). The single sender in mass communication is here abstracted to a single “source”, representing a team of people who

are often accountable for the message production. This one-to-many relation also shows the audience's passivity in information perception because the addressees cannot, on the whole, respond to the sender. No feedback possibilities are applicable in most cases of mass media communication. No real dialogue takes place.

In conventional advertising communication, carrier media are basically print and television media. Each medium possesses certain characteristic features and requirements, but they all are one-way communication media. They provide the same information within a certain time period to a wide audience, i.e. there is one print ad or TV-commercial addressed to a target group. Both are published in a certain print edition or during a program, with a certain number of distributions, and are available at a specific time. These carrier media are incapable of providing feedback or other interactive possibilities. The audience is, therefore, rather passive. Of course, there is the possibility of contacting the sender, but only by a different medium, for instance by a letter or telephone call. In recent times, there has been a slight tendency to observe that traditional media also integrates indirect feedback channels, e.g. URLs, telephone numbers, addresses etc. Apart from outside reactions of the market, as previously mentioned, interviews, questionnaires about television commercials or print ads can also give an insight into the effect of the advertising message. This is visualized as a time-shifted audience reaction (Figure 4.1) since it is impossible not to communicate any reaction, even though on a very time-shifted and restricted level.

Nevertheless, conventional mass advertising is conceptualized on the unidirectional flow of communication. Generally, neither direct feedback on the

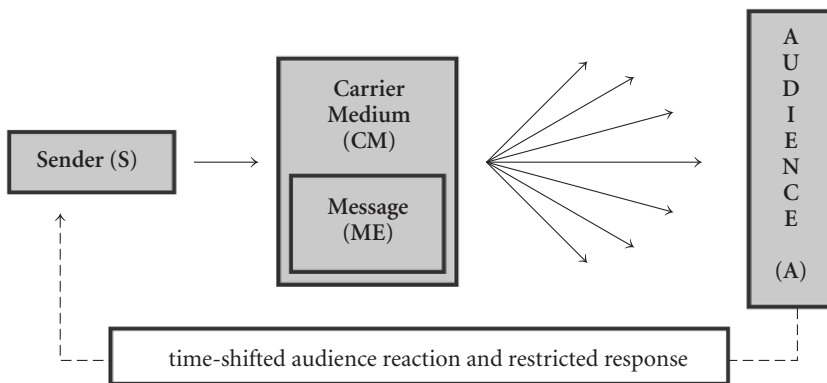


Figure 4.1 Model of mass media communication applied to traditional advertising

communicative, verbal level is possible, nor is it desired when commercials are broadcast or print ads are published.

When creating an advertising message, the sender intends to achieve certain effects. Copy writers, graphic designers, marketing advisers and the client work together to develop an advertisement. This means the sender plans the structure, the kind of transferring medium, the quantity and quality of information in advance, keeping in mind the addressed target audience. Due to the indirect flow of communication and the lack of a feedback channel, the advertiser has to be as precise as possible since any misunderstandings on the part of the audience cannot be coped with and inquiries cannot be addressed. The more a sender knows about the target groups (e.g. demographic data, behavior, media usage etc.), the easier it is to meet their requirements and the more likely it is that the intended message will be grasped and that the message will accomplish the projected effect.

The advertising message is the most important part of advertising communication. It expresses certain ideas and thoughts which should affect an audience in a particular way, perhaps changing the users' attitudes or purchasing behavior in favor of a certain product or service. For this purpose, linguistic means, as well as graphics, key visuals and illustrations are employed. The language used can be written as in print ads and/or spoken, as in television commercials. Likewise, static and moving illustrations and pictures can be employed accordingly as a means of communication. The conception of an advertising message can be analyzed in most cases according to the AIDA formula, which aims to get the addressees to act. In general, the message production depends on the selection of information, the capabilities of the chosen medium, and whether or not the intended effects can be achieved.

### 4.3.2 Interpersonal communication

“Interpersonal communication deals with communication between people, usually in face-to-face, private setting” (Littlejohn 1992: 19). Interpersonal or face-to-face communication is the reciprocal exchange of information. This means that in two-directional communication, the interactants are mutually senders and receivers, or source and target. Communication partners who reciprocally send information and receive feedback are actively involved in the communication process. A one-to-one relationship is characteristic for interpersonal communication, meaning that in most cases, two or more partners communicate with each other. It is synchronous and direct if the interaction takes place immediately between the interactants present. Basically, there is no

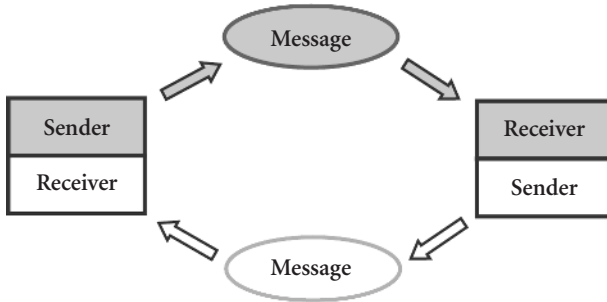


Figure 4.2 Message exchange in interpersonal communication

interrelated medium. The model above (4.2) shows the flow of mutual interpersonal communication. The gray and white elements visualize the changing roles of the communication partners in the message exchange where they become both the sender and the receiver.

Spoken language<sup>8</sup> is the primary means of interpersonal communication, but it is not the only one. There are also non-verbal means like signals, gestures, and mimicry which can be meaningful parts of a message.

As summarized in the table below (4.3), interpersonal communication differs from mass communication in several major aspects.

The more communicators are involved, the more difficult it becomes to communicate with each other. Consequently, less direct communication is feasible, and therefore, a carrier medium for the message transfer is needed. Accordingly, the time of message perception shifts from synchronous to asynchronous.

With regard to direct advertising, the model of interpersonal communication can only be applied to direct and spoken exchange, i.e. when a seller physically meets a customer as in “personal selling”. The seller and the customer interact directly with each other, using basically spoken language. In telephone marketing, the telephone is needed as a transferring medium for the message exchange. Spoken language is also used, but it lacks in direct contact and communicators do not need to be present at the same place. This and other similar cases where a medium gets involved in a spoken or written language exchange can be described as a form of “technically transferred interpersonal communication” (e.g. Bochner 1978; Höflich 1996).

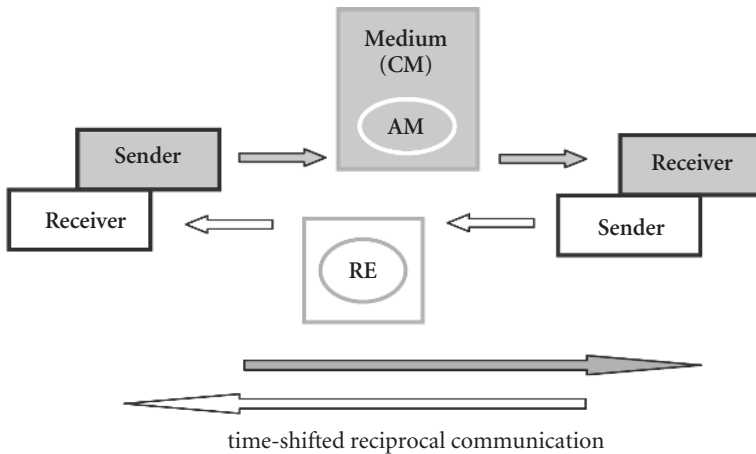
Nevertheless, and despite the use of a transferring medium, direct advertising is aimed at conveying the impression of interpersonal communication, using various strategies and linguistic means that imitate a one-to-one con-

Forms/characteristics	Mass communication	Interpersonal communication
Number of addressees	mass	individuals
Sequence of transfer	asynchronous, time-shifted	synchronous, real-time
Message transfer	indirect	direct
Spatial contact of comm. partners	absent	present
Relation S to A	one-to-many	one-to-one
Communicative feedback	generally no, but with restricted possibilities	(immediately) mutual
Message perception	passive	active
Flow of communication	uni-directional	two-directional exchange
Information access	public	private
Basic means of communication	written, spoken language, sound, (animated) graphics and pictures	spoken language, sound, gestures, mimic

Figure 4.3 Different characteristics of mass and interpersonal communication

versation. In addition, even on a written language basis, with the assistance of message-transferring media for a large audience, direct advertising still differs from conventional mass advertising in one relevant factor. Direct advertising calls for the addressees' response both linguistically and physically by providing response elements. The following model (4.4) of the communication process in direct print advertising (e.g. a direct mailing) serves to explain its similarities to interpersonal communication.

In comparison to the model of interpersonal communication (Figure 4.2), certain parallels are recognizable. There is a mutual message exchange between the sender and the receiver and a message. The sender aims to elicit feedback from the addressees by the return of answering cards or the making of telephone calls, even if this is not directly achieved because of the use of a transferring medium. Response elements are often pre-developed so that addressees need only to complete and return them. I have marked this restricted and asynchronous exchange with the shifted, horizontally pointing arrows, instead of forming a circle as in Figure 4.2, which expresses a direct, synchronous exchange. In contrast with conventional mass advertising, a feedback is possible and desired. Thus, the advertising concept in direct advertising is not only structured in another way, but also uses different means of communication.



AM = advertising message, RE = response element, CM = carrier medium

**Figure 4.4** Communication process in direct print advertising

As shown in Chapter 2 (Figures 2.10, 2.11), direct advertising employs linguistic means which create the impression of interpersonal communication. There are forms of direct addressing, such as the use of first and/or last names, personal and possessive pronouns etc. The addressing strategies of conventional mass advertising are, in contrast, more anonymous. For example, a reference to individuals by names etc. is not possible and also not intended. Instead, the creation of emotional worlds for products will be increasingly accomplished (Kroeber-Riel & Weinberg 1999: 125).

Nevertheless, this time-shifted, mutual direct advertising communication by the integration of transferring media (e.g. mailing letter, response card) for message sending and returning differs from a real-time interpersonal interaction. Furthermore, interpersonal communication is based on spoken instead of written language and requires the presence of communication partners. However, due to the conceptualized two-directional flow of communication that imitates a one-to-one realization, I would characterize the form of communication in direct mailings as interpersonal, technically transferred communication.

## 4.4 Communication on the Internet

During its comparably short history, the Internet as a new mass medium has become an established and essential communication tool. In 2001, Jucker said at the International Conference on Historical Linguistics in Melbourne that “the Internet may turn out to be just as important for mass media communication as the printing press”. Just three years later, I wonder whether we have not already passed this stage, taking into consideration how much influence the Internet already has on our communication behavior – whether in our everyday private life, or at work for business communication – not only in electronic mass communication, but also in the one-to-one exchange.

Along with this integration of the Internet, constitutive elements of the online communication process have altered the roles of communicators, providing them not only with new communicative capabilities, but also with new requirements. The field of advertising is reacting in accordance with these communicative changes. There are new types of advertising which must take new levels of interactivity into account, resulting in the new technology and hypertext structure.

### 4.4.1 A model of interactive mass communication

In online communication, a message is digitally transferred via the Internet to a large audience. The computer, as technical device, provides access to the Internet and its communication service, the world wide web. Message senders or producers can be individual persons and groups of people, and an audience can be addressed individually and as a mass. Examples of online advertising messages produced by individuals are, for instance, e-mails which campaign for a product or service, or web sites without any commercial purpose which are basically for personal usage, such as self-promotions or other presentations of personal activities like travelogues. These web sites might be privately addressed to the producer’s wide or close circle of friends and acquaintances, although other unfamiliar persons can also stumble upon the site. On a more private one-to-one or one-to-a-smaller-group level, it can, therefore, be characterized more as a way of interpersonal communication than of mass communication. Online advertising messages that are built by groups are e.g. commercial, institutional, governmental, corporate or news sites and web ads. They have in common that they generally address a larger public and, in most cases, a more anonymous audience.

Up to this point, the description of online communication is very similar to conventional mass communication. There is only one message, as in printed articles or television programs, which is produced and transferred via a medium to a smaller or larger target group. However, the Internet provides further possibilities of interpersonal-like communication. The written exchange of e-mails and communication in chat rooms comes very close to the definition of interpersonal communication, even though there is an interconnected medium needed for an information exchange. The technically transferred communication (e.g. Höflich 1996) can be an asynchronous or a synchronous interaction. From the perspective of communication, the most important factor is the reciprocal data exchange, i.e. the interaction between senders and recipients which turns both communication partners into a producer and receiver; not only by the written language exchange, but also by the activation of hyperlinks.

For instance, the form of communication in chat rooms (e.g. Runkehl et al. 1998; Beißwenger 2000) or via interaction programs such as “ICQ instant messenger”,<sup>9</sup> which is an acronym for the sentence pronounced as *I seek you*, is very close to synchronous spoken, face-to-face communication on a written level. In the sense of conceptual orality, users imitate aspects of spoken language communication on a communicative, lexical, syntactic, and grammatical level. Some forms of spoken-like language are terms of addressing, discourse and conversation markers like *you know?* or interruptions and topic changes. Acronyms like *LOL* ‘laughing out loud’ or abbreviations that exploit the pronunciation of items like *U R l8* meaning ‘you are late’<sup>10</sup> are used as often as ellipses, grammatically incorrectly written utterances and forms of punctuation (e.g. Lakoff 1982; Hughes 1996). Non-fluency features (e.g. Crystal & Davy 1969), such as incomplete utterances occur, for instance, if the users’ typing skills are too slow to follow an ongoing conversation.

In chats, other special-meaning signs like “emoticons” (also “smileys”, or “smiley faces”<sup>11</sup>) ☺, ☹ are integrated. As the term *emoticon* entails, the blend is composed by the notions *emotion* and *icon*, emoticons are a mixture of both. With the use of certain icons, particular emotions are expressed like ‘enjoyment’ and ‘pleasure’ ☺, or ‘sadness’ and ‘disapproval’ ☹. They replace extralinguistic cues, such as gestures and facial expressions used in interpersonal communication and which chats lack, due to the missing physical presence of interactants and eye-contact (Kresic 2000: 72).

Communication via e-mail is also an interaction between individual users, but it is asynchronous. This written exchange allows a greater time-shift for a response, more comprehensive messages, and is generally not aimed at being synchronous, even though a fast reply is possible. E-mails, like other means of



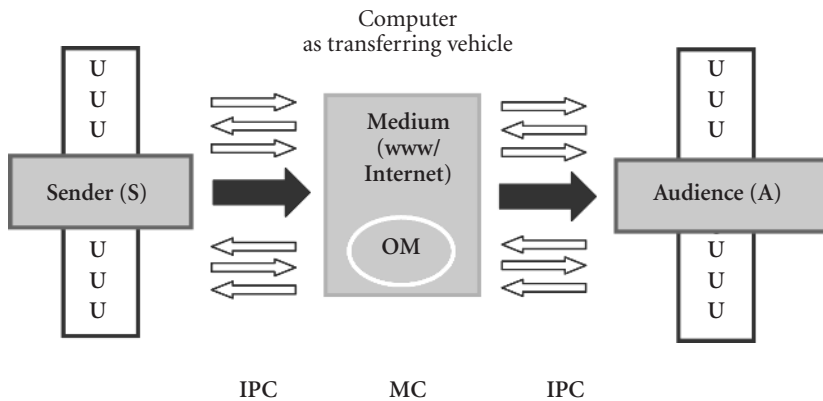
communication, can make use of different language styles. There are informal and formal e-mails which might contain acronyms, emoticons and/or abbreviated sentences etc. This usage depends on the content, the purpose and context of the message, as well as on the addressee to whom the e-mail is sent.<sup>12</sup>

The incorporation of mass and interpersonal communication in online communication, i.e. of two different forms of communication via one medium is a new phenomenon. Therefore, a new communication model is needed which explains the process of online communication and its main characteristic features (Figure 4.5).

The gray elements of the model visualize the constituents of the process of mass communication (MC). There is a message sender (S) and an audience (A). The uni-directional transfer of the online message (OM) is realized through the mass medium, the Internet. I have marked the flow of mass communication with bold black arrows.

The white elements are parts of the process of interpersonal communication (IPC). Since both communication partners can be individuals and groups, I have called them users (U) and separated them to visualize their individual communicative potential. The white, reciprocally pointing arrows visualize the two-directional flow of the message transfer, which is also carried out on the Internet.

The way information is perceived is related to the properties of the new transferring device which affects many areas of communication and linguistic



OM = Online message; U = User;  
MC = Mass communication; IPC = Interpersonal communication

Figure 4.5 Interactive mass communication on the Internet

behavior. The computer is a reading and writing, or an input and output instrument. It works with digital data that can be transferred into signs, moving images, film and video, sounds like music, spoken language, and the predominately used means of communication, viz. written language. A high-speed data transfer via the computer is feasible and this consequently facilitates a fast message exchange between users in an almost synchronous, but also asynchronous sequence. This characteristic feature is exploited for written chat and e-mail communication. The former is quasi real-time interpersonal communication, although some features are missing, e.g. interruptions by the communication partners due to the technical constructions and the written-language mode. The latter is less synchronous since message transfer and feedback takes at least a few seconds and one cannot expect the addressees' to be present when the message arrives. However, e-mails are not conceptualized to establish reciprocal real-time communication, but to permit a fast and more comprehensive exchange, at least faster than an information exchange by letter, via mail. In addition, the computer is the only device in mass media which authorizes feedback, i.e. the sending and receiving takes place through the computer or the Internet. This requires less effort for the users because they only need to activate the return key to answer an e-mail instead of bringing a letter to the post office.

In addition to illustrating the process of communication, it is necessary to discuss how communication is characterized. For this purpose, the following table (4.6) lists the most relevant features of interpersonal communication and mass communication in order to classify those attributes which are employed in interactive mass communication.

The criteria in interactive mass communication which are taken from both interpersonal communication and mass communication, such as the number of addressees, the sequence of message transfer, the relation of sender(s) to receiver(s), and the addressees' access to the message are positioned according to their affiliation. This means, for instance, interactive mass communication addresses individuals (IPC) and a mass audience (MC), likewise it is a one-to-one and a one-to-many relationship and can be private or public.

Other single features that are classified as interpersonal communication or mass communication issues are placed in the field from which they derive, i.e. a message transfer in interactive mass communication is indirect because of the use of a transferring medium and the interactants are not physically present.<sup>13</sup> These features of interactive mass communication, like the basic means of communication, match those of mass communication. Similarly, message per-

Characteristics	Interactive mass communication (IMC)	
	IPC*	MC**
Number of addressees	individuals	mass
Number of senders	INDIVIDUAL/MASS	
Sequence of transfer	synchronous	asynchronous
Message transfer	indirect	
Spatial contact comm. partners	absent	
Relation S to A	one-to-one	one-to-many
Feedback	(immediately) reciprocal	
Message perception	active	
Flow of communication	multi-directional exchange	
Access	private	public
Basic means of communication	spoken	written language, sound, (animated) images
<b>MULTIMEDIA ELEMENTS</b>		

\* IPC = Interpersonal communication; \*\* MC = Mass communication

Figure 4.6 Characteristics of interactive mass communication taken from IPC and MC

ception and feedback are active and reciprocally exchanging in interactive mass communication, but derive from interpersonal communication.

Since the number of message senders and multimedia elements as a means of communication are new characteristics which have not been employed before, I have marked them specifically with capitalization. The means of communication in interactive mass communication are basically written and, to some extent, include spoken language and multimedia elements such as animated images, short videos, and sound. Looking at the main aspects visualized, I would paraphrase online communication as ‘interactive mass communication’. It is interactive because it allows an interaction between the users and the medium, and it is mass communication since it also follows the principles and criteria of mass communication.

Up to this point, it seems as if interactive mass communication merges previously existing communicative characteristics. This is true to some extent. Online communication is, however, more than an incorporation of mass and interpersonal communication. Online communication is interactive, allowing different forms and levels of communication which are only feasible on the medium Internet. This is what web ads are based on. They not only combine characteristics of interpersonal communication and mass communication, but they also realize new forms of advertising communication. An active participation through interpersonal forms of communication exists side-

by-side with the retrieval of information that is directed to a mass audience (e.g. online newspapers). The potential of the Internet to allow communication between a sender and its mass audience, and additionally, the reciprocal interaction between the sender and receiver can be described as a “multi-way-communication”, combining the one-to-one and the one-to-many flow of messages.

With regard to language, traditional media messages have already been personalized in direct advertising by, for instance, the integration of personal names in mailings. On the Internet, based on the new text structure, technology, and data processing, the forms or levels of individualization can be expanded, and likewise, the functions and forms of communication. Since their occurrence is novel, they are potentially innovative. I will focus on these “new forms of interactive communication” in the last part of this chapter.

Moreover, the new digital medium has developed special communicative features that are impossible or unusual for traditional mass communication. Although a mass medium, the Internet offers response possibilities and an immediate information exchange. Due to the interactive potential of the Internet, most web sites integrate different elements of one-to-one communication with which an exchange of information via e-mail, chat, or other response formulas is possible.

Since the single elements of the online communication process are interrelated, components cannot be treated as absolutely independent of each other, i.e. the way information is perceived depends on the message structure which accordingly depends on the message created by the sender and the receiver.

In summary, the hybrid character of the Internet lies in the new medium’s communicative potential. As a mass medium, it facilitates a high level of individualization for a multi-way-communication. It seems unproblematic to state that within the process of online communication, new communicative requirements and possibilities necessitate a new reflection on the roles and actions of users. In addition to this, a new way of producing and receiving information takes place – which is also applicable to online advertising.

#### 4.4.2 Written interactive communication towards conceptual orality

The excursion into orality and literacy provides basic insights into the linguistic properties of web ads. I argue that written interactive communication in online advertising creates communicative immediacy with the use of some linguistic elements that show similarities to a spoken language exchange. In other words, web ads are written text types that can be characterized by their concep-

tual orality (cf. Koch & Oesterreicher 1990), i.e. in a written mode, but orally conceptualized.

Although referring to asynchronous chatgroups, Davis and Brewer (1997:2) support my assumption for electronic ads, saying that “electronic discourse is writing that very often reads as if it were being spoken”.

A lot of research about written and spoken language, which concentrates on their characteristic features, has been carried out in linguistics (e.g. Chafe 1982; Tannen 1982; Hughes 1996; Dürscheid 2002; Crystal 2003). By comparing and contrasting the two modes, scholars looked, for instance, at the distinctive use of word classes, vocabulary and aspects of syntax (e.g. O’Donnell 1974). Other approaches examined the relationship between spoken and written language and involved the process of text production, transfer, and perception. Lakoff (1982:240) argued that with technological progress “written documents are now tending to be couched in forms of imitative of the oral mode.” She referred to some linguistic devices used in written texts as markers of irony, emphasis and prosodic features. For instance, the application of quotation marks can indicate irony, and italics, as well as capitalization are signs of stress and imitate a speaker’s pitch in the spoken discourse.

Literacy and orality soon has become a large focus of analysis. Koch and Oesterreicher (1985, 1990), for instance, made a relevant and often quoted classification when defining the parameters of spoken and written language, referring to “communicative immediacy” and “communicative distance”. Based on Söll (1985:17–25), they (Koch 1999:400) considered the medial<sup>14</sup> dimension of graphic and phonic realization as dichotomous. Conceptual orality and literacy, however, were treated as a continuum (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985:6, 11) in which different types of discourse with different medial deployment could be categorized as summarized in Figure 4.7.

At their extreme ends, Koch (1999:400) exemplified (graphic) spontaneous private correspondence (C) and (phonic) spontaneous everyday conversation (A) as communicative immediacy and a (graphic) legal text (D) and a (phonic) funeral oration (B) as communicative distance.

Hence, it is not surprising that a strict categorization of features found exclusively in spoken or written communication is more theoretically based than practically true. Although spoken language is usually dialogically set up (e.g. Dürscheid 2002:29), telephone calls on answering machines are unidirectionally spoken monologues. Formal speeches, that are proclaimed by reading aloud written text, can be defined by a communicative distance in the phonic medium. Written texts that use a more colloquial register to imitate spoken language and/or social relatedness (e.g. political, commer-

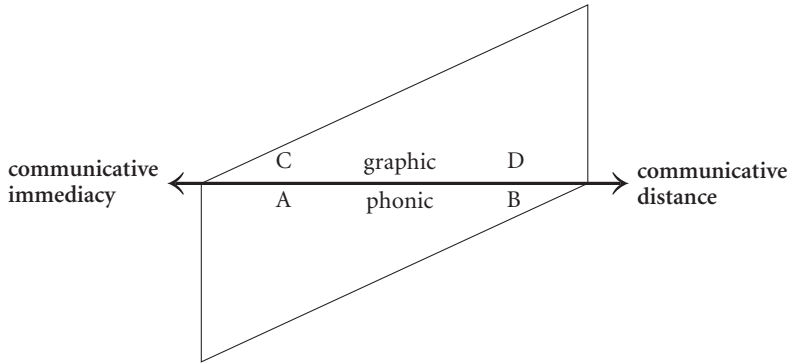


Figure 4.7 Communicative immediacy and distance (Koch 1999:400)

cial flyers, comics) are other examples for communicative immediacy in the written medium.

Especially on the Internet, a great variety of new text types that are hybrid in the above-mentioned sense, can be found and need to be classified within this continuum. In the last few years, linguists have applied this oral-written continuum and developed new approaches that describe new forms of communication, such as e-mails, newsgroups and chats (e.g. Storrer 2001; Beißwenger 2000; Dürscheid 1999). Due to the synchronicity of communicative interaction in chats, this new form has turned out to be *“eine in starker Weise konzeptionell mündlich bzw. nächsprachlich geprägte Kommunikationsform (...) ‘a communication form marked by a strong conceptual orality or immediacy’* (Beißwenger 2001:92). Beißwenger pinpoints the fact that language used in chats is fairly economical and spontaneous as in face-to-face conversation.

Based on the findings in the current study, I will argue that the language used in written web ads can be described as similar to chats; even though their message transfer is asynchronous, due to the time-lag between the text production and reception, and the interaction between the sender and addressees is not as reciprocally accomplished as in chats. Consequently, it is not the synchronous process of communication which might be in charge of conceptual orality found in written web ads. There are other reasons that offer an applicable explanation. First, for advertising, like chats, the Internet is a new communication medium for message transfer. New technical facilities turn uni-directional mass advertising into an interactive means of communication that relies on the addressees' active contribution. As a result, web ads use more direct forms of addressing for their target groups. Secondly, other new aspects,

such as small space on the limited screen, a short time of recognition (1.1 seconds according to Bachofer 1998:75), banner blindness, but also factors that are valid for advertising in general, such as highly competitive placements and a distracting context, might be the reasons for the selection of particular linguistic means. It seems that this choice is aimed at calling attention and creating communicative immediacy when instructing users to act.

The current analysis will show that web ads make use of certain linguistic means and strategies, such as vocabulary, sentence structure, forms of direct addressing and certain grammatical features that are carried from the spoken mode to written text types. There is rarely a high lexical density, complex vocabulary, long and subordinated clauses, and an explicit indication of text structure, which are properties of written language (Hughes 1996:33–34). Instead, spoken mode features such as tendencies to short and abbreviated sentences, to ellipses, coordinated clauses, personal and spatial deixis which refer directly to the situation, certain verb forms like imperatives, low lexical density, less abstract vocabulary, and grammatical mistakes (e.g. Crystal 2003; Hughes 1996; Chafe 1982,) can be observed in my data. In addition, there are markers that denote aspects of prosody and emphasis as used in spoken conversation, like intonation, loudness, pauses etc. in written communication (e.g. Lakoff 1982). Often, this emphasis is realized e.g. by capitalization (e.g. Figures 3.7, 3.22) and repetitions.

Thus, it seems reasonable to characterize web ads more in the direction of communicative immediacy than distance. In the adoption of Koch and Oesterreicher's model (Koch 1999:400), web ads (E) as a type of graphic discourse can be classified as follows (Figure 4.8).

My analysis reveals that web ads accomplish communicative immediacy linguistically by addressing the users directly via questions (e.g. Figures 3.7, 3.22, 5.4, 5.5), deictic expressions such as the first and third person pronouns, *I* and *you*, and possessive pronouns like *your* (e.g. Figures 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, 5.10, 5.11), explicit imperative instructions, such as *Click here* (e.g. Figures 3.5, 3.6) and implicit ones such as *Get (...)*, *Find (...)* in Figures 3.9, 3.10, simplifications and shortened sentences (e.g. Figures 3.5, 3.6, 5.5), to mention but a few. The use of these linguistic devices creates communicative immediacy among distant communicators; a trigger to initiate interaction – written interactive communication towards conceptual orality.

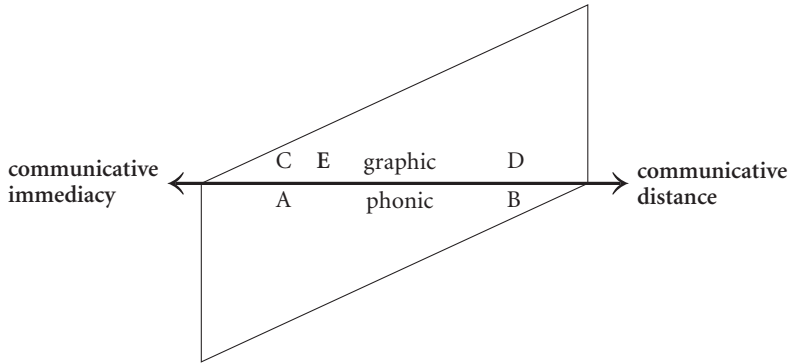


Figure 4.8 Web ads (E) positioned in terms of communicative immediacy (based on Koch 1999:400)

#### 4.5 New forms of interactive mass communication

Specific characteristics of the digital medium facilitate communicative changes, not only at the linguistic level. Large modifications that evolve with the Internet can be observed at both poles of the communication process, i.e. the message producer and the message user. Addressees are faced with roles that determine their communicative behavior, i.e. now being an active part of the message construction. Accordingly, when producing a message, former mere message senders have to take into consideration the addressees' feedback possibilities.

This new role is also denoted by the term *user*, which refers to people who do something on the Internet. The Macmillan English Dictionary (2002:1583) defines the verb *to use* as "to do something (...) in order to (...) achieve a result". By transferring this meaning to online users, a clearly active role is attributed to them. Information as well as advertising is no longer necessarily passively received, but actively used.

I will outline the new roles of senders and users, reflecting on some major new forms of communication that have been developed through Internet communication. I will concentrate on two perspectives; one refers to ways of constructing and receiving information, the other is concerned with new communicative possibilities of interaction provided by the Web. Focal points are message construction and text properties, information selection and information search, interaction and feedback, forms of individualization, and different degrees of interactivity.



#### 4.5.1 Message construction and text properties

Text structures employed on the world wide web show new forms of accessibility and usage. “Hypertexts” are characterized by their linking elements, i.e. “hyperlinks”, with which different information units are connected to construct a net. The world wide web is the biggest “hypertext net”, combining innumerable hypertexts (Storrer 1999:38–39). Hyperlinks allow the user to jump from one information unit to another linked unit. By this text structure, the world wide web provides every conceivable type of information of high complexity without any regional and temporal access restrictions. As a result of the large quantity of information, transparency is relatively low, even if navigation menus, site maps, or screen structure etc. are useful tools for structuring information.

At the same time, online information has a high rate of fluctuation, i.e. some sites, like online newspapers, are based on topicality and, therefore, they up-date information units periodically and substitute them with more recent ones. Unlike printed information, written online sources can react immediately and continuously to suddenly occurring incidents, such as reports about accidents, hijacking, kidnapping or other kinds of events. Information in online newspapers can be brought up to date as many times as required. Moreover, digital articles can be stored in archives that are easily accessible. In contrast, once an article is printed, the next article follows, in most cases, not earlier than 24 hours later.

The role of the sender in online communication changes in much the same way as the role of the receiver. Apart from the fact that in online communication a sender also becomes a message receiver, the sender has to produce a message in a way that meets the new requirements given by the new hypertext structure and the new perception and behavior of users. Texts by online authors need to attract users’ attention and keep them reading, similar to traditional media. Headlines, highlighted elements, paragraphs, and pictures etc. are structural text elements in print and online media which are employed to facilitate perception and which appeal to readers. Likewise, music, tunes or motion-pictures, to mention just a few, are attention-catchers on television, but also, to some extent, on the Web. Nevertheless, new textual online elements, i.e. the integration of hyperlinks, contrast with traditional media. Hypertexts are multi-linearly structured in contrast to printed texts. As mentioned above, users do not necessarily need to follow a predetermined linear text structure to comprehend its content. They follow their own path through information units. Hence, online journalists need to create texts with which,

on the one hand, they can bring their intended message across, but which still inform their online readership while allowing them to move to other parts.<sup>15</sup> Online reading, however, is linear as in printed text, but coherence is developed individually by the combination of selected hyperlinks.

The decision about which information unit should be programmed as a hyperlink is as important as the semantic value it mediates. With hyperlinks, authors can direct users to even a short and restricted path before they consider moving on to other links. This is what web ads are constructed for. They try to lead users onto a more or less predefined path, to one or more web pages that all belong to the merchandiser's web site.

Hyperlinks themselves generate certain expectations in the user. If these expectations are not met, users might be confused as to whether they misunderstood the meaning of the link or whether the link connotes different expectations. For instance, apart from being a hyperlink, the sign of a shopping cart on a web page creates certain user expectations with regard to its function. I will explain this by using Bühler's "organon model" of language in communication.<sup>16</sup> The intentions of the sender, for example Amazon.com,<sup>17</sup> are expressed by the "symptom". In the case of Amazon.com, a textual information *view cart* is added to the sign. Here, the shopping cart signals that users should or can go shopping at this place and that the sender is prepared to receive an order. Together with the textual information, it also denotes that users can *view* what they have already deposited into the shopping cart. The "signal" has an appealing function. It refers to the effect it has on the user. The shopping cart probably implies that users should click the sign and do their shopping in the same way as they would in real shops. However, here the shopping cart is filled in a virtual way. The mere sign is not really a user appeal or instruction sent by the signal. This is realized by the directive speech act *view cart*. The "symbol" describes the object of communication. It is meant to be a symbol for a shopping order and for a connection to the sender, e.g. a confirmation of what has been purchased. With the shopping cart as part of the navigation menu or designed as a graphic image link, users are meant to understand its function as a hyperlink.

In terms of language use and understanding, it becomes apparent that hyperlinks whose meanings are not easy to grasp will probably not be activated, whereas clearly understandable hyperlinks – e.g. in Bühler's sense – might meet the expectations aroused and are thus effective when activated.<sup>18</sup> This is particularly true of online advertising. The success of web ads strongly depends on what and how they communicate with users. The interpretation of the ini-

tial advertising message needs to meet the users' expectations so that they are satisfied with the activation of the hyperlink.

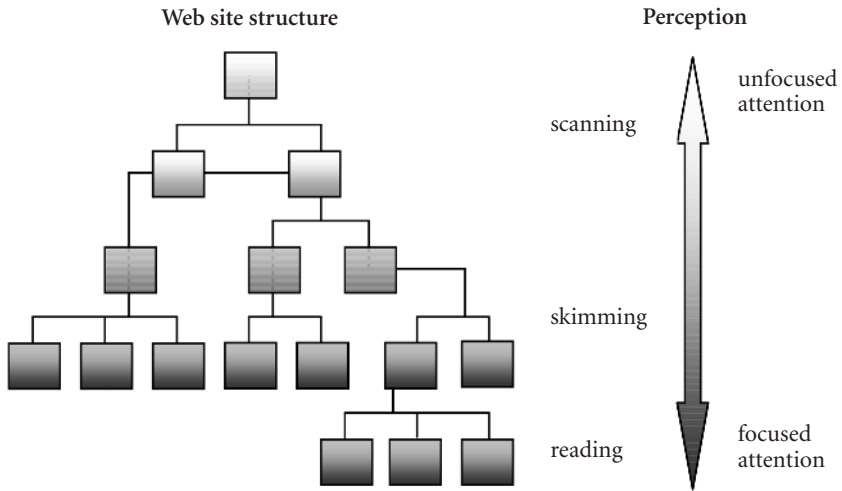
#### 4.5.2 Searching for and selecting information

When McLuhan (1967) introduced the metaphor of the *global village* as a result of electronic media, he not only referred to a closer relationship between its inhabitants due to worldwide and ubiquitous news reports and accessibility to news on the globe, but also to the fact that electronic media users are faced with a range of information at the same time.

On the Internet, users are simultaneously exposed to many kinds of information. High information density and low transparency affect the way users behave on the Web. To find the information needed, users must first perform a search, and then choose from what is offered. There are different ways of searching for information. A recent description of users' searching behavior on the Web is given by Wirth (2002:206f.). Wirth views "scanning" in relation to the users' perception abilities, i.e. the quantity of parallel information users are faced with and their attention paid to it holistically. Wirth calls this "*Schwebende Aufmerksamkeit*" 'unfocused attention' which helps users to get an overview about the high density of information presented on the Web, because when "surfing", users do not have any concrete expectations. Wirth defines a three-step process of online reading behavior. In the first stage, users roughly "scan" page information, focusing on highlighted elements like headlines or images, animations etc. The amount of information scanned is high, but the depth of information low.

The second stage, which he calls "skimming", is only achieved if the information recently scanned is relevant enough. The speed of reading decreases, the amount of information grasped increases and users start reading textual elements and smaller paragraphs.

In the third stage, "reading" starts. Information is accessed systematically, the speed of reading is reduced and attention is focused. According to Wirth (2002:207) the way of reading depends on four aspects, i.e. the quality of information, the users' interest and motivation, the time users want to spend on the Web and individual habits. Thus, the information structure in hypertexts is quite important. Information on a web site must be structured according to the users' reading behavior which ranges from scanning, to skimming and reading when the users' attention changes from unfocused into focused attention (Figure 4.9).



**Figure 4.9** Information structure on a site in relation to users' perception by Wirth (2002:209); slightly adapted

The model visualizes an increasing depth of information by the cubes getting darker, as users' reading behavior and perception on the Web changes.

This concept also applies to online advertising. The more appealing a web ad is while users are surfing the Web, the more likely they are to start skimming and reading, first its initial advertising message (IAM) and then perhaps the linked advertising message (LAM). Likewise, their attention might become more focused when the amount of information becomes more in depth. Of course, aspects like the informational and structural quality of the ad, the users' involvement and interest in its message, the time factor and the individual habits also play a major role in the activation of web ads.

We should not overlook the fact that there is also entertainment value in searching the Internet, quite apart from the mere desire for information. Web ads also employ entertaining features either programmed as simple games in which users can participate in the ad, or games which can only be watched (e.g. Figure 3.8).

Within this large quantity of information, users decide on their own which URL, which hyperlink, or which keyword to search. Users need to be actively engaged in the process of selecting information. Information is supplied with a minimum of fuss. Online writers put their information on the Web and users download and activate any information in which they are interested.

This means the direction of information transfer is initiated by the user (pull-strategy).

Although a pull-strategy seems to be a favorable method for users, enormous options and quantities of information require some selection effort by them. In order to obtain pertinent information, the users are required to make choices. In other words, on the Web users are not only free to choose, but also need to make decisions.

Beim Surfen im WWW (...) stehen permanent Entscheidungen an, etwa welchen Hyperlink man weiterverfolgt oder welchen Suchbegriff man in eine Suchmaschine eingibt. (Wirth & Schweiger 1999: 48)

While surfing on the www, there are constantly decisions to be taken about which hyperlink is to be followed up or which keyword is to be entered in a search engine. (translation: AJ)

Consulting search engines might ease the selection process. Search engines pre-select information in accordance with entered keywords. That is to say, digital data is manageable by data banks that store information about the content of web sites. Users need to determine and enter a keyword and then the search engines deliver corresponding web addresses (URL) in the form of direct clickable hyperlinks.

Nevertheless, users are asked to find a way through the Web on their own. An unintended selection, however, can easily be reversed by a simple procedure. Users only need to click the back and forth buttons of the browser. In contrast to traditional media, Wirth and Schweiger (1999: 48) claim that there is no direct selection pressure on television because a program continues without any effort on the viewers' part once it has been switched on. This further supports the concept of the users' active role on the Web. They do not only need to activate hyperlinks in order to carry on the flow of information, but also to create their own program by defining their individual path through the Web.

Users are persistently confronted with web ads. On the one hand, users are completely free to activate them or to decide not to click on them. Web users can ignore web ads or might react with banner blindness, focusing intentionally on everything except the web ads. On the other hand, users are also faced with lots of selecting decisions since web ads are part of the total information given on the site. It might be easier to ignore them as long as their advertising function is recognizable. In the case of faked application web ads,<sup>19</sup> the users' interest and motivation might be influenced by the supposed quality of information, i.e. technical support, which can lead to an unwilling ad activation. If

other web ads, whose advertising function is clear, are activated, this can be attributed to their advertising message.

The process of selecting information is not only carried out by users, but is also exercised by web site producers. For instance, the selection of information is most frequent in news reporting. In traditional and online media, journalists or editorial teams have to take a decision about what to mediate and what to leave out. This decision depends on various factors like the philosophy and political direction of the medium and subject, as well as the structure and interests of the audience. Selected information is transferred and presented by the sender to an audience, i.e. the message transfer is pushed (push-strategy). Even though print readers or television viewers can select information within articles and programs, these are restricted and still initiated and determined by the sender, in terms of quantity, quality and time. Moreover, for print media readers and television viewers, additional sources on the same medium are limited. It requires more time effort and is more restricted. Information on special topics is only available at certain times. This is why creators of online information need to concentrate more on the content and attention-getting devices which match the active role of users who retrieve data, such as the employment of appropriate and comprehensible hyperlinks. In addition to this, “usability” (Nielsen 2000a), i.e. the ease of web site handling and the simplicity of understanding, for which web site producers are responsible, is also crucial for the users’ selection processes. Thus, web sites and web ads employ “scannable text” (Nielsen 1997) like highlighted keywords, meaningful sub-headings or words, one idea per paragraph or web ad etc. in accordance with reading behavior on the Web. This is concurrent with credibility. According to a study by Nielsen (*ibid.*), the more information is structured and visualized, the more credible the sender’s message seems.

### 4.5.3 Individualization

Creating one’s own path through the hypertext net means individualizing information. Based on Jucker (2003: 136–138), I want to differentiate between two forms of “individualization”, viz. “personalization” and “customization”. Personalization takes place on the linguistic level with strategies such as personal addressing by means of personal pronouns or names, direct questions, imperatives, etc. These are very frequently found in web ads (e.g. Figures 3.18, 3.19, 3.22 etc.), but they are also used on web sites. For instance, Amazon.com welcomes its registered users personally by addressing them by their signed up name. In the following screenshot (Figure 4.10), *Anita* is the name of the per-



Figure 4.10 Personalized web site

son addressed, *Hello Anita*. Amazon.com presumes that a person called *Anita* has downloaded their site because their server has identified the IP-number of the computer through which someone (*Anita*) has been registered. Here, Amazon.com offers new books or music recommendations, *We have recommendations for you*, for further purchases (see separated box on the screenshot).

Amazon.com repeats the person's name twice. In the second reference, Amazon.com anticipates a possibly incorrect form of address by the conditional sentence *If you are not Anita* (...), which implies an excuse if this is a case of mistaken addressing. Then, the user is asked to activate the underlined *click here* hyperlink, where he/she can change registration errors, simply register, or call up his/her personal account. Amazon.com uses this strategy because a user registration depends upon the computer on which the download has been carried out and not on the person. Different people, apart from *Anita*, might have access to the same computer or *Anita* might use another computer for Internet access. In the latter case, there might be no addressing at all or users might be addressed incorrectly. Mistaken addressing is a "filter"<sup>20</sup> in advertising strategy. Filters can have some negative effect on the addressee. Users might not feel that they are being taken seriously or that they are an error of mass ad-

vertising. Incorrect and wrong name addressing might render a personalized message impersonal or make the user think that the message is intended for someone else, which would presumably lead to it being ignored. In addition, on the Web, users can be quite anonymous. The name of a person must not necessarily be the proper name nor reflect the sex of this person. In chats, for instance, people often use nicknames or other contrived names for their web identity (cf. e.g. Beißwenger 2000: 170ff.).

The term *recommendations* is underlined and functions as a text hyperlink. It connects users to another page which offers selected products. These are chosen by Amazon.com with regard to the customers' profile, i.e. their purchasing behavior, former purchases, or pages and sections previously visited which reflect the users' interests. Customer profiles can be compiled by cookie information and log-file analyses.<sup>21</sup> The former store relevant user data on the computer, the latter track the users' paths through the site.

Offers, such as the composition of special products (e.g. Figure 3.11), or any behavior that takes into consideration the needs and wants of an individual person is called "customization". Customization "(...) refers to possibilities for the audience to create a media product of their choice" (Jucker 2003: 137). There are, for instance, online newspapers which can be customized by users according to their interests. Users select only those articles, sections, or even whole newspapers with which they want to be brought up to date. One user might choose information about sports and the stock exchange, another about news, sports, entertainment and so on. As a result, users create their own individual information source, while the sender's role is merely to provide certain information. Crayon.net,<sup>22</sup> *CreAte Your Own Newspaper*, for instance, offers users the chance to customize their own daily type of news, even in a newspaper-like format that has been pre-chosen by the user. To receive their free customized electronic newspaper, users have to register,<sup>23</sup> select news items, and design their own newspaper.

The following screenshot (Figure 4.11) offers users the opportunity to customize content by the option given in (37):

- (37) Customize Your Content  
 Personalize this Page  
 Tell us which topics interest you, and  
 we will deliver related material to your  
 home page

Again, the shift in the roles of sender and receiver in terms of their communicative power is apparent. The sender asks the user what material to deliver





tional mass media where feedback is limited and, if conducted, always time-shifted by the use of an additional medium. However, there are also some further characteristic effects on the online communication process. First, the Internet as an interactive mass communication platform is not only a sending medium, but also focuses clearly on feedback options. Secondly, the Internet audience can interact with each other, via services like e-mail and chat and also e.g. via online auctions (e.g. <http://www.ebay.com>, <http://www.amazon.com>). These portals offer to sell and purchase any kind of products among users – companies and private persons. Online communication introduces new potential for interaction and also determines the possibility of giving feedback.

Interaction is the communication between the message sender(s) and the message receiver(s). Interaction is given, for instance, in chats and e-mails, but also in direct mailings and letters to the editor. Through the digital transfer of data, interaction on the Internet is faster than in traditional media, provided that there is any feedback at all. Internet users have the possibility to interact more or less at the time when they receive an online message. For instance, they only need to press the contact button and write an e-mail response. During online chats, the response proceeds in a synchronous way. The answer to an e-mail is a time-shifted exchange, whereas interaction in traditional media proceeds in a noticeably asynchronous way. The time increasingly needed for interaction and feedback in relation to the carrier medium is visualized in the following graphic (4.12).<sup>24</sup>

Feedback is one part of an interaction. As a way of communication, it has different meanings and functions. The term *feedback* describes a communicative action initiated by the sender in order to achieve a specific reaction from the receiver. Feedback which has already been given can, in turn, cause a response. My definition is based on Jucker's (2003) and Storrer's (1999) proposals. In Jucker's words (2003:139), "(...) media producers try to access the interests and the reading, viewing or listening patterns of their audiences". In a more abstract sense, feedback is a reaction to what has been communicated, or, in other words, is "information received in response to something done"

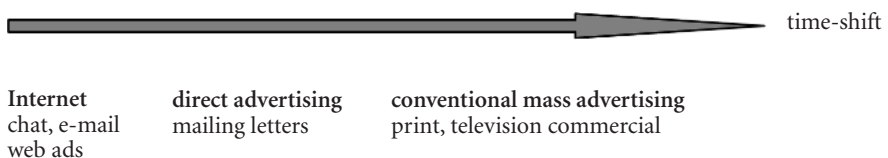


Figure 4.12 Interaction and feedback in relation to time

(Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus 2002:285). I will use the term *feedback* synonymously with *response*. In online advertising, feedback is an action, i.e. when users click on the web ads. Then, feedback is a reaction to the message created by the message producer. However, defining feedback in this way is somewhat problematic since the sender never knows the reason why a web ad has been activated. Nevertheless, the possibility that feedback can be given depends on the level of interactivity provided by a medium on its own or as facilitated by the producer.

#### 4.5.5 Interactivity

“Interactivity” describes communication with a medium (Jucker 2003; Storrer 1999). This can be selective reading, a hyperlink activation, entering keywords in search engines or search boxes, selecting items in pull-down menus, or any other form of active user participation. In other words, any action on the Web is interactivity, even if it is to a varying extent. Interactivity allows users to intervene in the communication process and to change or to treat what has been communicated to them (Esposito 2000:286).

In terms of online advertising, the activation of a web ad is a form of interactivity. Interactivity can be enlarged upon after arriving at the linked page where further links can be activated. There are different levels of interactivity on the Web. I will exemplify the users’ interactivity with a medium, or rather with web ads (Figure 4.13) by the online shop seller Amazon.com. As already mentioned, Amazon.com offers a variety of goods, like books, music, videos, and games or other electronic items such as hardware and software products, but also different household articles for purchase on the Internet.

The initial advertising message of this interactive web ad consists graphically of two parts, which are reduced in design. On the left side, the logo, Amazon.com, can be identified as the signature of the advertising company.

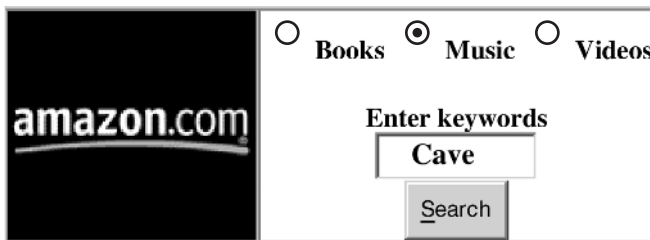


Figure 4.13 Interactive web ad “Amazon”

On the right side, the web ad contains two different elements of interactive search. The first one consists of three predetermined options to tick, i.e. *Books*, *Music*, *Videos*. The second one is a field for free keyword entry. Linguistically, the message is built with simple lexical items that are listed in relation to the corresponding technical function. Users are expected to make their choice by agreeing on a section and by typing in a keyword. The web ad connects users, even if they only pick out one of the selection alternatives or just activate the search button of the already predefined section. Users, however, can increase the specificity of their search. This is what I did (see Figure 4.13). I selected the section *Music* and entered the last name of an artist, *Cave*. Then, I activated the search-field and arrived at the ad's target web page (Figure 4.14), where my search criteria were matched.<sup>25</sup>

The user's selection criteria reappear on the linked page (Figure 4.14) as the linked advertising message (LAM). The section *Music* is highlighted in the navigation menu and entered in a search field saying *Popular Music*. Next to this, the chosen keyword, the artist's name *Cave*, is also inserted. These repetitions create lexical cohesion.<sup>26</sup> In the middle of the web page, the frame 71



Figure 4.14 Web site with search results received by the activation of an interactive web ad

*total matches for Cave*, announces the number of subsequent search results. Subsumed under the rating headline *Most popular matches for Cave*, already listed hyperlinks can be directly activated, such as the underlined text hyperlink of a CD title, *No More Shall We Part*. The activation of one or more of the result links takes users to another page. They create an extended advertising message (EAM), which becomes less under the sender's control as more hyperlinks are activated by the users. Moreover, the page offers other hyperlinks which are not sense related to *Music* and *Cave*, e.g. different links in the main navigation menu. Hence, users create their own path through the site or their own advertising message.

This example of an interactive web ad shows how users can give feedback to an advertising instrument. It additionally outlines two different levels of interactivity. First, users can choose between particular options which are predetermined by the producer of the web ad, as in Figure 4.13. Other alternative forms of predetermined option-search include pull-down menus (see e.g. Figures 3.11, 3.12). Secondly, on a higher level of interactivity, the users are free to enter any keyword. This form of interactive self-selection is more individualized than a predetermined search. It also means the higher the level of interactivity, the more customized a search is and the more individual a user's behavior or path. This means that the message producers have less influence on the users with regard to their behavior on the Web.

Apart from this example, users also give feedback to single-click web ads, i.e. static and animated web ads, although their potential for interactivity is relatively low. With reference to individualization of the initial advertising message (IAM), the interaction consists only of a click. Hence, it is not possible for users to customize their search. Instead, they have to rely on the message transferred by the web ad and hope that their expectations will be met on the linked web page. In this case, it is the sender who determines the users' arriving point. Thus, a mere click on hyperlinks for their activation is the lowest level of interactivity and the first unit of a predefined path.

The following model (4.15) visualizes the effect of increasing interactivity at the initial advertising message, as exemplified by web ads activated by a single-click, option-selection, and keyword entry. It describes the senders' and users' power to determine the target of a search, i.e. the linked advertising message (LAM).<sup>27</sup>

With an increased level of interactivity, individualization rises, and consequently, the level of customization also grows. This means that the users' arrival at the connected target web site is more specific. On the other hand, less interactivity means less user specification and more influence on the part of

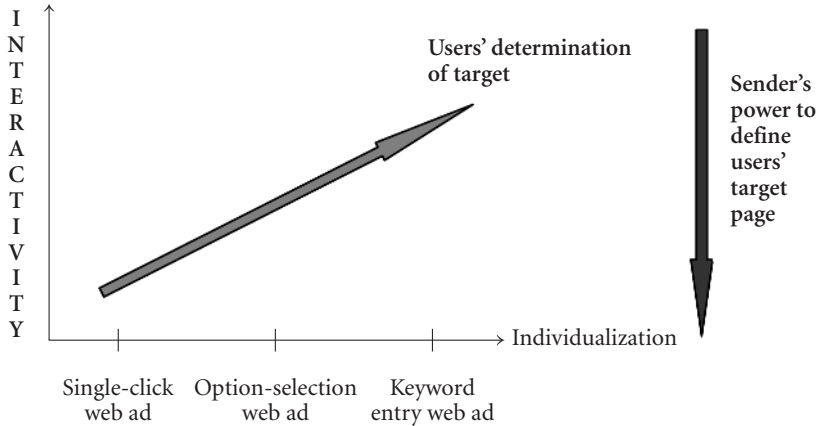


Figure 4.15 Effects of interactivity

the sender concerning the arrival at a connected page. In this case, the users' decisions depend mainly on the attractiveness of the initial advertising message (IAM) and the message interpretation. Nevertheless, although different degrees of interactivity define different types of feedback, it is still the producer of the advertising message who controls the potential of user customization. A connection to a web page must be programmed for every keyword search – even if there is an apology for not being able to match results.

Interactivity is not only conducted in online advertising. The model applies to other hyperlinks, as well as to multi-linked web sites or search engines. The main function of a hyperlink is to be clicked on in order to bring its activator to a certain web page. On a web site, users are faced with various hyperlink options such as text- and image links or links in the navigation menu. The interactivity with the medium, the web site, or the elements placed on it increases because users' decision power about what to activate increases, too. Once a search engine provides users with the search results for their keyword entry, they have the option of activating numerous URL-links. To a certain extent, it is relevant that the more search options users have, the higher the interactivity and the higher the probability that users will find what they are searching for. Beyond an individual's capacity for grasping information, too many options and search results can cause the often quoted "lost in hyperspace". However, in the long run, due to the possibilities of interactivity in a hypertext, users should be able to find their intended target. Free keyword entry on interactive web ads is the fastest way to reach an individual target, whereas single consec-

utive clicks might need some further link-activation effort before the final and intended target is arrived at.

#### 4.6 Summary

This chapter has focused on the process and functions of online advertising communication. It has shown that different features of two basic forms of communication, i.e. mass and interpersonal communication, are combined on the Internet. I called this new form of communication “interactive mass communication” and have developed a new model which describes online communication, accordingly.

Interactive mass communication, however, is not only a mere conglomeration of two forms, but also establishes new forms of communication. Although the boundaries between traditional and new forms of communication are still blurred and new ones are partially based on the old forms, there are some important features which show how the two forms differ from each other. Interaction, feedback, and interactivity – all conducted via a single medium – are relevant new components which also affect the roles of both communication partners. The shift of communicative power from formerly passive receivers to active interactants is clearly identifiable.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the linguistic means and strategies that are used in online communication, in particular in web ads.

## CHAPTER 5

# The language of web ads

### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the process of interactive communication and focused on new forms of communication resulting from the Web.

In this chapter, the focal point will be on the language used in online advertising. Web ads employ particular linguistic means in order to attract attention and to persuade users to click. For this reason, I intend to show how persuasively communication in web advertising is realized by looking at the syntactic, lexical and pragmatic language level, as well as emotionally motivating strategies. I will not give equal attention to these linguistic levels since some aspects are more important and also more frequently used than others. Since web ads combine various linguistic methods in their advertising message, it seems impossible to classify the ads as such. I will rather focus on the linguistic means and strategies they use.

Before concentrating on the linguistic analysis, I want to have a look at the concept of persuasion in advertising and at certain linguistic similarities which can be found in both traditional and online advertising. Nevertheless, there are particular means which are more frequently used in online advertising and others which have been recently established, adopting the requirements of interactive advertising instruments.

Although online advertising messages are written-language based, speech acts make use of elements that are typically found in spoken language. These employ, for instance, simplified, abbreviated language, forms of personal user addressing such as questions, imperatives, personal pronouns and deictic terms to carry out their functions. This conceptual orality, often expressed by directives, creates a communicative immediacy, imitating interpersonal communication, which is technically transferred. There are other frequently found linguistic means that are aimed at persuading users on an emotional level, such as different motivation strategies, trigger words, and linguistic simplifications. Some of them might cause an increased pragmatic impact on the addressees.



## 5.2 The concept of persuasion

A lot of empirical research has been done in the field of persuasion by many scholars (e.g. Jowett & O'Donnell 1999; O'Keefe 2002) from different perspectives or disciplines.

Persuasion was already part of antique rhetoric, where the system of rhetoric was developed by Cicero, Aristoteles, and Quintilian (Ueding 2000:8). Three forms of speech were differentiated, i.e. judicial speech (*genus indiciale*), political speech (*genus deliberativum*), and ceremonial speech (*genus demonstrativum*). They all have in common the fact that they are decision and action-orientated. Their conception is aimed at the addressed audience. Topic and hypothesis, message structure, the intentional use of language, catchiness of speech through emotionally visualized language, and the presentation of the speech are major steps in its production (ibid.).

These basic steps are still valid for today's communication processes, such as in the political field, propaganda, business meetings, everyday conversation and advertising. O'Donnell and Kable (1982:9) provide a comprehensive definition of persuasion. They explain that persuasion is

a complex, continuing, interactive process in which a sender and a receiver are linked by symbols, verbal and nonverbal, through which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behaviour because the persuadee has had perceptions enlarged or changed.

This definition also applies to online advertising when considering the main aspects used, i.e. "interactivity", "means of persuasion", "influence", "change of attitude". I will add some further important requirements, namely "successful" and "purposeful" (O'Keefe 2002:3) persuasion and the addressees' "involvement".

Since advertising on the Internet is interactive, it also involves users actively in the communication process. The advertising message has a specified content which is realized by a specific language use and presented to a determined audience. Among other things, it is aimed at convincing addressees and remaining in the customers' mind. Message producers try to convince their communication partners, just as politicians try to persuade party members, opponents (e.g. Janoschka 1995), and the public, and advertisers try to achieve a shift of attitudes in their target groups and motivate them to act accordingly.

Online advertising is purposeful persuasion. Web ads are intended to reach their goals by achieving the users' activation. Thus, they need to catch the users' attention and interest in order to direct them to the merchandiser's web site.

For this purpose, web ads can employ non-linguistic means, like images and sometimes sound, and linguistic means in order to be the most effective.

According to O’Keefe’s (2002:3) concept of persuasion, which is based on the communicative issues, persuasion is a successful attempt to influence someone. The term “successful” is particularly important since unsuccessful persuasion is impossible. The process of persuasion presupposes that an influence has taken place. To exemplify this, O’Keefe uses the following sentence: “*I persuaded him but failed*”. This sentence is pragmatically incorrect because either I persuade someone, which means ‘I managed to get a person to do something or to change an attitude’ or ‘I fail to persuade someone’, but then no persuasion has taken place. If web ads can persuade users to click, they are successful or effective web ads.<sup>1</sup>

Web ads might also be considered to be successful even if users do not click on them. Users may be attracted by the offer made by a web ad, but they do not pursue it further for various reasons. For instance, users might not have enough money for a fantastically cheap car or no time for the vacation of a lifetime. Some users might not belong to the target group of the web ad. In any case, positive, conscious or subconscious, recognition of web ads means users will have been familiarized with at least the advertiser’s name, brand, or products. This is also an important aim of advertising. The persuasive strategy has worked, even if the target audience has not pledged to make a purchase or to click the web ad at this time. In this case, the effectiveness of a web ad is not measurable in terms of click-through rates.

Persuasion in advertising depends on the users’ involvement and the quality of information (Brown 2002). As outlined in Chapter 3, pull-down menus enhance information quality. This makes web ads more attentive and persuasive than mere single-click web ads with less information and results in a higher response (*ibid.*). The greater the users’ involvement with a product or brand and the better the information is, the more likely it is that users will activate web ads.

Certain rhetorical figures like repetitions, questions, alliterations, ellipses, exclamations etc. (e.g. Janich 2001: 141ff.) are means of persuasion. They can often be found to have a particular impact on users in advertising.

To summarize, persuasion is an intentional communication process in which a persuader communicates with a persuadee in order to influence him or her. Since advertising pursues a certain goal, it is as intentional as persuasion. Attracting the users’ interest and calling them to action (AIDA) is accomplished by various methods. In the following, I want to use the term *persuasive* in the

sense of ‘convincing’, ‘influential’, but not in the rather negatively connoted expression of ‘manipulative’.

### 5.3 The language of advertising

Language in advertising is persistently subject to change and adoption, reacting to changes and developments in society, cultures, new requirements of target groups, product innovations, or inventions of new media etc. For this reason, typical characteristics and tendencies of language use can be described, but rarely categorized stylistically as one text type which is used exclusively in advertising. In addition, advertising messages or texts are seldom constituted by one distinctive attribute or function (e.g. Crystal 2001; Janich 2001:73ff.). Therefore, in the following I will refer to some descriptive categories used in advertising texts rather than categorize these texts.

Even if the language of English advertising is part of the general English language (Sauer 1998:87), there are some general features which characterize the language of advertising. This chapter aims to show that online and traditional advertising share some of the linguistic means frequently found in advertising. This does not seem very astonishing, since both types of advertising principally follow the same concepts (e.g. AIDA, audience persuasion) in order to fulfill their functions in their basic interpretation. Nevertheless, they differ extremely with regard to focus and extent of usage. The study will provide evidence that online advertising establishes new linguistic means and strategies of persuasive advertising, adopting the new forms of communication on the Internet.

The language of advertising is commonly a language of appeal. With regard to this text-function, Brinker (1997: 109) categorizes advertising according to its basic communicative functions as “appellative”, which he paraphrases as follows:

Ich (der Emittent) fordere dich (den Rezipienten) auf, die Einstellung (Meinung) X zu übernehmen/die Handlung X zu vollziehen.

I (the sender) instruct you (the receiver) to adopt the attitude (opinion) X/to carry out the action X. (translation: AJ)

According to Brinker (1997:110–111), in advertising texts, instructions to act are seldom accomplished by explicit performatives. Instead, appellative language is often realized by imperatives which also instruct addressees to do

something. Other grammatical forms with appealing functions are, for example, interrogative sentences and infinitive constructions (*ibid.*).

Web ads very frequently instruct users, for instance, to *click here*. In online advertising, the imperative is an indicator of direct user addressing. As a pragmatic phenomenon, these directive speech acts are not strict commands, which would be a too offensive addressing in the advertising context. Instead, they function as a kind of polite request with a reduced impact on interactants. The illocutionary force of the advertising message gives the users some space to act. In their implicit communication, it is initially the advertiser who wants something from the user and not vice versa. Nevertheless, the use of imperatives is still far more forceful, more striking, and often shorter than a politely worded request or an indirect speech act that avoids imposing on the other. Online advertising needs to initiate an action, and for this reason, imperatives are employed. According to DoubleClick.com (quoted by Webreference.com n.d.), the instruction *click here* tends to increase click rates by 15 per cent.

Advertising violates some common language rules on the grammatical, lexical, or syntactical level to achieve particular effects and meanings. For instance, the web ad analyzed in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3.20), here Figure 5.1, offers cheaper hotel rooms with a syntactically incorrect sentence, but without violating its meaning.

In some cases, it might have the effect of appearing more spoken which can enhance the impression of personal interaction. According to Goddard (2002:31), written advertisements “often use aspects of spoken language in order to achieve their effects”.<sup>2</sup> Unconventional use of language and wrong spellings are means of advertising in general. They are applied in order to attract attention (Leech 1966:27).

Further syntactical means are ellipses (Cook 2001:171) where, for instance, verbs are left out, similar to headlines in news reporting (Sauer 1998:91). Abbreviated language is very common in advertising to make information short and easy to grasp, although sometimes, this can lead to misinterpretations.

Advertising uses rhetorical means and figures like alliterations, anaphor, repetitions of letters, words, fragments of sentences or whole sentences, or

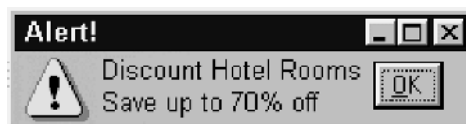


Figure 5.1 Faked application web ad “Alert!”

irony (e.g. Sauer 1998:93). It creates new, artificial words like in a printed advertisement by Heinz, *Make today a Heinz Souperday* (Holme 1982:250). The pun *souperday* is built by the blend derived from the terms *soup* and *super* combined with the noun *day*. Puns are examples of winning strategies of humor.

Persuasion can be accomplished through the linguistic means employed and through illustrations. Often, a combination of both is applied in advertising. There are, for instance, linguistic forms of direct personal audience addressing, *you*-addressing, names, personal and possessive pronouns. They create a more personal style (Leech 1966:80). These forms of direct addressing are frequently used in online advertising. The reason for this seems quite obvious. Conventional mass advertising is a uni-directional monologue and does not aim to elicit feedback. Direct advertising includes feedback possibilities, whereas web ads are themselves interactive. Their communication process is similar to a dialogue. Since direct and online advertising both focus on the communicative exchange with their audience – although to a different extent and technical level – they consequently make use of linguistic features that can be found in interpersonal communication. Personal and direct audience addressing is one strategy which imitates the language used in interpersonal communication, with which a closer communicative relationship between the advertising sender and receiver can be realized.

Appealing language uses some means of motivation to persuade addressees emotionally. Emotional stimuli are typical instruments of today's advertising (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000:166), often supported by visual elements. They make users act, i.e. buy or click. Naturally, these stimuli are employed to a different extent, depending on the product advertised. Some products need a high level of information, like high-tech machines or other durable goods; various non-durable consumer goods for everyday usage, e.g. similar types of food, need to differentiate themselves and attract both attention and appeal through arousing emotions rather than through supplying information, or perhaps with a combination of both. However, depending on the customer's awareness of a brand, emotionally appealing strategies also occur in ads of high-priced products such as in (Figure 5.2).

This print ad might aim to attract its readership audience emotionally by the emphasis on written language (38) and by a very reduced illustration:

- (38) You have 2 weeks a year to relax.  
The other 50 are for the real adventure.

The advertising message (38) makes use of direct *you*-addressing and implies a humorous surprise-element to provoke the audience's curiosity. We do not

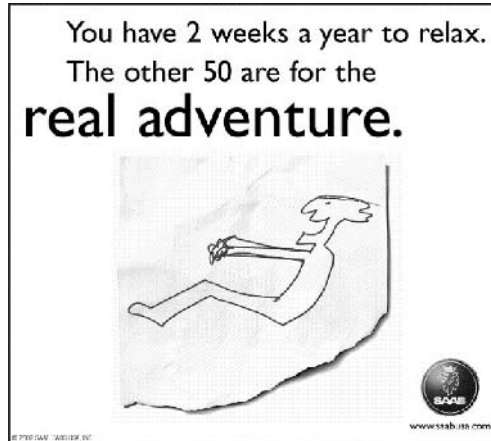


Figure 5.2 Print ad with emotional impact

usually expect the routine of our working lives to be the time of adventure, whereas the advert tells us the opposite. Once their attention has been caught, the addressees might want to discover what it is that can turn a hum-drum existence into *the real adventure*. The ad makes its target group search for the answer individually, since no further information is given, except for the car which is not clearly illustrated. Only the car's brand name is indicated by the small logo in the bottom right-hand corner.

The main motivators are emphasized typographically, *real adventure* is printed in bigger letters, and illustratively visualized by the scribbled figure having fun driving a speedy invisible car. Speed is envisioned by the figure's blowing hair. On an emotional level, entertainment, perhaps thoughts of leisure after working hours and gaining more from life are possible motivating strategies, which aim to persuade the addressees to adopt the positive attitudes or the image transferred through the ad.

Of course, this list of linguistic means, which is more or less employed by both traditional and online advertising, could be further continued. I will refer to some of them again in the subsequent analysis. However, for my purpose, the main areas have been covered.

## 5.4 Linguistic means and strategies of web ads

Since online advertising is a comparatively new discipline, its language usage has not been treated as much as language used in traditional advertising (e.g. Leech 1966; Sauer 1998; Janich 2001; Goddard 2002).

Crystal (2001) is, for instance, one scholar to publish a book on the English language<sup>3</sup> used on the Internet, focusing on language in e-mails, in chat-groups or on the Web in general. Crystal's aim is to explore the effects of the global usage of the Internet on language in general and on individual languages (2001:5), because the communicative situation has changed usage, habits, roles, and the power of communication partners. In his analysis, he comes to the conclusion that on the Internet, a distinctive variety of language and new linguistic means have been established. This development will be continued due to the innovative and still evolving impact of the Internet, resulting in the permanent pressure on users "to adapt their language to the demands of the new contexts" (2001:224). Crystal even claims that the new medium has triggered a "linguistic revolution" (2001:238). Taking this into consideration, it seems obvious that the language used in the particular field of online advertising must be affected by this linguistic revolution, too.

This can be examined, for instance, on a lexical level. The new vocabulary rooted in the American language reflects America's role as the country which invented the Internet. Not only do English technical terms enlarge the English language, like *browser*, *file transfer protocol* (initialized use: FTP), but also new word creations or extensions of word meanings, such as *to surf*, deal with the different attributes and usage around the Internet. For instance, the abbreviation *net* is a shortening of *Internet*. The term *Internet* is a blend of *International network*. *Netizen* is a blend derived from the combination of the shortened word *net* and the term *citizen*. Following Rosenbaum (1999:198) *netizens* are inhabitants of "the global village" (McLuhan & Fiore 1967:67) who run a homepage or have a heavy e-mail exchange. The term *cyberspace* is a word combination created by the prefix *cyber-* and the word *space* and refers to the virtual world of the Internet. The list of new vocabulary which describes characteristic aspects and the use of the Internet could be easily continued (see e.g. Rosenbaum 1999). However, we will see later in this chapter that especially online advertising texts intentionally use certain words and phrases which have a special impact on the reader. These are called trigger words.

The following analysis gives an insight into the linguistic usage in online advertising. Most relevant linguistic areas are affected. The subsequent model (5.3) visualizes advertising dependencies and previously mentioned areas of

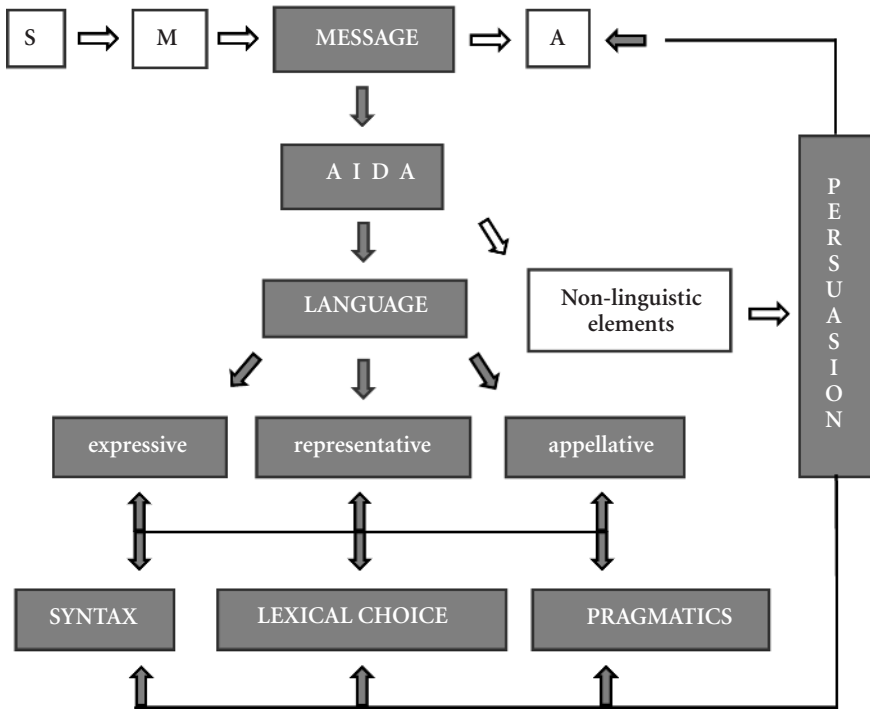


Figure 5.3 Language in the context of the online advertising message

analysis, starting from the communication process, to message realization by the use and function of language and its persuasive linguistic strategies. The elements marked in gray are those on which I am concentrating to exemplify Crystal's "linguistic revolution" in online advertising.

It is the advertising producer (S) who selects the carrier medium (M) which transports the advertising message in order to be successful in achieving defined advertising goals. In online advertising, the advertising message is aimed at persuading addressees (A) to activate a web ad or pop-up. The realization of the function of online advertising can be applied to the AIDA formula. That is why linguistic and non-linguistic means and strategies are employed. The linguistic means applied in an advertising message can be used as an attention-getting device, not only for the creation of interest, but also to provide information. They are also employed to make a product or service desirable for the purpose of immediate action. For this reason, the language of advertising is persuasive, trying to influence potential customers' attitudes and purchasing behavior. Linguistic persuasion is accomplished in various ways



and by various means. I am focusing basically on syntactic structures, lexical choices, and the pragmatic meaning of the speech acts used in the advertising message. These are, for a large part, responsible for the persuasion of an audience, and therefore, the activation of a web ad.

Bühler's (1999[1934]:28) organon model<sup>4</sup> describes three functions of language, which is one possible way of looking at the language in an advertising message. Bühler's "representative function" is related to the context. It refers to the relation to reality and illustrates the informational content of a message. The "expressive function" communicates the addresser's attitudes towards the content of the message. Language is used to evoke a certain reaction. Imperatives and emphatic speech are some examples. We will see that the "appellative function" is crucial in advertising when calling users to act (e.g. Brinker 1997:109). This function is directed to the addressee and refers to the order included in the message as in the example sentences *Click to apply online now* (Figure 3.8), *Find music and movies. Fast.* (Figure 3.12).

The use of linguistic features that are typically found in spoken conversations (e.g. Crystal 2003; Hughes 1996; Chafe 1982; Lakoff 1982) is particularly striking in the online advertising interaction. This conceptual orality (Koch & Oesterreicher 1990) reflects the affinity between language use and the conception of web ads found in the new communication medium. Characterized by the Web's technical interactivity, the way in which language is utilized in online advertising can create the impression of interpersonal communication and communicative immediacy.<sup>5</sup>

In the previous chapters, I pointed out that as a result of the common information overload through the media, often only fragments of information are perceived. I further explained that the addressees involved have to find and select information, especially on the Internet. Thus, journalists, advertisers, or information producers in general try to emphasize the presentation of their articles, advertising, or other kind of data in order to be more appealing than others. Competition not only occurs within similar areas or media like news articles or advertisements. Advertising also competes, for instance, with news or the entertainment section in various media, often at a great disadvantage, since advertising belongs to the kind of information that is not essentially required by an audience. Therefore, advertising exerts even more effort to appeal and to be selected or perceived. For this purpose, it makes use of "Aktivierungstechniken" 'techniques of activation' (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 164) because

[j]e größer die Aktivierungskraft eines Werbemittels ist, um so größer wird seine Chance, unter konkurrierenden Werbemitteln beachtet **und** genutzt zu werden. (emphasis in original)

[t]he more power of activation an advertising instrument has, the more likely it is to be noticed **and** to be used among competing advertising instruments. (translation: AJ)

Although this is applicable to all advertising, in online advertising, the need to be recognized and selected is even higher. Online advertising not only contends with the informational and advertising environment on the Web, but also with all kinds of hyperlinks, pages and sites that are offered in its closer and wider setting. In addition, unlike traditional advertising, online advertising is interactive and needs to be activated and to call for immediate user action. The emphasis is on “immediate” because owing to the fast-moving behavior on the Web, recently attracted users might soon be lost in favor of other information units. Interactivity on the Web is an additional effort for users which means that online advertising has to apply different strategies of activation and is faced with additional requirements of addressing and appealing to the user than in traditional advertising. This will be exemplified in the following sections.

Even in the short history of web advertising the way in which users are addressed has changed not only technically, but also with regard to the linguistic impact.<sup>6</sup> Remembering the first web ad (1994) (Figure 3.7), its advertising message consisted merely of written language in a static presentation. Technically, no animations were possible, and since it was the first banner ad it appealed by its innovative character. Linguistically, there was no direct user instruction to activate the web ad, like *click here*, but a question which indirectly told the perhaps inexperienced user what to do and how to handle this new kind of hyperlink.

Within a few years of increased usage, technical improvements and a constantly growing number of Internet users have affected online advertising, too. With a rising number of web ads, the impact to appeal more than other competitive ads has become more intense. The first animated web ads attracted attention because they were new. The increasing accumulation of blinking elements on the Web made them unremarkable or ordinary. In this “wear-out effect” (e.g. Wirth 2002:182), users get used to them and are no longer really attracted by animations, which not seldom results in banner blindness.<sup>7</sup> In a next step, interactive elements have been integrated. They offer the users more information and decision power, which gives rise to higher click rates (see Brown 2002).

The linguistic impact on the users has increased, too. In a limited space, it does not seem to be sufficient just to present a brand or to transfer mere information. Web ads employ catchy or new words and linguistic symbols, address users directly in various ways, and use emotional stimuli as a means of persuasion. To a great extent, web ads instruct users explicitly to *click here*. The persuasive effect which web ads want to achieve is, on the one hand, to attract attention and to encourage users to act; on the other hand, it is the technical interactive function of web ads which is also accomplished by the language used. Since activity on the Web means interactivity, web ads need more than traditional and direct advertising instruments to interact with users. Thus, web ads try to create a conversational relationship with the user, imitating interpersonal communication. This conceptual orality turns the written language communication into a more spoken-like manner, as the following sections will exemplify.<sup>8</sup>

## 5.5 Linguistic persuasion by the addressees' communicative integration

Linguistic persuasion that integrates addressees and imitates interaction occurs on the syntactical and lexical level and the way language is used in context. It is marked by a more personal style which involves users communicatively and treats them as individuals. In this case, web ads try to appeal to their addressees by addressing them directly and personally.

### 5.5.1 Questions

Questions are a means of direct user addressing. Online advertising uses these conversation markers as a means of interaction between the ad and the addressee. Their usage seems somehow paradoxical since in most cases the addressed users cannot give verbal feedback – apart from free keyword entry and predefined answers through pull-down menus. However, often it is not the individual verbal feedback which is to be achieved by the web ad, but a response in the form of a communicative action, i.e. the activation. For instance, in online advertising, questions are a means of linguistic persuasion, which are aimed at achieving a click response. Depending on the linguistic means used, they can create the impression of interpersonal communication. By this strategy, they address the individual user instead of a mass audience, which is intended to affect users' action.

Syntactically, there are different types of interrogatives. Aarts (2001:59f.) categorizes them as “yes/no interrogatives”, which require either *yes* or *no* as an answer, and as “open interrogatives” to which various answers are possible. The latter are characterized by initial wh-question words as well as the question word *how*. In online advertising, various answers can be given when the web ad offers a free keyword entry. Aarts (ibid.) calls questions that allow optional answers “alternative interrogatives”, e.g. *Do you want butter or margarine?* There are also types of interrogative sentences that are not used to get an answer at all. These are called “rhetorical questions”. The speech act “*Can you be quiet?*” (ibid.) is syntactically an interrogative, but can pragmatically have the impact of a directive. Rhetorical questions are, for instance, not only applied in news headlines to paraphrase the subsequent article, but also in advertising. Here they do not require an answer, but anticipate a confirmation of what has been expressed (Janich 2001:143). Some of these questions used in advertising include a problem-solution format such as *Thinning hair?* where the product, a hair restorer, offers help (Goddard 2002:74f.), (e.g. Figure 5.5).

Online advertising gives major attention to yes/no-questions for the following reason: As previously mentioned, users can rarely respond to the question linguistically. Thus, it seems quite reasonable for web ads to favor yes/no-questions or rhetorical questions which require a decision from the addressee rather than a verbal answer such as in example 5.4.

(39) Are you fast enough to find the GOLDEN JACKPOT?

Question (39) is meant to be answered mentally with *yes* or *no*.<sup>9</sup> The message sender reflects on a positive reply which would imply that the users will activate the web ad. A negative reply would signify that the users do not feel attracted by the message and will not act. In the case of (39), the speech act challenges the user by the indirect invitation to participate in the game<sup>10</sup> asking him/her if he/she is capable finding the *golden jackpot* beneath the coconut-cups. Attraction and interest can be aroused by the term *golden jackpot* which connotes a great quantitative value, a prize that can be won if users participate or click. This means the appellative function of the interrogative sentence is sublimi-

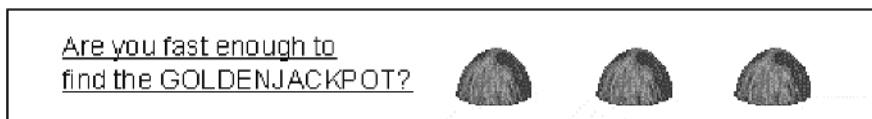


Figure 5.4 Web ad with challenging yes/no-question

nally expressed by the challenging question. Although the motivation to act lies in the chance of winning or finding the jackpot, it is unimportant on which of the coconuts users click. This faked interactive web ad will immediately connect the user to the merchandiser's web site.

Question (39) addresses the individual user personally by using the personal pronoun *you*. In interpersonal communication *you* is a marker of interaction with the targeted addressee. This is what web ad (5.4) tries to imitate. It takes out the individual user from the mass. The impression of an interaction between individuals makes online advertising communication more personal.

The following web ad (5.5) also anticipates a positive response which should result in the trigger of the web ad.

Looking from Bühler's perspective at the advertising message in images (A) and (B), its representative function is to participate in a game. The expressive function is syntactically realized by the interrogative used in (A) and the directive in (B). This direct yes/no-question (40)

(40) Need to get organized?

is an abbreviated interrogative which misses the supportive dummy auxiliary *do* and the personal pronoun *you*, as in sentence (41).

(41) Do you need to get organized?

would be the complete sentence structure. In this case, the missing *you* in (40) gives the question less impact. Abbreviated sentences typically occur in advertising (e.g. Leech 1966:90ff.). They are used because they are short, to the point, have punch and are easier to remember. Nevertheless, depending on how the text is abbreviated, there is always the risk of misinterpretation.



Figure 5.5 Web ad with yes/no-question

The ad's message follows the "problem-solution format" whereby the product offers help for a better organization. Organization or order is graphically visualized by the typewritten language (40, 42). Disorder is symbolized by the image of two hands with handwritten notes and scribbles on them (A). The image of the product (B) functions as solution to the question asked or as an explanation for the problem faced in this ad.

By the use of the imperative sentence (42) a second persuading aspect is added.

(42) Click here and enter to win a handspring Visor!

Apart from the opportunity to become better organized by the purchase of an organizer, users might have the possibility to get it for free – if they participate in the game on the target web site. Altogether, the advertising message contains three motivators for activation. The first applies to people who feel the need for better organization, the second refers to the aspect of saving money, and the third motivator is the opportunity to win something. The verb *win* is a typical trigger word.

What is noteworthy in this web ad message is the integration of various if-then-conditions as a means of persuasion to click, if confirmed. First, if the users are not well organized, then they might necessitate an organizer which also implies that they need to activate the web ad. Secondly, if users want to be distracted, then they will participate in the game which means to *enter* (42) or to activate the web ad. Thirdly, if users speculate on getting an organizer for free, then they also have to activate the web ad.

Sentence (42) contains two imperatives, i.e. *click here* and *enter*. As directives, they fulfill Bühler's appellative function which is literally the instruction for users to activate the web ad and which pragmatically expresses the realization of the if-then conditions. The analysis of imperatives in online advertising is part of the following section.

### 5.5.2 Imperatives

For reasons of time, space, and perception, web ad messages must be short and to the point, in addition to their appellative function.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it seems reasonable that the imperative verb form or directive speech acts can be frequently found.

Imperatives have an urgent tonality. They are applied in order to tell people what to do (Swan 1997:254) or what not to do. Since the main function of imperatives is to express a call or prohibition for an action (Bußmann

2002:293), an advertising message which employs imperatives clearly gives instructions to the addressed audience. Imperatives belong to the field of direct user addressing (Jucker 2000b: 638) and persuasion.

In online advertising, imperatives can be linguistically categorized in “direct, explicit activation instructions” like *click here*, in “indirect, implicit activation instructions” such as *apply now* and in “optional activation instructions”. As directive speech acts in the advertising copy, they can communicate a beneficial order such as *Save 50–70% on term life insurance* (Figure 3.11). Pragmatically, if users want to benefit from the reduction, they need to activate the web ad because literally, the imperative verb *save* does not say ‘click the web ad’; this is figuratively expressed.

Throughout my data, I observed that almost every type of web ad uses imperative activation instructions. These instructions have the same function, but differ in pragmatic impact. The most frequently applied command to be found is the explicit imperative expression *Click* or *Click here* (e.g. in web ads 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.13, 5.14, 5.16, 5.17, 5.18, 5.20, 5.21, 5.24, 5.25).<sup>12</sup> These instructions are semantically simple to comprehend as they tell users literally what to do, i.e. to click. They do not imply any alternative actions. The additional deictic term *here* even elucidates this meaning of ad activation because it refers locally to the place where the term *here* is positioned. This location can be typographically marked, although in most cases, any click somewhere on the web ad leads to its activation.

Alternative appellative user orders for web ad activations are implicit imperatives such as *Apply now* (Figure 5.13), *Find it* (Figure 3.10), *Search* (4.13), *Act now* (e.g. Figure 5.8), *Get it* (Figure 5.12), or *Go* (e.g. Figures 3.10, 3.12, 3.14, 3.23). Unlike *click here*-orders, these directives do not really tell users what to do, but describe the action or the way to receive the advertised product. In other words, message decoding takes place on the pragmatic level. It is presupposed that users already know that they have to click on the web ad *to find something* or *to apply for something*.

*Go*-instructions are often designed in the form of a technical operation button. This also applies to *OK*-buttons used in faked application web ads (e.g. in web ad traps 3.17–3.20, 5.11). The *OK*-button is a confirmation to which users agree if they click on it. Vice versa, it signifies their disagreement if they do not click. In other words, the users’ confirmation or disagreement is always context-dependent and optional, i.e. bound to the advertising message. Hence, *OK*-buttons do not only have the same function as imperative instructions, but they offer users optional reactions and are, therefore, less powerful.

	Explicit activation instructions	Implicit activation instructions	Optional activation instructions
Linguistic means	literal imperatives	figurative imperatives	literal agreement
Pragmatic intention	explicit direct orders	pragmatically indirect orders	context and user-dependent confirmation or disagreement
Linguistic examples	<i>click, click here</i>	<i>find it, search, go, etc.</i>	OK

Figure 5.6 Different linguistic impacts of imperative activation instructions

Table (5.6) summarizes the different types and impacts of imperative activation instructions on users.

Web ads also employ imperatives in their advertising copy. The subsequent web ad (Figure 5.7) successively develops its message by fading in one word after the other (43):

(43) Buy Books HERE! amazon.com.

The web ad consists of an imperative advertising copy, *Buy books here*, and the sender's address, Amazon.com. In the unlikely event that addressees do not know what or who Amazon.com is, namely an online seller of basically books and music, its relation to the purchase of books can be deduced from the body copy. Clearly identifiable as the message sender, amazon.com tells users to *buy books*.

The use of the deictic term *here* is somehow ambiguous. "Deixis is part of the **modality** function in language, i.e. *the situating of the information with respect to the current context*" (Werth 1999:157, emphasis in original). The interpretation of deictic terms depends on the location of the speaker and/or hearer within a particular setting (O'Grady et al. 1997:711) and the point of reference. Since books cannot physically be bought at the web ad, the adverb *here* is used to refer to Amazon.com. Consequently, users have to interpret the meaning of *here* metaphorically as a pointer to click on the web ad in order to be linked with the online shop <http://www.amazon.com>. *Here* can



Figure 5.7 Web ad with directive speech act





Figure 5.8 Web ad with directive speech act

also be an abbreviated instruction which derives from the explicit order *click here*, missing the literal instruction *click*. However, the directive clearly tells the users to buy books at Amazon.com and emphasizes this instruction by the exclamation mark.

Web ad (Figure 5.8) follows the same principle, but includes the instant deictic time marker, *now*. Imperatively, it tells users to *save* money (A) by using the special offer of lower fares at Delta, with a 10% discount (B):

(44) Buy now and save money.

The verb *to save* specifies the verb *to buy* because when purchasing products, it is rather unusual to save money, except for special offers. In other words, the special price method is a strategy that is used by advertisers to motivate the users to act. The term *save* is also a “trigger word” in the conception of advertising. From this perspective, customers might be more interested in buying a low-priced product than a more expensive version.

The direct linguistic impact on the users’ actions through the imperative *buy*, is reinforced and rendered immediately indispensable by the time marker *now*. It is repetitively used (44, 45) as a device of emphasis with a memory effect (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 150) and is meant to persuade users to activate the web ad instantly.

(45) Act now. Sale ends January 6.

*Act now* is another form of pragmatic implicit activation instruction. In combination with the subsequent deadline, *January 6*, it indicates the limited time period in which the offer is available and strengthens the acting of users. If users have been persuaded to trigger the web ad, then they are linked to the web site of Delta.com and they can purchase a ticket immediately in the online shop.

Further examples of imperatives will also be found in the different sections below.

### 5.5.3 Personal and possessive pronouns

Another form of direct user addressing is realized by personal and possessive pronouns. Used in a conversation between the sender and addressee, the first and second person pronouns *I*, *you*, and *we* refer either to the speaker him-/herself and/or directly to the communication partner(s). The same applies to the possessive pronouns *my*, *ours*, *your*, and *yours*. The comprehension of these referring expressions depends on the common ground knowledge and their reference to other linguistic elements in the same or in a previous sentence. In my data, referring expressions that point to third parties such as *she*, *he*, *they*, *her*, *him*, are hardly found. This stresses the aspect of interactional-conversational language used in web ads.

In online advertising, the use of first and second person pronouns can be interpreted as an imitation of a dialogue since they create the impression of an individual interaction between the sender and target user(s). By their employment, message producers treat their recipients more individually and integrate them into the communication process, just like interpersonal communication and direct advertising do. This is what web ad (5.9) demonstrates.

(46) Click Your way to an MBA/BA.

The advertising message (46) consists of an imperative sentence which tells users appellatively what to do to gain an MBA or BA, i.e. first of all to *click*. There is no additional direct activation instruction as in Figure 5.5, but in contrast with example (5.7), the verb order *click* is an abbreviated version of *click here* and to be understood literally.

The integration of the possessive pronoun *your* makes the instruction more personal. Sentence (46) does not offer the way to an MBA or BA to just anybody, but to *you* personally and individually. This meaning is emphasized by the only capitalization of the pronoun in the sentence. Although *your* can refer linguistically to a single person and to a group of people, users will feel individually addressed. *Your* with plural reference can only be interpreted if more



Figure 5.9 Web ad with a possessive pronoun as means of direct user addressing

than one user perceives or clicks the web ad, together. This is rather unlikely as surfing the Web is seldom a group activity.

Sentence (46) also incorporates prosodic properties. Its prosodic structure is related to the terms *way* and *MBA/BA*, whose phonologically identical end vowels create a rhyme. The phonological pun in (46) functions like a jingle which is an acoustic stimulus for a better memory of the advertising message.

The animated web ad (5.10) consists of an advertising copy, the sender's address, and an explicit activation instruction. In its body copy, a combination of the personal pronouns of the first person, *I*, in (A, B), and the second person singular, *you*, (C) occurs.

- (47) I will not pay a monthly fee. (A)
- (48) I will not keep a minimum balance. (A)
- (49) I will not accept a wimpy rate. (B)
- (50) I will not pay for checking. (B)

The linguistic strategy of persuasion in this web ad is the incorporation of contrastive pronouns as pragmatic elements for emphasis, and forms of personal user addressing as a kind of communicative integration.

If the pronouns *I* and *you* are used in interpersonal communication, message producers use *I* to refer to themselves and *you* to refer to their communication partner. Since both are message producers and receivers, the references of *I* and *you* can be exchanged. In this example, the pointing of the two pronouns is even graphically emphasized by different typographies and an animated and static presentation, i.e. the *I*-sentences in (A, B) roll in and sentence (51) in (C)



Figure 5.10 Web ad with pronouns *I*, *you* and *your*

is a fixed image. Contrasting image movements function as eye-catchers and attention-getters.

Most credit institutions might charge their clients for their services by monthly fees and require a minimum balance on their account. The use of the pronoun *I* in the sentences (47–50) can be interpreted as a reference to the message producer who dissociates himself/herself from *paying a monthly fee, keeping a minimum balance, accepting a wimpy rate, and paying for checking*. This dissociation is realized by the negative particle *not*. In other words, the negatively connoted charges become positive because they are rejected.

The rhetorical figure of repetition, in this case anaphorically by the consecutive four-time-repetition of the sentence part *I will not (...)*, is a marker of emphasis and gives the message more importance. The phrase *I will not* sounds almost like the Ten Commandments *Thou shall not* where the second person singular *thou (you)* is replaced by the first person singular *I*. It is then easy to remember and might have a greater impact on the users.

With reference to the Ten Commandments, the use of the modal *will* is more akin to a self-imposed directive which also implies volition. In addition, the auxiliary *will* transfers these speech acts to a future action and functions as a prediction. This prediction connotes an obligatory promise if one considers the whole context of the advertising message.

Together with the sentence (51), the reference of the pronouns used becomes clearer. If the LightHouseBank is the message sender, the pronoun *you* refers to the addressee. With this representative (51), the LightHouse-Bank states in image (C) that the individually addressed person can keep his/her promises:

(51) With Lighthouse you can actually keep your promises. (C)

The noun phrase *your promises* in (51) refers anaphorically to the speech acts (47–50). Here, these commissives are meant to be made by the addressee who uses the first person singular pronoun *I*. The initially presumed speaker reference is, therefore, ambiguous since the message sender functions as a representative speaker reflecting the addressee's presumed thoughts.

The following faked application web ad (5.11) uses the personal pronoun *you* twice at the beginning and the end of the sentence (52).<sup>13</sup>

Instead of the more neutral sentence *There is 1 message waiting for you*, there is a syntactic movement of the pronoun *you* in sentence (52). This fronting stresses the importance of the pronoun as a salient element of direct user addressing.



Figure 5.11 Faked application web ad with direct personal user addressing

(52) You have 1 message waiting for you.

The repetition of *you* at the end of the sentence is also a marker of emphasis and an additional way of final addressing. Pragmatically, the sentence creates a curiosity appeal when it says that there is *1 message waiting* for the addressed user, but it leaves open the message content and the semantic agent, i.e. by whom it has been sent. Normally, the double emphasis of *you have* and *waiting for you* would be superfluous, but here it creates a more personal tone since the latter implies a person, i.e. ‘to wait for someone’.

Regarding the message as such, it is not an indefinite message, *a*, but a particularly quantified one, by the use of the number *1*. However, it is still an anonymous message with an unknown content, graphically highlighted by bold and bigger letters, which might function as a motivator to click – although it seems obvious that the message sender is presumably the advertiser whose first aim is to persuade the receiver to visit his/her web site.

In its advertising message, the following web ad trap (5.12) also addresses its users directly:

(53) The domain you thought was registered years ago  
may be available again right now!

This ad refers to the possibility that an Internet domain that had not been available at one time is now no longer registered or in use by others. This likelihood is expressed by the epistemic modal *may*. The speech act’s supposition becomes true if the person appealed to has not yet checked again the availability of a domain which he or she once wanted. Thus, this web ad indirectly asks users to check this another time at DeletedDomains.com. The pronoun *you* is a marker of personal deixis with reference to the individual user.

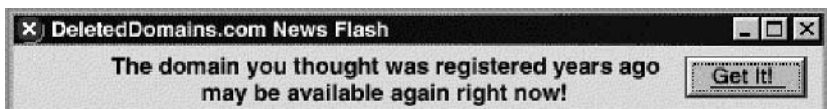


Figure 5.12 Faked application web ad with direct, personal user addressing

The expression *right now* at the end of the sentence functions as a pragmatic imperative. It can be interpreted as ‘go ahead right now’ which imposes the need to act immediately. The directive *Get it!*, even highlighted by an exclamation mark, is aimed at making the addressee activate the ad. This implicit activation instruction does not implicate that an availability must be checked first, but it connotes that with the click, the domain can be obtained.

#### 5.5.4 Spatial and temporal deixis

The employment of deictic terms is occasionally problematic because of their sometimes ambiguous referring function. The use and interpretation of *here* and *there* depend on the location of the sender and hearer (O’Grady et al. 1997:711). As long as these positions and references are apparent, ambiguity can be avoided. In spoken interaction, speakers can additionally draw on gestures to explicate the spatial meaning of deictic terms used.

In the following animated web ad (5.13), there is an adverbial usage of the deictic terms *here* and *there* in web ad images (A) and (B).

The meaning of *here* and *there* in this advertising message might be confusing. Both terms refer locally to the same place although *here* is used where the speaker (web ad) is and *there* for other places, e.g. online shops in general. It

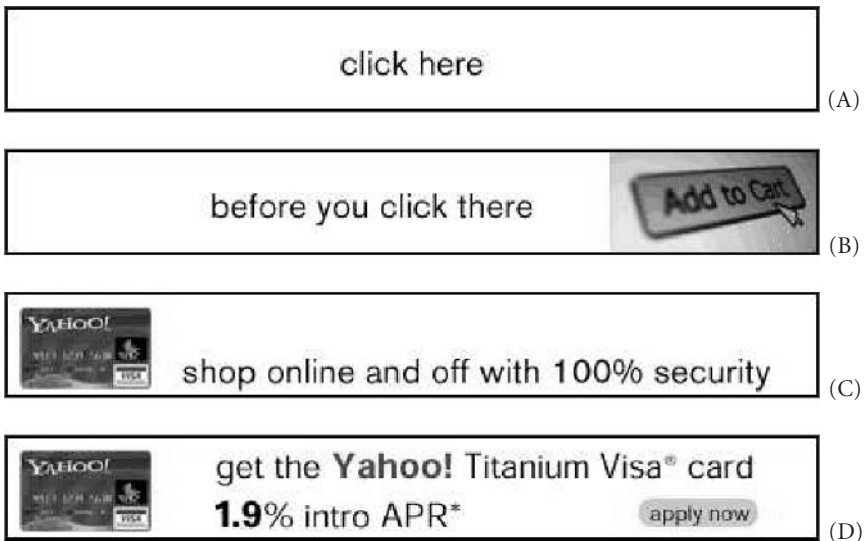


Figure 5.13 Web ad with deictic terms

means that before users start or continue their shopping, they should first apply for the card (B), (D). Together with the *you*-addressing (B), the addressed user is personally requested to activate this web ad. The focus of the message is on the maximum security factor of 100% (USP) which means that shopping online and off is only safe if the purchase has been made by the *Yahoo! Titanium Visa Card*.

Web ad images (C) and (D) use the imperatives *shop (...)* and *get (...)* to increase the linguistic impact on addressees. Explicit and implicit activation instructions are applied at image (A), *click here*, and at the end of the message (D), *apply now*. Other examples of spatial deixis can be found in Figures 3.7 and 5.7, for instance. Temporal deixis is used e.g. in Figures 3.8, 3.14, 3.18, and 5.8.

### 5.5.5 Abbreviated sentences

Abbreviated sentences<sup>14</sup> are a linguistic means not only found in advertising, but also frequently in newspaper articles, mainly in headlines. Abbreviated language is characterized by the omission of certain linguistic elements in sentences like (13) *Women's swimwear On sale* where a verb is omitted, or in the interrogative (40) where the auxiliary *do* and a personal pronoun are missing. Their use in advertising is anything but new. A widespread use can be traced back to the era between 1850–1920, such as in the example 'Keeps indefinitely in dry place' (Leech 1966: 173–174) where the advertised subject has been left out.

Abbreviated language is also a very frequent appearance in online advertising. Apart from the fact that brevity saves space, abbreviated sentences are faster and easier to grasp than longer and more complicated ones. Fast perception and comprehension is important on the Internet with its high density of information. However, depending upon how the information is abbreviated, comprehension problems or alternative interpretations by different users and backgrounds might cause some problems.

The following example (Figure 5.14) of an abbreviated question in a pop-up ad leaves out the auxiliary question verb *do* and a personal pronoun.

The question asked (54) is an abbreviated form of the presumed complete interrogative (55):

(54) Travel a lot?

(55) Do you travel a lot?



Figure 5.14 Pop-up with abbreviated question

I added the question particle *do* because with this auxiliary, the question is formed without morphological and semantic changes. The personal pronoun *you* is included because of its frequently applied function of personal user addressing in online advertising. Of course, other personal pronouns like *he*, *she*, *we*, *you* (second person plural), and *they* would also be correct substitutes, in accordance with *do/does*, but only from the grammatical perspective and not as a speech act that directly addresses its target group in the advertising communication.

Context-independent, question (54) only refers to the quantity, *a lot*, of traveling. Target users might, therefore, expect to be informed about various topics such as special holiday offers by a travel agency. Instead, looking at the context, question (54) refers to the frequent travel of persons who need or want Internet access from everywhere they go. This is explicitly communicated by the directive *access the Internet anywhere (...)*.

Nevertheless, even if people do not travel a lot they might also be interested in ubiquitous Internet access, taking into consideration that this pop-up ad appeals to users who are online while receiving the message, i.e. affiliated to this medium.

The imperative activation instruction *click here* is connected to the reason for an activation, i.e. to try out a *free* version program, in this case, by the Internet provider AOL which makes Internet access possible from everywhere. Of course, for an ubiquitous access, AOL is not the only provider. The adjective



*free* is a typical trigger word with the intention of captivating and having a persuasive effect on the users.

## 5.6 Linguistic persuasion by emotional appeal

The higher the potential of an ad to motivate its audience, the more likely the users will be engaged by it, and the more likely an efficient confrontation and recall (Kroeber-Riel & Weinberg 1999: 81) will be. This can be realized by emotionally appealing advertising strategies. Web ads try to persuade their online readers emotionally, too.

In this section, I am defining two kinds of emotional user appeal. First, web ads apply certain motivational strategies that appeal to users, and secondly, on a lexical level, they use simplifications or specific words, i.e. “trigger words”, which attract users through their powerful impact.

### 5.6.1 Persuasion by emotionally motivating strategies

There are various motives which are used to persuade users to click. The most frequently employed motivation strategies in my data belong to the fields of “entertainment” and “gain”. Web ads propose diversion, games, or prizes and make special price offers. Since the following analysis will also include other motivation strategies, I will once again insert the table used in Chapter 3 (3.24), but here, in a reduced version. The motives and behavior patterns selected refer to those on which I will focus in the sections below (Figure 5.15).

Motivations	Explanation of behavior / Implication – goals
Curiosity	Variety, novelty, inquisitiveness, broadening one’s horizon
Safety	Risk prevention, avoidance of failure, pain, disease
Giving support	Supporting, helping, protecting, caring
Receiving support	Being supported, directed, protected
Order	Simplicity, comprehensibility, predictability of environment
Entertainment	Games, distraction
Gain	Earning and investing money, good bargains, accumulating wealth/possession, saving money
Sex	Real and fantasized sexual activities
Emotions	Excitement, sensation seeking, avoidance of negative and incitement of positive emotions

Figure 5.15 Motivations and explanation of behavior (reduced version, translation: AJ)

part of the jumping ball

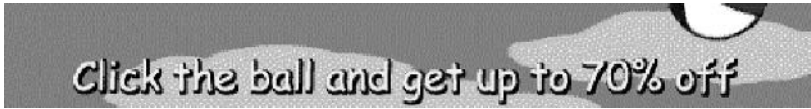


Figure 5.16 Web ad with motivations “entertainment”, “gain”, “curiosity”

The example (Figure 5.16) of an animated web ad invites users to hit the jumping ball.

Apart from reflecting on the users’ playing instinct, the web ad uses an additional motivation strategy. It tries to persuade users with the option of saving money. Using a combination of different motivators, the probability of activation increases. Some users might be attracted by the game, others by the bargain, and some by both.

Linguistically, the advertising message is formulated as a directive (56) which tells users to *click the ball* and to *get up to 70% off*. There is no additional activation instruction, such as *click here* needed since it is already included in the first part of the sentence:

(56) Click the ball and get up to 70% off.

Sentence (56) consists of two sentences that are linked by the coordinating conjunction *and*. There is no alternative offered, as would have been the case with the conjunction *or*. Consequently, the advertising message could be interpreted as an if/then-condition, meaning ‘if you click the ball, you will receive a 70% reduction’. Users will recognize the conditional impact by the technical construction of the ad which is an animated single-click web ad. In other words, it does not offer a game at all, since any click on it, no matter if the ball has been hit or not, connects the user directly to the merchandiser’s web site. Thus, the entertaining motivator turns out to be a faked game that is merely meant to be an immediate trigger.

Some users might be attracted by the opportunity to benefit from the high price reduction of 70%, or to receive something which will be cheaper than usual. However, it is not mentioned what kind of offer it is in order to arouse curiosity, which is an additional motivation.

The subsequent animated web ad (5.17) follows almost the same principle, except that entertainment and winning a prize are its focal points.

The advertising strategy of this web ad appears to be the entertainment of users – even though it is a web ad trap that is activated by the user’s first click on

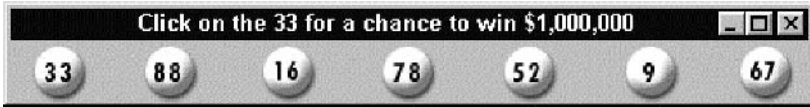


Figure 5.17 Web ad with motivation “entertainment”

any of the blinking shots. Linguistically, it is not as definite as the previous web ad because it says that there is *a chance* to win. It also instructs the users imperatively to *click* on the shot with number 33. Naming the extremely high amount of money that can be won, *\$1,000,000*, can have a strong persuasive impact on some users, which then functions as a trigger to click onto the web ad.

Web ad (5.18) tries to persuade the users to participate in a game that offers the possibility to win a flat-panel monitor, in order to visit its linked web site.

The web ad focuses on two aspects. First, it provokes the users’ attention linguistically by contrastive language use in the advertising message, and secondly, it gives the users the opportunity to get something for free, when first imperatively addressing:

(57) Go to the movies (A) and never leave work (B).

At first sight, the coordinated sentences are contradictory and physically paradox because it seems impossible ‘to go somewhere’ (A) ‘without ever leaving a place’ (B). The verb *to go* denotes ‘physical movement’, *never leave* means ‘to stay’. Thus, its meaning is to be deconstructed pragmatically. In this context, sentence (57) can be interpreted as there being a possibility to stay at work and

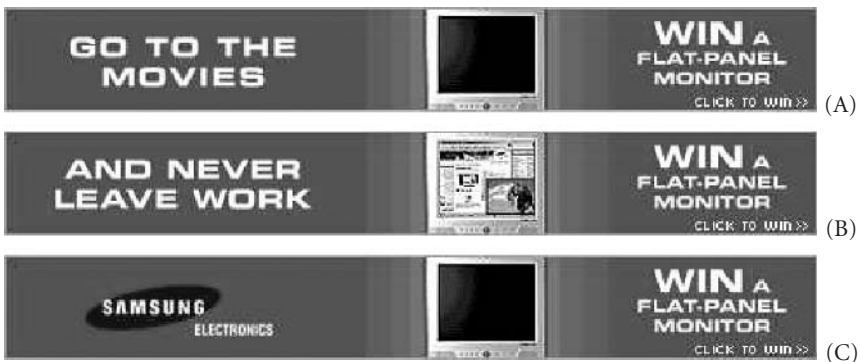


Figure 5.18 Web ad with motivation “entertainment”

watch movies. This meaning is supported by the image of a flat panel monitor and the directive (58):

(58) Win a flat-panel monitor.

Due to the high technology of the monitor, the speech act implies that it is no longer necessary to go out to see movies. Instead, movies can be watched by means of the same device one is working with, at home or in the office.

Image (C) presents the advertising sender, *Samsung Electronics*, and includes a users' explicit activation instruction *click to win*, which appears together with sentence (58) with all three images of the web ad (A, B, C).

I will exemplify two further motivational strategies, "sexual appeal" and "emotion" in Figure 5.19 and "giving support" and "safety appeal" in Figure 5.20.

Web ad (5.19) uses sexual and emotional appeal as persuasive motives and the direct personal addressing *you* to be interactively closer to the addressee. Interpersonal communication is emphasized by the opening inverted commas that mark direct speech (59). Here, it is the voice of the visualized woman in white, who presumably is supposed to be a dentist or dental nurse. In an open-ended sentence she allows the addressed user:

(59) "You may now kiss...

Without any further context information, this truncated speech act is a permission to kiss, which is expressed by the deontic modal *may*.

The term *now* refers to a contrasting previous situation where the addressed person had apparently not had the possibility to kiss or was not allowed to do so. Sentence (59) is continued in the advertised product, a chewing gum called *Crest Whitestrips*. Paraphrasing the message, it can be pragmatically interpreted to mean that if the users follow the woman's recommendation and chew Whitestrips, they are ready to kiss... .

The web ad makes use of a typical sexual cliché. It is presumably a female doctor or nurse who interacts with the users, recommending in a rather polite way what activities chewing gum is needed for. Obviously, the use of chewing



Figure 5.19 Web ad with motivations "sex", "emotion"

gum for the purpose of kissing is a UAP which is meant to appeal in a sexual or at least emotional way, more than perhaps originally the taste and dental care.

Motivations like “giving support” and “safety” are used in the following web ad (5.20) of the American Red Cross.

Its message consists of an advertising copy and an activation instruction (60), a claim (61), and the address of the sender, the *American Red Cross*. Focusing on the help of the individual users, it addresses them directly in a personal style:

- (60) You Can Help.  
Click Here to Donate.

The lacking intonational emphasis in written language is graphically visualized here by the capitalization of the most important words *You Can Help*, *Click Here* and *Donate*. The former could be interpreted as a ‘call for help’, the latter is highlighted because it seems important for the sender to say that users *donate* if they click the web ad rather than increase a company’s profit. The terms *help* and *donation* should clearly appeal to the users’ willingness to support other helpless or impoverished people. Preceded by the personal pronoun *you*, the modal auxiliary *can* tells the user that he/she has the power or the ability to help. The claim makes use of the inclusive *we*, which is stressed by the preceded *together*, functioning as a repetition and marker of emphasis:

- (61) Together, we can save a life.

The inclusive pronoun *we* expresses shared identity and communal effort in terms of ‘together we stand’ and appeals to the individual to be part of a whole. Again, the modal *can* gives the user the feeling that he/she has the ability to save a life together with the American Red Cross.

The following examples concentrate on advertising messages that use trigger words to attract attention and appeal to users by their powerful impact – linguistic strategies of motivation are also found.



Figure 5.20 Web ad with motivations “giving support”, “safety”

### 5.6.2 Persuasion by trigger words

In order to be successful, words that call customers to action must be powerful (Stone et al. 1995:164). I will call these loaded words “trigger words”. As a means of persuasion which appeals to users emotionally they intend to change the users’ mental disposition in order to click on the web ad. Trigger words incorporate different word classes, mainly verbs and adjectives, but also nouns. They can be semantically explicit or provoke the users’ attention and interest by their implicit meaning in the forms of emoticons, acronyms, and substituting items.

Especially money saving expressions attract the users’ attention. According to a study by DoubleClick.com (Webreference.com n.d.), these words have a direct impact on users which consequently increases the click rates of web ads. In simple terms, the advertisers propose discount bargains or goods for free by expressions like *save up to (...)*, *free (...)*, *low cost credit, (...)* *offers*, *get your (...)* or *win (...)*, *new*, *discount*, *opportunity* or punctuations like exclamation marks. Some of these trigger words have already been treated in this analysis. The verb *save* was used, for example in Figures 3.11, 3.20, 5.8, *win* in Figures 5.5, 5.17, 5.18, and *free* in Figures 3.14, 5.14. Although most of these terms might be overused (Stone et al. 1995:166), they are still frequently applied by advertisers, not only in online advertising, but also in direct advertising (e.g. Figures 2.10, 2.11) and to some extent in print ads.

Many trigger verbs are imperatively used. That is to say, they captivate users emotionally while instructing them to act.

The animated web ad (5.21) proposes a bargain of up to a 75% reduction on telephone costs. Eye-catching words (62) are highlighted in bold and bigger typeface.

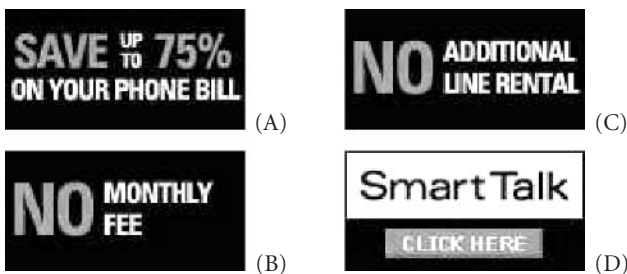


Figure 5.21 Web ad with trigger words *save*, *free*

- (62) Save (...) 75% (...), (A)  
 NO (...), (B)  
 NO (...), (C)  
 CLICK HERE. (D)

Like in direct advertising, there are signals that lead to a positive or negative user reaction. Vögele (1996:78) calls these “response signals”. The more positively loaded signals are, the more likely a response. Here, it is the aspect of saving money which is a personal advantage and thus a stimulus. The imperative *save* is a positive signal which is meant to have an instantaneous effect on users to make them react. The negative aspects are turned into a positive meaning by their negation with *no*, i.e. *no additional line rental, no monthly fee*. The high numeric specification of 75%, another positive response signal, stresses the persuasive stimulus in the advertising message. Direct user addressing personalizes the offer with *your* phone bill. The message closes with the sender’s name, *Smart Talk*, and the explicit activation instruction *click here*.

Due to their highly informative meaning, adjectives are frequently used. According to Webreference.com (n.d.), “the 4 most powerful letters in direct response are free.” Webreference.com also quotes DoubleClick.com which has compiled a list of graphic, positioning, and content aspects that promote the effectiveness of web ad advertising. One of the linguistic aspects presented in the list is the proposal to offer goods and services for free because this “generally improves click-throughs” (Webreference.com). To exemplify this, the message sender, Barnes & Noble, uses the trigger word *free* in web ad (5.22), emphasized in an eye-catching way by capital letters. The exclamatory imperative sentence (63) is repeated three times for emphasis:

- (63) Get FREE Shipping!

The condition *just buy 2 or more* is bound to the purchase of *books for class*. This restriction is converted positively by the term *just*. However, users first of all need to buy two books or more to benefit from the free-shipping offer.

The web ad on page 153 (5.23) offers sunglasses and motivates by free shipping and the positive stimulus of summer.



Figure 5.22 Web ad with trigger word *free*



Figure 5.23 Web ad with trigger word *free*

The advertiser is a company that sells sunglasses. The advertising message includes an illustration of a woman's head, wearing sunglasses, which visualizes the product advertised, a copy (64), and the URL,<sup>15</sup> *ibeauty.com*, which refers to the message sender. The letter *i* at the beginning of the web site address is phonologically motivated and relates to the term *eye* (see (65)). Positive emotions of summer, *SUN*, are transferred by the woman and her reflecting sunglasses. Linguistically, the product is positioned in the same way. The imperative tells the users to benefit from the sunglasses by promising to turn bad days into good days (A, B):

(64) Make everyday a SUN day.

Lexical emphasis is placed on the capitalized noun *SUN* and on the use of the two combined nouns *sun* and *day*. This simplification derives either from the phonologically similar words *sunny day*, which implies that *sun day* is an abbreviated noun phrase, or from the noun *Sunday*, as a noun separated in its two noun components. There is also an expression about turning every day into a Sunday. This pun functions as a motivator that is meant to transfer summer, a relaxed atmosphere, holiday or any other attributes which the addressed person associates with *sun*.

The advertising message also makes use of the persuasive trigger word *free*, which is accentuated graphically by capitalization and linguistically by its repetition. Like web ad (5.22), it offers *free shipping* and additionally a *free gift wrap*



(D). There is a time restriction on the offer (C) saying *limited time offer*, which should drive the users to act sooner rather than later if they want to benefit from this offer.

### 5.6.3 Simplifications

Another phenomenon on the Internet is the use of simplified items on the language level and in the form of signs. Basically deriving from written interaction in chats or ICQs, they also find usage in e-mail communication, SMS-exchange, and online advertising. According to Rosenbaum (1999: 136), these language items have been integrated very quickly into online language because of their minimal typing effort. Hence, it is possible to speed up written interpersonal communication (e.g. chats), even if it is slower than spoken interaction. In addition, time still means money on the Internet. It is quite obvious that the more time users spend on the Internet, the higher online costs are.<sup>16</sup>

Emoticons, abbreviations, and acronyms<sup>17</sup> are also simplifications. On a sign basis, they substitute words and phrases. This type of language use is a kind of artificial language (e.g. Bußmann 2002: 386), developed for communication purposes among special users and within special areas. Rosenbaum (1999: 136) calls these special kinds of abbreviations “hakspek” because they derive from language used by hackers.<sup>18</sup>

Often, single letters or numbers are used to abbreviate words, resulting in their similar or homophonous pronunciation, such as in the Internet address of the message producer in the previous web ad (5.23):

(65) ibeauty.com.

The letter *i* is homophonous with the word *eye*, having the same pronunciation, but a different spelling and meaning. It refers to the advertised product which protects eyes against sunlight.

The same linguistic strategy of exploiting phonologic similarity is applied in the following web ad (5.24). Different numbers and letters substitute complete words that sound alike.

The message of the web ad is graphically tripled into the body copy (66), the claim, *Dell online support.*, and the brand, *intel inside pentium III*. The meaning of the copy must be decoded by the user:

(66) Dell is there 4 U 24/7



Figure 5.24 Web ad with simplified language, motivation “receiving support”

The interpretation (67, 68) needs to take place by the following substitution of the homophonous numbers and letters in order to build sentence (69):

- (67) number 4 substitutes the pronoun *for*,
- (68) the single letter *U* stands for the personal pronoun *you*.

Number 4 is homophonous with the pronoun *for*. Although orthography and meaning differ, the users can recognize the intended meaning by the similar pronunciation. This is also applicable to (68). The meaning of the letter *U* derives from the same phonological sound, denoting the personal pronoun *you*. The properly formulated sentence (66) is therefore (69):

- (69) Dell is there for you.

The understanding of the numbers 24/7 in (66) needs some further effort by the user since an exact definition of 24 and 7 is missing. Their meaning cannot be deduced phonologically, but must be interpreted within the context of the sentence. Using the claim and asking the question ‘when’ *Dell online support* is needed, the missing specification can be figured out by a possible answer ‘always’. Then, number 24 refers to the ‘hours per day’ and number 7 to ‘days per week’. The meaning of the copy can be paraphrased by ‘Dell is always there for you’ or more literally ‘Dell is there for you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week’, i.e. whenever its customers need support.

Again, there is a direct user addressing by the personal pronoun *you*. A call to action is realized by the explicit activation instruction *click here*.

The following web ad (5.25) uses mathematical symbols or formulas which build a sum, in the sense of ‘ $A + B = C$ ’. The add-up elements are graphically supported language items.

The added elements are *one form* (A) and *10 minutes* (B) which result in (C) *instant & comparative online quotes* (70):



Figure 5.25 Web ad with symbolic language, motivation “saving money”

(70) ONE FORM + 10 MINUTES = Instant & Comparative Online Quotes.

In combination with the imperative sentence (71),

(71) See what you can save on your auto insurance,

the meaning of this advertising message in the mathematical language formula can be easily derived. The web ad offers a comparison between auto insurances (C) if the users fill in a form (A) which takes them 10 minutes (B). With the modal auxiliary *can*, the directive (71) expresses pragmatically a possibility to the individual user, *you*, that he or she might save money. The aspect of possibly saving money, explicitly mentioned by the trigger word *save*, is meant as a motivation for the user to activate the ad. The message ends with the explicit activation instruction *click here*.

Even more reduced in language and requiring increased effort on the part of the user to elicit the meaning, this web ad (5.26) is also based on the mathematical addition and subtraction formula ‘A + B – C = X’.

The formula-message is framed by the letter Q and a question mark. It seems obvious that Q stands for ‘question’ to which no answer is yet provided, ?. A formulation of the question could be *There is a project (A) and no time (B) but no budget (C), what to do? (X)*. I paraphrased the plus sign in ‘and’ to contrast it with the minus sign in ‘but no’ according to their mathematical meaning. With no further context information, the addressee is kept in the dark about various issues; for instance, what kind of projects are supported, who will be supported and by whom and to what extent etc. In other words, there is no direct instruction to activate the ad, but rather an implicit one, accomplished by the curiosity created.



Figure 5.26 Web ad with simplified language use embedded in mathematical formulas, motivation “curiosity”

Methods	Linguistic means of persuasion by	
	addressees' communicative integration	emotional appeal
Means	questions	motivation strategies
	imperatives	trigger words
	personal, possessive pronouns	simplifications
	deictic terms	
	abbreviated sentences	

Figure 5.27 Summary of linguistic means of persuasion

To sum up, simplifications and shortenings on the Internet are innovative language use. One of their main, general functions is the time-saving aspect. Instead of typing whole words or sentences, just single or a few letters or numbers have the same meaning effect. In real-time or live online interactions like chats, they are quite common and very useful to speed up writing. Interactive communication through a keyboard and monitor between one or more users imitates verbal talk, but uses typed instead of verbal speech.

In online advertising, these simplified items have another effect. The ad's basic message is fixed once it is published. It is, therefore, possible that simplified language and shortenings have an entertaining effect which should appeal to the target group. Users might need to put some effort into decoding the meaning of the message – as long as advertising uses more commonly known simplifications which keep the advertising message easy to grasp. This advertising strategy of playing with words keeps users engaged with the web ad.

Table (5.27) summarizes the two classes of linguistic means of persuasion analyzed in this chapter.

As already mentioned, web ads do not always concentrate on one persuasive strategy, but combine several. Imperatives are accompanied by entertaining or sexual motivators, forms of personal user addressing are combined with direct and indirect questions or certain motivation strategies and trigger words. Any other combination is possible.

## 5.7 Summary

In advertising, there are various linguistic means and methods that appeal to customers. This chapter has analyzed the linguistic means and strategies which web ads use to gain attention and persuade users to activate them. Some of them have already been employed in traditional advertising and some of them have been created with the new medium. In most cases, these means try to

involve the user in the communication process in one way or another. Although in online advertising, web ads are mass media instruments like their printed counterparts, they address the individual user personally. Particular language use and the choice of vocabulary in advertising speech acts are aimed at achieving the user's feedback. This intended reciprocal communication is why linguistic methods of direct user addressing and forms of spoken-like, written language can be found in almost every web ad, but less in print ads that lack the possibility of direct user response. The analysis has shown that web ads very often employ directive speech acts when they address their target users in order to trigger an action. The explicit activation instruction *click here* is particularly used although users might be quite familiar with the activation of web ads. It is noteworthy to state that the function of appellative language is applied even though the imperative *click here* seems to be redundant. This instruction, however, has become an integral part of the advertising message, a call to action which is similarly used in direct advertising and obviously stresses the widespread use of directives in online advertising.

## CHAPTER 6

# Hyperadvertising

### 6.1 Introduction

In order to expose how a text is structured in the online advertising message, it is important to look at text from a more traditional point of view, first. I will, therefore, briefly explore the structural and functional aspects of linear texts and apply these findings to a printed advertising message. This is necessary, since the printed advertising message is a kind of printed hypertext, which leads to the characterization of hypertext and hyperlinks. Here, I will develop a new model of hypertext.

The main part of this chapter deals with “hyperadvertising”.<sup>1</sup> An explanatory pop-up ad will serve to illustrate the hypermessage structure. It is my aim to describe the way in which online advertising creates cohesion and coherence and, thus, message comprehension. The initial advertising message of web ads or pop-ups is the same for all the addressees, as in traditional mass media advertising, too. However, it is the linking hypertext structure that turns the online message into an individual and dynamic one. Various link options make it possible for web users to create their individual paths and establish their own advertising message and coherence – a new form of advertising.

### 6.2 Text

The development of definitions and especially a definition of “text” depends on the different perspectives of analyses. As a result of these pluralistic views, describing “text” is a rather difficult issue (e.g. Tiedge 1997; Brinker 1997). It is, therefore, understandable that even in linguistics, with its various disciplines, a universally applied, in depth-definition of text does not exist (Tiedge 1997:3; Klemm 2002: 17ff.).

It is not only the different branches, such as semantics and pragmatics, semiotics, textlinguistics or its antecedent rhetoric (e.g. Ueding 2000; Corbett 1990) which bring about this variety of text classifications, but also its usage

in different types of carrier media which contribute to its categorization. With the invention of the printing press, new typeset texts followed other criteria to the former handwritten ones. The radio contributed to its terminological expansion of spoken text, television combines both modes, and on the Web, we are faced with a range of texts modes and various multimedia elements. The variety of different types of text can make a differentiation quite difficult. As the study of online advertising has already shown, the hypermessage is not only an appellative text type, it also often has an entertaining and/or informative function.

To approach the notion of text in hyperadvertising, I will briefly introduce its different perspectives described in textlinguistics. In a next step, some relevant aspects that explain the notion of text in the hypermessage will be transferred, taking into consideration the media which carries the information. In other words, the analysis goes from text to hypertext, in particular from the printed advertising message to the digital message in hyperadvertising.

### 6.2.1 Definition

Textlinguistics has described text from different perspectives. The first approach, developed before the mid-sixties of the last century, is system-orientated and focuses on the structural properties of text. Leading scholars (e.g. de Saussure 1916; Bloomfield 1935; Chomsky 1965) based language description on grammatical rules and syntactic relations, originating from structuralistic sentence linguistics to textlinguistics (see e.g. Hartmann 1968). Sentence and text and their systematic description and relations are the most relevant points of reference in which a text is a sequence of words and sentences.

From the mid-sixties to the early seventies, criticism grew because structural textlinguistics neglected some linguistic phenomena like semantic relations (e.g. Vater 1994: 20) and context meaning. Together with the development of pragmatics, this evaluation led to the second approach in textlinguistics, which is action and communication-orientated. Related to the pragmatic turn (e.g. Feilke 2000), communicative textlinguistics does not analyze a text as an isolated unit, but looks at its context and examines its functional aspects. In other words, it studies the communicative situation in which the text occurs and incorporates the components of text production and reception, i.e. the sender and receiver, which become crucial constituents. From this pragmatic perspective, Jucker (2000a: 10) defines texts as intentional acts:

Sprachwissenschaftlich und insbesondere textlinguistisch verwendet man den Begriff 'Text' für die sprachliche Äußerungsform einer kommunikativen Handlung, die mit einer bestimmten Intention und für einen bestimmten Zweck, also eine bestimmte Funktion produziert wurde.

Linguistically and especially from the point of view of textlinguistics, the term 'text' is used for the linguistic realization of a communicative act which has been produced intentionally and for a specific purpose, and therefore with a specific function. (translation: AJ)

Parallels to advertising can easily be drawn. The advertising message can be understood as a speech act which is produced for a specific purpose and with a particular intention. The speech act is accomplished by the communication between the ad and its target audience. Advertising communication always tries to achieve certain effects.

Text as an "instrument of communication" (Thiele 1998: 525) can be generally defined as

eine Folge von geschriebenen oder gesprochenen monologischen oder dialogischen (...) Teiltexen, die sich aus Sätzen/Sprech- bzw. Intonationseinheiten konstituieren und auch nichtsprachliche Mittel wie bildliche Illustrationen umfassen kann.

a sequence of spoken or written monologue or dialogue (...) text units which consist of sentences/speech or intonation units and can also incorporate non-linguistic means, such as graphic illustrations. (translation: AJ)

Thiele's definition applies, therefore, to interpersonal communication where text is "spoken information" exchanged in a "dialogue form", but also to mass communication where texts like newspaper articles are "written information" and uni-directionally mediated. It also operates for advertising where the advertising text consists of written and/or spoken language, e.g. in print ads, in radio and television commercials, and of non-linguistic means such as pictures and sound. In conventional advertising, a text is transferred like a monologue; in direct, and even more in online advertising, its transfer takes place in the form of a dialogue.

A more recent approach in textlinguistics is directed at cognitive and process-orientated aspects deriving from the cognitive turn (e.g. Figge 2000). The process-orientated perspective, which emphasizes the increasing activities of receivers in online communication, is considered in the following analysis of the construction of coherence in the hyperadvertising message.



### 6.2.2 Text structure and function

A text can be written or spoken. With regard to the form and transmission of written texts, it is necessary to differentiate between written printed texts and written electronic or digital texts.

#### *Text structure*

The structure of texts depends on their mode of production and perception. Storrer (1999: 33) defines printed texts as

(...) sequentielle Abfolge von Teiltexten, die vom Leser in der vom Autor vorgegebenen linearen Anordnung rezipiert wird.

(...) sequence of text units which the reader receives in a linear way determined by the author. (translation: AJ)

In other words, the author establishes and basically determines the text structure and the reader's path<sup>2</sup> of text perception. In this sense, texts are linearly structured and perceived. This applies mainly to printed texts. The sequence of text structure has the principle that one text part (sentences or paragraphs) ( $T_x$ ) follows another ( $T_y$ ) to produce a text of ( $T_1 \dots T_n$ ). The model (6.1) by Fritz (1999: 222) illustrates a linear text structure.

The textual elements ( $T_3$ ) and ( $T_4$ ) are illustrated twice to demonstrate the author's autonomy of positioning text parts. From the perspective of text reception, the reader basically follows the author's predetermined path. Typical examples for linearly produced printed texts are narrative or general texts and articles that compose the meaning and understanding in a consecutive way. The comprehension is process-orientated and based on preceding sentences or text passages. For instance, a story is constructed step by step. Structurally and semantically, one sentence follows the other, creating a cohesive and coherent text. Information that is given at the beginning might be relevant at the end so that the whole story can be grasped.

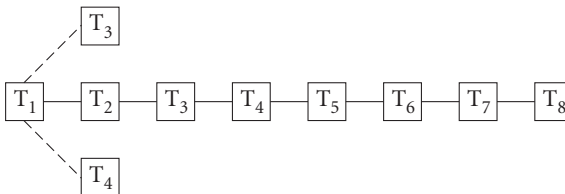


Figure 6.1 Linear text structure

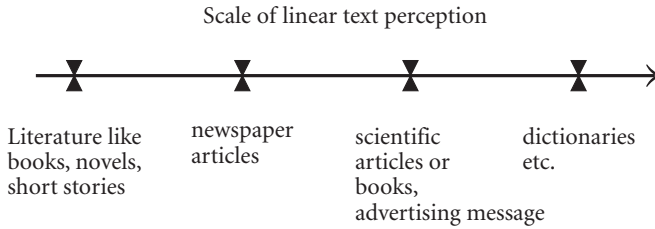
Blakemore (1988:241) describes this process-orientated perspective of coherence as follows:

(...) information made accessible by the interpretation of the first utterance is used in establishing the relevance of the second; the interpretation of that utterance makes information available for the interpretation of the third, and so on. In this way discourse provides the hearer with a continually changing background against which new propositions are processed. If the preceding discourse does not make contextual assumptions accessible for a new utterance, then the hearer will not be able to see any connection, and the discourse will seem incoherent.

However, this concept of linearity is only partially true. Although the majority of printed texts are constructed in a linear way, printed linearity is not a text inherent or exclusive criterion for perception. For instance, dictionaries, encyclopedias, or telephone books are printed documents,<sup>3</sup> but they are not intended to be read from the beginning to the end. As a corollary, the alphabetic order in dictionaries and encyclopedias allows for ubiquitous access and an individual search for required information. This means these texts do not have to be accessed in a linear way. Dictionaries are seldom read completely for their entire coherence to be established (Freisler 1994:20). In addition, linearity for reasons of comprehension is not necessary. Dictionaries do not need a semantic connection between the single entries. Each entry stands independently for itself. Jucker calls these kinds of printed texts that consist of textual units which are not determined for a linear access “printed hypertexts” (Jucker 2002a:29f.).

Of course, the level of the users’ freedom to choose their own path through the text depends on how loose or fixed the semantic connection of these printed hypertexts is. In this sense, scientific texts are, to some degree, also printed hypertexts. They often contain footnotes or other references, either at the end of a corresponding page, at the end of an article, or are included in the text. As different textual units, these further reading suggestions do not necessarily contribute to text comprehension, but are additional references or side information. Consulting cross references could cause some difficulty in availability, thus requiring a bigger time-shift for accessing them than is the case for commentating footnotes. This would then create a non-linear access to the text.

Nonetheless, the majority of these texts still have a particular sequence in common. Dictionaries are organized in an alphabetical order, scientific texts are linearly produced and can be basically understood without the reader having to follow further embedded footnotes. In addition to comprehension rea-



**Figure 6.2** Printed texts with increasing non-linear access

sons, the structural order in printed hypertexts is useful to speed up search and text selection, e.g. the alphabetical search for a single word. The degree of a chronological sequence in a text and the readers' text perception vary with regard to different text types. This is summarized on the scale above by pinpointing some characteristic examples (Figure 6.2).

The scale envisions that written printed texts like novels and short stories are more linearly produced and accessed than newspaper articles, scientific articles and dictionaries. We will see later in Section 6.2.4 that the written printed advertising text has a position between these groups. It uses a certain structural linearity, but is rather a printed hypertext. For advertising, it is important that the meaning of the advertising message is communicated, independently where the user enters the message.

### *Text functions*

Text as a means of communication pursues specific intentions. These intentions convey different text functions. Brinker (1997:93) defines "text function" as the communicative intention of the text producer towards the receiver, as the

Absicht des Emittenten, die der Rezipient erkennen soll, [...] die Anweisung (Instruktion) des Emittenten an den Rezipienten, als was dieser Text aufgefasst werden soll, [...].

intention of the sender to be recognized by the receiver, the sender's instruction (direction) to the receiver of how the text is to be comprehended [...].

(translation: A)

Based on everyday communication, Brinker (1997: 104f.) classifies five basic text functions. These also serve as the basis for the characterization of text types, i.e. informative function, appellative function, obligatory function, contact function, declarative function. Since advertising is part of everyday communication and makes use of these categories, I will briefly explain them.

Brinker's (ibid.) first mentioned text function is the "informative function". This function is found in informative text types like news and reports, and can be paraphrased as 'A informs B about X'.

Secondly, the "appellative function" of text, in appellative text types, means that 'A says something to B in order to influence B's attitudes or action'. According to Brinker (ibid.), advertising as well as law and politics etc. make intensive use of appellative language. Chapter 5 considered the use of appellative language in advertising in detail and showed how it is often accomplished by directive speech acts.

Thirdly, the "obligatory text function" can be paraphrased by 'A making an obligatory promise to B to do X'. Examples of where these text types can be found are in contracts, offers, or agreements.

Fourthly, with the "contact function" Brinker has in mind that 'A makes it clear to B that for A their personal relation (establishment and continuation) is important'. These text types are closely connected with social events where personal attitudes need to be expressed, like letters of condolence, texts for marriage, birth etc.

Fifthly, declarative text types signal new realities or changes of situation. That means 'A says X is Y'. This "declarative function" is found in texts like last wills and testaments or certificates.

There is one text function which Brinker did not classify and which I would like to include, i.e. the "entertaining text function". In everyday communication, written and spoken texts are also used to entertain. Continuing Brinker's formulas, this would mean 'A says something to B in order to entertain B'. These texts can be found in comics, novels, jokes, puns, and talk shows, but also frequently in advertising.

Brinker's categorization, however, serves to show that in hyperadvertising, various combinations of text types can be found. Of course, advertising is an appellative text type, but as I have already shown, it cannot be exclusively grouped into just one of these classes. Advertising texts often fulfill various functions of Brinker's text classifications. Print ads similar to web ads can be informative text types that are also humorous, but which still have an appellative function. Many other functional combinations are possible.

### 6.2.3 Cohesion and coherence

There are some additional conditions that must be met before a text is defined as a text (e.g. de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981: 3; Schmidt 1976: 144). I will only

focus on two central criteria of textuality (e.g. Vater 1994: 65; Storrer 1999: 40), i.e. “cohesion” and “coherence”. Both are responsible for text comprehension.

### *Cohesion*

As a part of structural textlinguistics, de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 3–4) define the cohesion of a text as

die Art, wie die Komponenten des OBERFLÄCHENTEXTES, d.h. die Worte [...] miteinander verbunden sind. Die Oberflächenkomponenten hängen durch grammatische Formen und Konventionen voneinander ab, so daß also Kohäsion auf GRAMMATISCHEN ABHÄNGIGKEITEN beruht.

(emphasis by de Beaugrande & Dressler)

the way in which the components of the SURFACE TEXT, i.e. the words [...] are connected to each other. The surface components are dependent on grammatical forms and conventions which means that cohesion is based on GRAMMATICAL DEPENDENCIES. (translation: AJ)

Regarding sentence structure (e.g. Vater 1994: 32; Tiedge 1997: 6), text cohesion is realized through grammatical relations in the consecutive sequence of text units, such as repetitions of text elements, the use of referring expressions such as pronouns, lexicalization, tenses, syntactical elements such as ellipses, or paraphrasing.<sup>4</sup> Cohesion remains independent of coherence.

### *Coherence*

A second criterion of textuality is coherence. Coherence is part of the analysis of communicative textlinguistics and can be generally described as

den textbildenden Zusammenhang, der die einzelnen Textelemente über die Satzgrenze hinaus zusammenhält. (Jucker 2000a: 25)

the text-creating context which holds together the single textual elements across the sentence border. (translation: AJ)

That means coherence focuses on the meaning of text, the semantic junction of language units beyond the syntax level. Thus, coherence is closely connected with text comprehension (e.g. Foltz 1996: 114, 128) which can be supported by formal, syntactic relations (cohesion). There are text types like poems which refrain from cohesion, but which are still coherent or have an accessible sense (Vater 1994: 65). Coherence in text is realized as long as there is an underlying and continual sense or meaning. In this connection, de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 88) define text as a ‘continuation of sense’. Since text coherence is possible without text cohesion, Vater (ibid.) concludes that coherence is

the most dominant criterion of textuality, and is responsible for the establishment of text. This is also the reason why advertising messages, which consist of various linguistic and non-linguistic elements, are understood by an audience although they often lack grammatical cohesion. The single elements build a coherent message meaning.

According to Fritz (1999:221–222) “coherence is regarded as a guiding principle for text production and as the basis for understanding texts.” Due to a mixture of aspects like background knowledge, status of information, psychological disposition, cultural and social values, and interest, texts are perceived and interpreted in different ways by different readers, which also means that a different text understanding is inevitable. Nevertheless, text perception is based on such factors. New information is affected by already acquired knowledge and integrated into pre-existing structures.

In addition, Foltz (1996: 118f.) points out that comprehension might interact with the narrative schema of a text and its structural and semantic features. He argues that in the context of decoding meaning, familiar text types might be more transparent to readers than text types and structures with which they are less familiar. In other words, readers have certain experiences and, therefore, certain expectations of text types and functions that are subject to specific conventions. For instance, the reader of a detective novel basically expects a criminal action that will be solved. The story is often accompanied by a surprising ending while trying to keep the readers in suspense. The same is relevant for readers of scientific texts who generally expect to be informed, but not entertained. From the communicative perspective, advertisements have the function of informing, but mainly convincing the addressees about the promoted product. From the commercial perspective, advertising aims to increase sales figures. It is, therefore, necessary that advertisers also meet their target groups’ expectations. A violation of expectations, cohesion, and coherence could lead to misunderstanding or a discontinuation of reading. The addressees, however, seem to be quite aware of the purposes of advertising – not without reason do whole advertising conceptions try to attract their attention, but they are faced with the addressees’ ignorance (e.g. banner blindness).

#### 6.2.4 The advertising message as printed hypertext

Print advertisements are permanently available sources of information that allow receivers to go back and re-read the advertising message in as much detail as they desire. The structure of an advertising message in traditional print advertising principally follows the structure of printed hypertexts. Its elements

are basically presented in a non-linear fashion and can be accessed as such, after a first visual consideration which is determined by a certain order. Especially in advertising, perception follows certain rules of attention. In the interplay of text and picture, the majority of receivers first pay attention to the picture and then to the text.<sup>5</sup> Since images are perceived faster than text, they are often implemented to create an initial contact<sup>6</sup> to the ad receiver (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 144). Illustrations and pictures have at least two functions. First, to catch the readers' attention and to keep them on the ad; and secondly, to carry the story or the mood of the advertising message.

Considering these rules, advertisers can, to some extent, direct attention and basically determine the way in which they want readers to visually access the message.<sup>7</sup> This means that the creation of elements is relevant for their first perception. Nevertheless, after this first visual contact, recipients have the option of deciding whether to read the body copy in total, looking at the background picture in more detail or of concentrating on the headline or slogan, which makes the access to the message non-linear.

Print ad (6.3) will exemplify the non-linear text structure of an advertising message and its principles of comprehension by textual cohesion and coherence. The ad is structured by five components: a picture of a station with a passing train and silhouettes of passengers, a headline, which is a combination of a statement and a question, saying

(72) I AM YOUR IDEA  
How far can I take you?,

a body copy, the name of the sender, *Accenture*, and the slogan *Innovation delivered*.

With regard to the AIDA formula, this ad uses the picture and the headline on the billboard as initial, attention-getting devices. It is the sender's name and the claim which finish the message. As part of an image campaign, in this print ad, the call to action is not as explicit as in web ads, but rather implicitly understood in the complete argumentation and collaboration of elements. Thus, the position and emphasis of elements structure the message and are responsible for its perception. Here, it is more the correlation and mutual interplay of components than a fixed sequence which makes the advertising message coherent and comprehensible. The choices of interaction in these different elements break down the structural text linearity. Consequently, I would characterize the message structure of print ads as a printed hypertext, i.e. a set of information units which are individually accessible after certain rules of attention have been applied.



Figure 6.3 The structure of an advertising message in a print ad

With regard to the print ad (6.3), its message gives an impression of physical transportation, realized by the moving train, which might pragmatically associate mental or business movement. This is accomplished in the sign which carries the headline that points to the train and asks *How far can I take you?*. The headline catches the readers' attention because of its graphically emphasized position and is, therefore, a striking written element of the ad. The claim *Innovation delivered* strengthens the coherence of all elements since the train as a means of transportation also functions physically as a supplier of goods. Metaphorically interpreted, the train substitutes the company *Accenture* which delivers ideas, *innovations*. This figurative substitution is elucidated by the statement *I am your idea*. There are no cohesive devices used in the headline. Without written information, the ad would have various – if not too many possible interpretations, which reflects the importance of textual information.

To summarize, the message structure in traditional print advertising is predominately non-linearly structured. Although the preliminary visual sequence of elements can be determined by the advertiser, the access to the printed



advertising message is basically determined by the receiver. Even if pictorial information is grasped first, textual information specifies the meaning of the advertising message. In most cases the deconstruction of a message meaning depends more on the interplay of all elements and the readers' motivations than on a special sequence. For the advertising purpose, it is essential that the meaning of the advertising message is comprehended, no matter where the user enters the message.

### 6.3 Hypertext

This chapter will elaborate the most important characteristics of hypertexts and hyperlinks with regard to hyperadvertising.

#### 6.3.1 Characteristics of hypertexts

Hypertext has the power to change the way we understand and experience texts (...). (Landow 1989:174)

The system of hypertext and hyperlinks is the typical way of presenting and obtaining information on the world wide web. For some years, hypertext has been the central point of comprehensive studies and discussions. Today, a rather heterogeneous use of the term "hypertext" can be found. Sometimes, it is not clear enough whether hypertexts refer to parts, whole web pages, or to hypertext networks. Occasionally, the notion implies only textual elements, in other cases, hypertext includes multimedia components. In the latter, hypertext is synonymous with hypermedia. Often, hypertext is viewed in comparison to linear texts and some scholars (e.g. Preu & Ehlers 1998) come to conclusions that hypertexts do not differ very much from conventional texts, except for some newly added features and restrictions like their electronic presence on the Internet. Others polarize and realize that hypertext

is text seen in a new way, a new kind of text. (Deemer 1995)

One reason for these diverging perspectives might be that hypertext structures are not entirely new. As pointed out before, there are printed text types which show structural similarities to hypertexts. Nevertheless, there are significant differences.

Hypertexts are electronically stored and can contain a vast range of information. There is fast access to these information units, which Freisler (1994: 20)

summarizes as the advantages of hypertexts. With reference to the density of information, Nelson<sup>8</sup> (1965:96), who is widely taken (e.g. Eckkrammer 2002:39; Landow 1992:4) as the originator of the term “hypertext”, defines it as

(...) written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper.

Printed books can only contain a restricted number of pages and a certain format, otherwise they are functionally ineffective. It takes little time to leaf through a book, but much more to consult or to search out different references. Due to the technical realization, any cross-reference in a hypertext can be accessed immediately via hyperlinks. For instance, the navigation menu or search tools are directly linked to diverse corresponding units.

Storrer (1999:38–39) categorizes different types of hypertexts. She defines “hypertexts” as electronically published texts with a non-linear text structure that have a recognizable text function and a thematic consistency, such as web sites. Hypertexts are open-ended. “E-texts”<sup>9</sup> are linearly organized texts that are part of a hypertext. Similar to printed texts, in e-texts cohesive devices are used. A “hypertext net” connects hypertexts and e-texts by hyperlinks. In this sense, the world wide web is a hypertext net rather than a hypertext. Applying her classification of online texts to hyperadvertising, the initial advertising message of a web ad is an e-text. It is linearly structured and, as the source of the linked advertising message, part of a hypertext. The advertising message from its initial point to its target site is a hyperlink (from IAM to LAM); including different hyperlink options on the target site (EAM) turns it into a hypertext. Only theoretically can the advertising message be enlarged to a hypertext net.

Printed texts cannot be updated. Once a text is printed, it cannot be changed in its original layout by the author, or by the reader, apart from scribbles and comments written in the margin. This applies basically to a hypertext on the web page. The original source on the web site can only be changed by authorized persons, but not by users. Nevertheless, online readers have the possibility to copy and save these hypertexts easily on their computers. Then, they can add, change, renew, or extract new text parts, sentences, words or other data. E-texts and smaller hypertexts can be stored, but hypertext nets are too complex to be archived. From the perspective of hypertext production, hypertexts can be continually modified. New elements can be added while others are deleted.

The structure of textual information in hypertexts, in contrast to printed linear texts, is primarily non-linear. Hypertexts consist of single, interconnected information units, named “hyperlinks”. Non-linearity in hypertexts

results in individual reading paths with ubiquitous access, unlike the predetermined path in printed texts, and this in turn leads to different ways of perception and comprehension.

### 6.3.2 A structure of hypertexts

For complexity and flexibility reasons, it is difficult or even impossible to visualize the structure of open-ended and individually created hypertexts or even hypertext nets. Nevertheless, there are certain characteristics, such as the linking function and the aspect of breaking down the linearity of texts, which can be outlined in a model (e.g. Figures 6.4, 6.5). Actually, the structure of hypertext is multi-linear (e.g. Fritz 1999:222) rather than non-linear (e.g. Amaral 1995, Storrer 1999:38). Its information units can be spread and combined infinitely within the whole world wide web. Fritz (1999:222f.) refers to multilinearity from the users' perspective saying that they select their own way through a network in any direction, which is visualized in Figure 6.4.

For a general hypertext model, at least three criteria need to be added for the following reasons. First, his model illustrates a closed network of textual elements ( $T_1$ – $T_8$ ) that are linked to each other. Hypertexts, however, are open-ended. Secondly, his model disregards the hierarchical structure that is very common for hypertexts. Textual elements are embedded in other textual elements. Thirdly, not all hypertexts contain a starting page or a textual element like a homepage. This is not necessary although it seems that a lot of web sites have one. Users do not need to access a web site by its homepage; there are other optional links which lead users directly to the information unit they want. Nevertheless, the homepage is a means of orientation, structurally and contextually. It provides an overview of the structural content of the web site

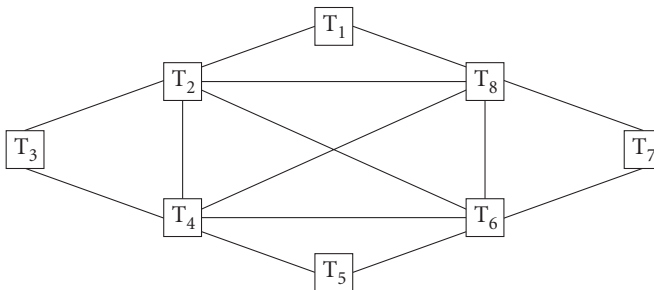


Figure 6.4 Hypertext structure by Fritz (1999:223)

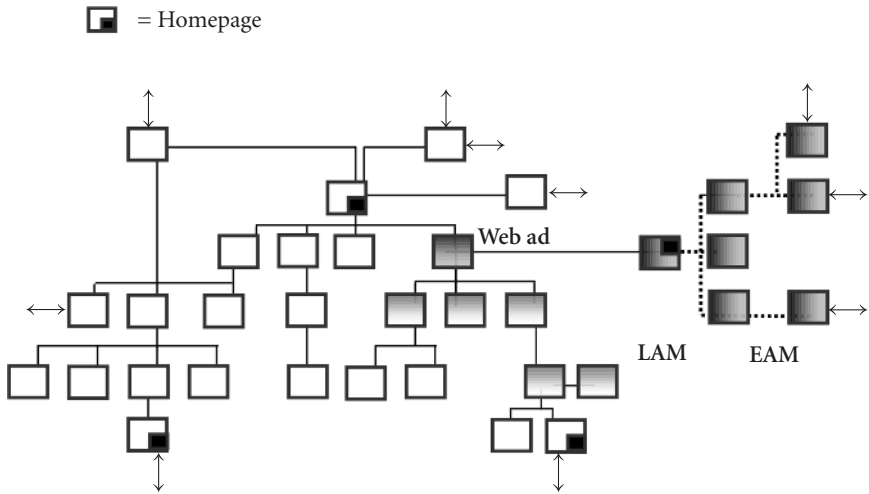


Figure 6.5 A new model of a hypertext structure

by the main navigation menu and should give users an idea of what the web site is about. The homepage gives a hypertext a contextual setting, a point to start from, even if there is no end.

In this sense, Fritz's model applies best to a hypertext with no further connections to other hypertexts, as for instance, the electronic OED saved on an external data carrier, such as a CD-Rom.

The model above (Figure 6.5) of a possible hypertext structure is based on Fritz's illustration (Figure 6.4), but considers the critical points already mentioned.

Hypertexts can be presented in various complex structures and not just in the manner of the model above. This model basically exemplifies the structure of a web site integrated in the world wide web. It sketches the position of the web site within a hypertext net as there are other homepages/hypertexts symbolically integrated. The small black cubes represent a "homepage", as the starting page of a web site. Even if the homepage is contextually the entrance of a web site, it is centered here to demonstrate that there is no necessity to access web sites only through this door. In other words, hypertexts are decentralized structures and not conceptualized to be followed linearly. Their open-ended connection to other information units, sites, and pages is visualized by the two-directional arrows. They symbolize the source and target or exits and entrance to other textual elements.

All other cubes (black and white) are further connected hyperlinks. For instance, a web ad as a hyperlink with a pull-down menu might be positioned on the homepage. This initial advertising message can be connected internally (brighter cubes), but is mostly externally<sup>10</sup> linked (darker cubes). In this model, its target is another homepage that expands the advertising message by other connected links which make up the linked advertising message (LAM). The dotted lines refer to further links that represent the ad's extended advertising message (EAM).

The structure of hypertexts has some influence on writing and reading behavior. Due to the decentralized and infinite structure and the ubiquitous hyperlink access, hypertexts need to be constructed accordingly. The multi-linear way of presenting information affects the users' reading behavior. Online readers have control over the order in which they extract information from the Web. In other words,

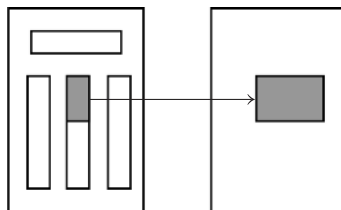
(...) readers of hypertexts may follow their own path, create their own order – their own meaning out of the material. (Amaral 1995)

The creation of an individual path entails that for the users the reading process is always linear. This also implies that coherence in hypertext is process-orientated, determined by the users, and not a text-intrinsic quality.

The next example of a hypertext structure, a model of articles presented in online newspapers (Figure 6.7), can be demonstrated by its comparison to the structure of a printed article (Figure 6.6).

Surfing through printed newspapers can be paraphrased as leafing through pages. Even if printed editions do not have immediately connecting links, they often continue articles on subsequent pages (Figure 6.6), but a "(...) substantial interplay between different spreads is rare" (Nielsen 1999).

Online articles differ from printed articles in the presentation and structure of news. On the entrance page of online newspapers, articles often consist of a



**Figure 6.6** Text structure of an article in a printed newspaper continued on a following page

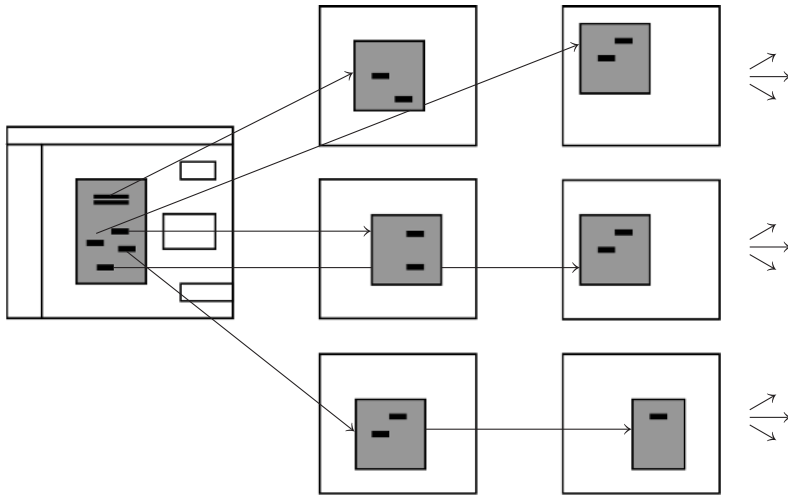


Figure 6.7 Hypertext structure visualized by an article in an online newspaper

headline and a brief summary presented in one or two sentences or a paragraph (see e.g. screenshot, Figure 6.8). This also applies to the front page of printed newspapers, although often a longer article follows right after the headline. Readers of online and printed texts decide whether or not to read the complete article just on the strength of briefly summarized information. Online readers are additionally supported in their decision-making by the hyperlinks offered which continue the article on the linked pages (6.7). In an optimal way, these links provide a contextual overview. The text organization on web sites follows the scanning reading behavior of online users and the limited space of the screen.<sup>11</sup> Material on one topic can be grouped together as special features or sections and stored in archives, too; in contrast to printed editions, this is immediately accessible.

When reading online articles, users interact with the text or text parts. They enter into a kind of dialogical exchange with the hypertext. Logically linked text parts allow the users to save time by scanning and consulting only those information units in which they are interested, and leaving out others that are already known and/or of no further relevance. The linking of text components is, therefore, an important issue that defines the quality of hypertext (Eckkammer 2002: 37) and is a means of coherence.

Hypertext authors, like traditional text authors, are faced with the same task when creating texts. Both need to find ways that invite users to read their work, as well as holding their attention. The problem with which hypertext au-

thors are additionally confronted is how to support users' orientation within the hypertext under certain screen reading conditions. According to a preliminary study by the Ohio State University (Grabmeier n.d.), texts on computer screens are "harder to understand, less interesting and less persuasive" than printed texts. The study is based on 131 students who had to read a printed article that appeared in the *Time* magazine and then the same electronic version on the Internet. With respect to learning skills and behavior, it has been concluded that readers develop strategies for remembering and comprehending printed text, but the students were unable to transfer these skills to electronic texts. From this point of view, it seems important that hypertexts need to provide skillfully designed texts and easy to grasp links as helpful tools for user navigation and comprehension. Structured textual information makes it easier to understand the information given on the screen.

### 6.3.3 Functions of hypertexts

Brinker's classification of text functions mentioned earlier in this chapter<sup>12</sup> is also applicable to the description of hypertext functions and types, especially with regard to the perspective of viewing text in everyday communication. Communication on the Internet can also be considered as everyday communication. It finds regular usage in private and business communication, with a worldwide coverage by millions of users for everyday e-mail exchange, chats, information, news, online shopping, production transactions, software supplies etc.<sup>13</sup>

Although hypertexts are informative, appellative, obligatory, fulfill a contact function, are declarative and entertaining, there is one decisive difference from the functions of texts because of structural and technical reasons. Hypertexts, comparable to web ads, seldom fulfill only one function – they incorporate many.<sup>14</sup> However, it is first necessary to examine where these types of hypertexts can be found on the Internet.

News portals or online newspapers are aimed at providing information. They have a mainly "informative function". However, these web sites often accomplish other functions, too. They establish a contact between the online writer and reader. This "contact function" takes place on the interactional level, technically and linguistically. Services like e-mailing and chat communication are examples of how users can either get in contact with the producer and sender of the web site or with other users.

The "appellative function" is, for instance, realized in hyperadvertising. As outlined in Chapter 5, web ads make frequent use of appellative language for

persuasive purposes. The appellative text function of web advertisements can also be compared to their function in general since web ads try to influence the addressee's attitudes and call to action. However, their analysis has shown that web ads can additionally pursue an informative hypertext function like those in Figure 5.8, 5.21. They inform about special price offers. Others combine an entertaining purpose with appealing language.

The "declarative function" of hypertexts can be found in online certificates. There are, for instance, voluntary regulations on web ad sizes (Interactive Advertising Bureau, <http://www.iab.net>). Of course, these sites have an informative function for users, too.

Although there are contracts on the Web, there is still some uncertainty about their legal validity, e.g. digital signatures in different countries etc. However, "obligatory hypertext functions" can be found, for instance, in web sites that offer services like opening an e-mail account, participating in an online auction, or online shopping in general. These services are only accessible under certain contract conditions.

One relevant reason for these blended hypertext functions and types is their flexible text structure and their interactive function due to new technologies. Finite texts tend to concentrate on one function in order to be most effective. Infinite hypertexts are difficult to restrict to just one text function since it seems impossible to define where a hypertext starts and where it ends. In addition, the e-texts placed in hypertexts can also have different text functions, which means it is rather impossible to devote a single function to hypertexts. Due to the inherent characteristic elements of hypertexts, users can easily jump from one text type to another by using hyperlinks. Moreover, hyperlinks themselves fulfill different functions which will be explained in the next section.

#### 6.3.4 Definition of hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are an integral part of a hypertext. They allow readers to move from one textual unit to another linked information unit. There are "internal links" which can be found within one text or on the same web site and "external hyperlinks" that lead to different documents or web sites.

In a more detailed categorization, Storrer (1999: 39)<sup>15</sup> classifies three types of hyperlinks. There are "intratextual" hyperlinks which connect links in the same hypertext, usually on one and the same web page; "intertextual" hyperlinks which can be found on the whole web site and which connect single pages within the same web site; and "extratextual" hyperlinks that lead users to other



web sites. Web ads are mainly extratextual links. Only in some cases do they direct users intertextually within the same web site. If online shops promote their own products on their web site, the ad has an internal referring function. For instance, in the health section, an ad might promote sports articles that are contextually related to physical recuperation. These products can be found in the linked sports sector of the same web site to which the activated ad will direct the user. The advantage of intertextual and intratextual hyperlinks from the provider's perspective is that the users might not be lost to other external sites. For the time being, they are kept within the pages of one's own site.

Storrer's link definition concentrates on the different targets to which a trigger is connected. Since hyperlinks are marked and readers recognize them predominantly by their visual conception, I would like to include this aspect here. There are principally three types of links, i.e. "text links" (A), "image links" (B), "interactive links" (C). The following screenshot of the online newspaper, *Sun Online*, exemplifies Storrer's link terminology with the visual presentation of hyperlinks (Figure 6.8).

Text links are typographically marked as underlined or bold words and sentences like headlines, structural issues in the navigation menu, or other

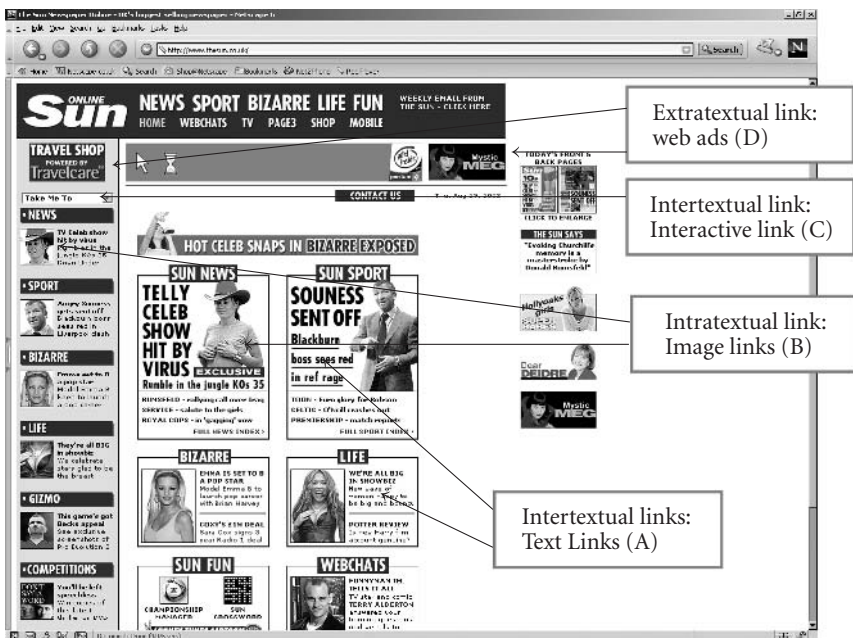


Figure 6.8 Screenshot with different types of hyperlinks

keywords like brands, names etc. As descriptive links, they are used as an orientation for the users' navigation and function as a contextual overview of the information that can be expected on the target page.

The same function applies to image links such as pictures, icons, or illustrations, but presumably with a higher pragmatic impact, requiring some more effort and possibilities to extract their meaning. In order to direct users when figuring out the meaning of image links, text tags (also: *ALT tags*) can explain their denotation when the mouse is run over the image.

Interactive links<sup>16</sup> (C) offer users options to select. These can be pull-down menus, or search boxes. Web ads (D) as a special kind of hyperlinks are either image links, text links, or interactive links, but in most cases a combination of (A), (B), and/or (C).

### 6.3.5 Functions of hyperlinks

Hyperlinks have mainly three functions. One of them has already been examined. This is their task of persuading and motivating users to click, which is especially important for commercial web ads. A second function is the connection between two units. Jucker (2002a:39) uses the following model (6.9) to visualize that hyperlinks functionally and structurally consist of two parts, i.e. a "trigger"<sup>17</sup> and an "anchor". The trigger is placed on the root text. It is the component which activates the link. The anchor describes the position at which users arrive when the link has been activated.

In terms of online advertising, the trigger is the initial advertising message and the anchor the connected web page, i.e. the linked advertising message.

A third function of hyperlinks is the need to meet users' expectations on the linked web page, associated by the information on the trigger. For instance,

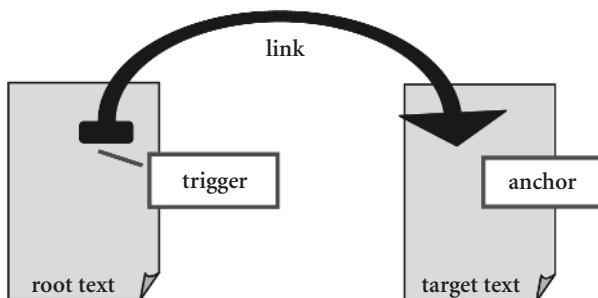


Figure 6.9 Structure and function of a hypertext link

the activation of the *home*-button is meant to take the users back to the homepage of a web site. Likewise, the *contact*-button promises users the possibility to get back to the sender. This can be done directly via a response-template on the web site, or e-mail, and indirectly via telephone or mail. In most cases, all three possibilities are offered. The same applies to other text links that are integrated in a text or function as headlines. These hyperlinks contain a semantic proposition, awakened by the trigger and which should be realized on the linked page. The selection of words that describe triggers is, therefore, important, but not always unproblematic as Gray (1995:630) outlines:

Competency is demonstrated in everyday life through agreed-upon meanings of the words that can be used to create information categories. Words and categories are seen as not continually subject to negotiation. Nevertheless, there can be a great deal of ambiguity and actors may not share with the hypertext an assessment of what data can be found in which category. Such ambiguity may not become visible until interaction becomes troubled. Until then shared meanings are assumed.

This means that the more denotation and connotation correspond to each other, and the less ambiguous the terms are, the more effective links are. The meaning of text triggers can also depend on factors like the context in which they occur and the affinity of the target group. For instance, a navigation point called *tips* or *help* does not clearly connote what kind of tips are to be found. In the context of *car washing*, it is more likely to expect tips on how to clean a car. Predefined interactive links face the same problem. The information provided by pull-down menus, for example, should give readers a good indication of what they might anticipate on the target text. Ambiguous information entails the danger of being provided with unexpected, perhaps unwanted information.

It is more difficult to meet expectations provoked by pictures and signs because the possibility of different interpretations by different users is higher than in explicit text links (Wirth 2002:121f.). As mentioned before, in order to direct these interpretations, an ALT-tag is often used or a combination of a picture and integrated text.

For free keyword entry on interactive hyperlinks, the concordance between the word entry and target can be even more problematic if particular expectations in the users' minds are not met by the proposed link targets. Of course, this is also a problem of how precisely word meanings agree with expectancy. The more concrete an entry the higher the chance of being linked to corresponding targets. And vice versa, the more generic term entries are, the less precise the search results will be. The results received depend, to some ex-



Figure 6.10 Matching results by an internal hyperlink search

tent, on whether they are externally or internally linked. The latter might limit search results to looking for matches in a restricted network, i.e. at one web site (see Figure 6.10). In some cases, an internal, restricted search might be more appropriate than an external search on the whole world wide web. For instance, the entry *holiday* in the search engine Google.com (accessed 09/2003) found approximately 5,190,000 matching entries. In contrast, the internal search in the online newspaper, *Sun Online*, found only 23 results in the current issue (Figure 6.10).

Looking at the aspect of the communication process between the web site and the target user, it can be said that the more concretely the connotations of triggers are restricted, the more successful the interaction will be. Precise textual trigger information does not allow many interpretations and will, therefore, be more likely to meet the users' expectations than vague ones would be (Figure 6.11).

The meaning of hyperlinks creates and influences comprehension, and thus, their selection and the users' path. If users do not understand the meaning of a trigger, they will probably turn their attention somewhere else. The appropriate naming of triggers is, therefore, fundamental in communication on the Internet.

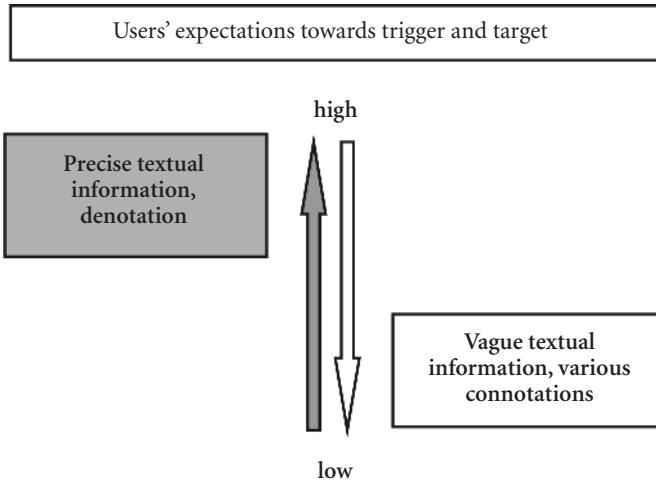


Figure 6.11 Users' expectations in relation to trigger denotation and connotation

In addition, the naming of hyperlinks or their source is responsible for the meaning correlation between trigger and anchor, with which coherence is created in hypertexts. The following section explains why there is little cohesion between single linking textual elements in hypertext nets and also how coherence can be realized. An example is given in Section 6.4, which serves as an explanation of the hyperadvertising message, its structure and function. Moreover, it demonstrates how cohesion and coherence is accomplished on the Internet.

### 6.3.6 Cohesion and coherence in hyperadvertising texts

As stated before, texts can be coherent without using cohesive elements (e.g. Vater 1994: 32). This does not just apply to linear texts, but even more so to hypertexts. What does cohesion and coherence mean in hyperadvertising and how do online advertising and addressees create them in multi-linear hypertexts?

There are several reasons for the rare usage of grammatical cohesion in multi-linear hypertexts.<sup>18</sup> First, since hypertexts provide several paths, grammatical cohesion across sentences or textual units is difficult or almost impossible to accomplish. Secondly, most text triggers are not whole sentences, but often single words or short phrases. Lexical cohesion between words, however, can exist in the listing of words, although this seems difficult to achieve

on the Web. A certain sequence of words implies a fixed linear path. On the Web, predefined paths are restricted to e.g. guided tours and to e-texts. Nevertheless, lexical cohesion occurs. Jucker (2002:41ff.) differentiates between “semantically filled links” and “semantically empty links”. The former refer to semantically explicit triggers, such as lexical repetitions where the trigger information is repeated on the target site. For the latter, Jucker uses the example of footnote conventions in printed texts that have been transferred to hypertexts. In this case, trigger and anchor are numbers that indicate cross-references. However, apart from lexical cohesion in hypertexts, other cohesive devices, such as grammatical cohesion are very rare and difficult to find.

In contrast, coherence as “the basis for understanding texts” (Fritz 1999: 221–222), is quite a usual phenomenon on the Web. Information units are related on a pragmatic or contextual level, which is consistent with the definition of coherence. According to Foltz (1996: 114),

the primary goal of both hypertexts and linear texts is to convey information in a coherent form to a reader.

Following Storrer (1999:40), coherence in hypertexts is not a text-inherent property, but a process-orientated one and as such, the linkage of meaning is rooted in a communicative context. Hyperlinks work as information points which create a semantic chain when connected. This also means that hypertext coherence depends on the users working their way along these points and creating their individual coherent paths. In online advertising, for instance, the trigger and target are often sense related. This means the initial advertising message (IAM) is continued through the linked advertising message (LAM), as in Figure 3.2, when a swimsuit is offered on the ad which can be bought at the target online shop.

Engebreetsen (1997:222) interprets a missing sense relation as “one of the greatest costs of hypertext”. On the one hand, this is particularly true of hyperadvertising which creates certain expectations in the users that should be met. On the other hand, coherence is restricted on the Web. Depending on the path a user selects, coherence can be more extensive or less so, due to the variety of information choices connected to each other. A very simple example to elucidate this is the browser’s “back” button. Activating this button, users return to the previously visited page(s). Here, they can start an alternative path – either sense related to the earlier one or completely unrelated, which then interrupts the coherence making process.

In brief, coherence on the Web and in hyperadvertising is process-orientated, but restricted. Relevant factors that contribute to the sense continu-

ation are the corresponding descriptions and wordings of the triggers and their target, in addition to the users' individually created path through the Internet.

#### 6.4 The hypertext message in online advertising

From the structural perspective, the most relevant characteristics of hypertexts also pertain to hyperadvertising. Thus, I define "hyperadvertising", with regard to web ads, as a

multi-linear hypertext which aims at persuading addressees to activate its trigger (IAM) and direct users to its target text (LAM).

The method of deepening the ad's message is multi-linear. Users can combine pieces of information in which they are interested once they have triggered the web ad. Therefore, there is no possibility and no need for a linear structure in order to understand the message, since its content follows the users' personal requirements. The hyperadvertising message is theoretically an unlimited flow of information units. The more links a target web site provides, the more the users decide on their paths through the site. A decreasing sender control turns into an increasing user power in individual message linking. This makes it difficult to define exactly which parts still belong to the message and which do not. It also explains why I subdivided the hyperadvertising message of web ads<sup>19</sup> into three parts, the initial, the linked, and the extended advertising message.

The online message has no fixed end and the users are actively involved in the creation of the hypermessage. This differs from traditional advertising. Here, the message structure and content are limited and unchangeably fixed once its instruments have been produced, published and broadcast. Any changes like scribbles on ads do not make any modifications to the original version. Print ads, TV-commercials, direct mailing letters have a beginning and an end. The whole message is placed on a page of a magazine, or on a letter, and TV-commercials tell their story in a fixed sequence of pictures and sound. Advertisers decide what to mediate and in which way – the addressee just receives it. Restricted by their technical format, traditional means of advertising are identical for all receivers and cannot provide options for further expansion.

Hyperadvertising provides a new potential for alternative user action in which the recipient selects different information units, and thus becomes both the author and the reader. Since different users click on different hyperlinks, they combine different information units and generate different customized messages. According to Kaplan (1995):

Each choice of direction a reader makes in her encounter with the emerging text, in effect, produces that text.

Hence, the linked and extended advertising message is also a “self-selected path” (Fritz 1999: 223), dependent on the user. Consequently, there is no fixed message for a mass audience, but instead, infinite flexible messages. To persuade and direct users to the target site advertisers decide how and what kind of information they want to provide on the web ad.

Although the structure of hypertexts allows users to retrieve information, this freedom of choice is only partly true. The selection and activation of other hyperlinks is restricted to those hyperlinks which are actually provided, and therefore, pre-selected by the producer. Other data cannot be accessed – at least not directly by links on the current page.

The following example exposes a hypermessage structure from the initial advertising message to the linked advertising message and reveals how cohesion and coherence are realized. When I accessed the online newspaper, TheNewYorkTimes.com, the source web site opened and a pop-up window appeared before the homepage had been completely loaded (Figure 6.12).

Since this pop-up ad covers up main parts of the web page, it first of all prevents users from reading the information on the page. At this point, the users need to decide whether to ignore the content of the ad and go directly to



Figure 6.12 Web site with self-opening pop-up ad





Figure 6.13 Structure of an advertising message visualized by a pop-up ad

the news provided by *The New York Times* or whether to give up the original plan and follow the promotional hyperlink. In either case, a users' reaction is unavoidable – interaction is realized.

The key visual of the advertising message (Figure 6.13) consists mainly of silhouettes of people. Linguistically, it consists of truncated speech acts<sup>20</sup> (73), the sender's name, *CheapTickets*, a claim (74), a headline (75), and the directive *click here*.

- (73) So does he (...) (A)
- He knew already (...) (B)
- He told them (...) (C)
- She knows (...) (D)

Speech act (A) in (73) seems to be a representative through which the speaker expresses a confirmative statement, possibly made as a reaction to something that has been uttered before. The speech acts (B–D) employ transitive verbs that miss their direct object. This is a clear marker of just started, but not finished sentences. The complete meaning of these truncated sentences is obscure. This unspoken information is presumably only shared by the speakers in the ad, who might belong to a privileged group of people. Moreover, the hidden information creates the impression of an exclusive, particular knowledge. This could be the reason why graphically, only silhouettes are illustrated, and linguistically, no names as personal referring expressions are mentioned in the speech acts. Like a secret, the identification of these communicating people remains covered. Secrets can be advantageous for those who know them. For others, a secret might create interest and curiosity if they realize that there is something special, but that they have no idea about its content. This is one motivation strategy which the ad employs to persuade its addressees to click. The term *secret* is explicitly expressed by the claim (74):

## (74) THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN TRAVEL.

It emphasizes the secret by the superlative *best kept* and exposes the topic of traveling. The addressed user (75) does not yet belong to this group, but might become one of the privileged few who already have this special information about traveling. Being socially related to a group might be a second strategy of persuasion.

The content of the secret is only partially uncovered in the headline (75). The reason for this is obvious. As a means of advertising which follows the AIDA concept, the pop-up is aimed at attracting attention and interest, not only technically, by jumping into the center of the screen, and graphically, by the attention-getting tools of big and bold letters, but also linguistically. Again, it is curiosity which is intended to motivate users to click.

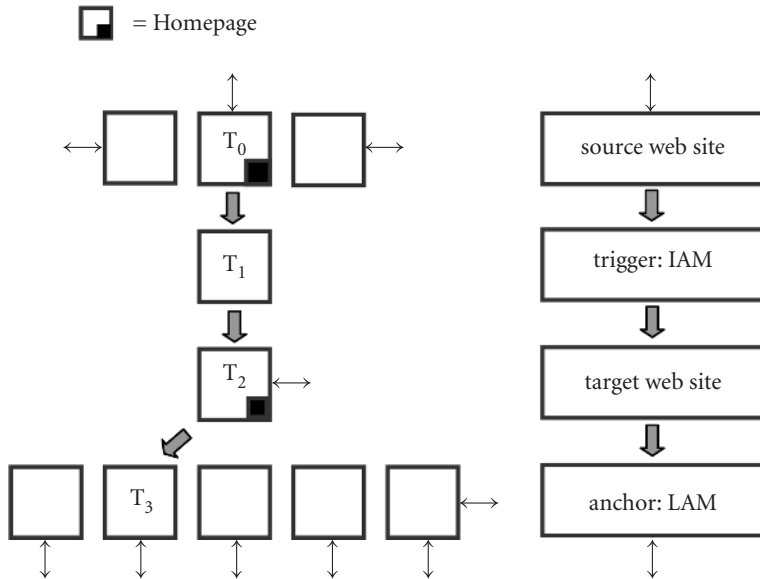
## (75) Unpublished airfares you won't find anywhere else.

The headline (75) is syntactically marked by the fronting of its direct object *unpublished airfares*. There might be two reasons for this. First, this position reveals the salience of the noun phrase with regard to the advertising message, and secondly, it refers to the *secret* as given information and thus establishes the connection to the key visual and the claim (74). The term *unpublished* implies that something is not available to the general public – but this does not exclude it from being available somewhere else. In this context, *unpublished airfares* refer to the exclusive information shared by the people on the ad. The addressee has the chance to belong to them if he/she visits the merchandiser's web site.

A contradiction lies in the noun phrase *unpublished airfares* and the sentence *you won't find anywhere else*. Either these fares are unpublished and then you cannot find them or they are published, as it is the case on the ad's target web site. That these airfares seem to be available at a presumably low price is conveyed by the sender's name, *CheapTickets*. Through the modal *will*, the speech act (75) is a promise with an appellative tonality that urges the users to act in order to profit from the advantage of cheap airfares, since they 'won't be found anywhere else'. If users follow the explicit activation instruction *click here*, they will visit the pop-up's target web site (6.14), *New.CheapTickets.com* (B).

Users will arrive at the homepage in the *home* section (C), which is highlighted by colors for users' orientation. In other sections of the main navigation menu, the page offers travel alternatives, *Flights*, *Hotels*, *Cars*, *Cruises*, *Last minute trips*, and *Specials*. On the homepage, some of these options are already visualized. There is an interactive tool (D) where users can check dates, desti-





IAM = Initial advertising message; LAM = Linked advertising message

Figure 6.15 Hypertext structure of an online advertising message from IAM to LAM

structure from the initial advertising message to the linked advertising message is established by the elements ( $T_1$ – $T_3$ ). Adjoining bi-directional arrows indicate the continuation of the network as an extended advertising message or other individual user paths.

The example above visualizes an appropriate way to describe users' expectations and the way in which the message creates cohesion and coherence. The pop-up ad uses different cohesive and coherent devices which connect the trigger message with its target, the merchandiser's homepage. The logo or name of the sender, *CheapTickets*, is graphically set apart on the pop-up and functions as an eye-catching signal. As an element of lexical cohesion, it is repeated twice on the target text, once as a graphically identical logo, and then, in written form as the URL in the browser field. The same strategy of emphasis and increasing the effect of recognition is employed by the claim (74). It appears on the trigger and is repeated together with the logo on the linked web site.<sup>21</sup>

The term *airfares* in sentence (75) on the pop-up is a pragmatic coherence marker, whose meaning is continued on the interactive tool (D) which offers an individual flight search. This pragmatic linking is implicitly stressed by the

already activated search formula of *flights* instead of the search for *cars* in the same field which is not highlighted.

As stated previously, the statement in (75) *unpublished* airfares and *you won't find anywhere else* is a contradiction in itself since the secret or rather the airfares are being published on the Internet at this very moment and are consequently accessible to a large public audience. Here, the message coherence is pragmatically based on the secret which is only open to some special addressees, namely those who activate the pop-up.

The contents of the carrier web site, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*, and the pop-up window, *CheapTickets*, are independent of each other.

To summarize, there are various pragmatic means with which an advertising message on the hypertext basis creates coherence.<sup>22</sup> In this example, lexical cohesion is also used. By implicit and explicit meaning and the wording of textual elements online advertising tries to meet users' expectations. The more online advertising achieves to match sense continuation, the more likely users are to perceive and create coherence from their perspective, and the less they might be lost on their path. Thus, online users can create their own hypermessage by choosing information units that are offered.

## 6.5 Summary

The definition of the criteria of linear texts was the basis for outlining the characteristic features of hypertexts, their structures and main functions. Since hyperlinks crucially determine hypertexts, they were separately treated from their functional perspective. Cohesion and coherence in linear and non-linear texts have been defined and applied to an example of traditional advertising and an example of online advertising. The latter closed this chapter after confirming that hyperadvertising uses the relevant characteristics and functions of hypertexts. In contrast to traditional advertising, the online advertising message is characterized by multi-linearity, user interaction, and a potentially infinite amount of linked units. Thus, the message is not fixed but open-ended and can be divided into the initial, the linked, and the extended advertising message. These attributes make it very hard for an advertiser to direct users. Instead, users decide actively on their web activities, they select an individual path and create their own coherence. Hence, the hypermessage becomes customized by the continuing link activation.

## Summary and conclusion

The overall aim of this study was to describe the new forms of communication that emerged through the interactive capability of the Internet and to discuss the effects they have had on the language used, in particular in online advertising. In this connection, I have especially focused on the three interdisciplinary areas of communication, language and hypertext. It has become clear that the new structure of information on the Internet does not only change the communication process, but also the roles of the senders and receivers. The addressees are actively involved in the selection and perception of information, a new aspect of interactivity which has not only revolutionized the process of communication in general, but also the field of advertising, in particular.

Interaction with direct feedback possibilities is technically realized by the user's activation of an ad. To initiate this interaction, I noticed a high degree of various forms of direct user addressing often made by directive speech acts. These involve users linguistically in the communication process.

The development of the Internet has added new dimensions to communication. Communication on the Internet incorporates elements of mass communication and interpersonal communication and develops several new components. My analysis has shown that new forms of communication have been established within the existing framework of traditional forms of communication. Since traditional models of communication were not capable of explaining the process of online communication, I have developed a new model which takes into consideration its characteristic features, communicative developments and changes which I have summarized with the term "interactive mass communication". This model is capable of explaining how online communication works and can be applied to several forms, e.g. communication via web ads, e-mails, and chat. It also elucidates the Internet's new communicative potential for "interaction", the possibility of giving "feedback" and "interactivity".

Interaction not only takes place from user to user, e.g. via e-mails, but also between user and medium, e.g. via web ads. This feedback is a part of the interaction initiated by the sender in order to achieve a specific reaction from the

receiver. In online advertising, feedback is directly given when users click on the web ads. Communication with a medium is called “interactivity”. It allows users to intervene in the communication process and to change or influence what has been communicated to them. This is also a new form of advertising communication which has not been used before in such a direct and immediate way. I have demonstrated interactivity by the use of an interactive web ad which offers users the opportunity to give feedback by customizing their search through free verbal entry and predetermined options.

As shown, not only the reciprocal exchange of information in real-time or in a time-shifted mode, but also the activation of hyperlinks display the characteristic features of interpersonal communication which is technically transferred.

Transferring information to a large audience – as accomplished, for instance, by both traditional and online advertising – corresponds to the method of communication in mass media, from one source to many receivers. However, due to the interactivity option, online ads involve users actively in the construction and perception of their message. The users create their own individual advertising path by their selection of hyperlinks.

Other specific characteristics of the digital medium have brought up further new forms of communication. Some innovations make communication on the Internet more onerous for the user. On the one hand, the high density of information on the Internet gives users the opportunity to search comprehensively in just one source, namely the Web. Moreover, the direct connection of seemingly endless links allows very fast access to information. On the other hand, users are simultaneously exposed to a plethora of information which makes their selection more difficult. As shown, there are different forms of search behavior on the Web to help users select information. The more clearly information is structured (on a web site) and the less ambiguous the semantic propositions of triggers are, the more easily it can be followed and grasped.

Creating one’s own path through the hypertext net means individualizing information. Individualization can be grouped into “customization” and “personalization”. Customizing information means that the users have the possibility to create an individual media product. I have demonstrated this new aspect with the individual search for a product through pull-down menus and free keyword entry in search tools on web sites, but also on interactive web ads. Pull-down menus provide the users with predetermined options from which they can select, whereas free keyword entry is an individual search decision initiated by the user. Personalization is based on the language with which users are personally addressed. There are several forms of personalization predomi-

nantly found in web ads, such as the personal pronoun *you*, but these can also be found on web sites. I have chosen an example where registered users are personally welcomed by their name whenever they visit this web site.

Briefly recapitulated, the new potential of interaction is a major dimension which has been added to communication and which affects many areas, one of which is the language used, as summarized below.

Another major part of this study was devoted to the written language used in the communication process between web advertisements and their audience. I started with an overview of traditional media and advertising, and focused on the process of advertising communication, the roles of the advertising sender and audience, the construction of the advertising message, and the language used in traditional advertising. The purpose was threefold: first, to distinguish the main characteristics of traditional advertising from online advertising,<sup>1</sup> secondly, to introduce mass and direct media as a basis for interactive mass media communication, and thirdly, to explain the concept of AIDA, which describes how advertising messages are constructed and work. AIDA also works for the online advertising message. However, here, AIDA was useful for the analysis of a restricted corpus. As soon as technological capacities expand and develop to an even greater extent, AIDA may no longer be sufficient and the development of different models will have to be taken into consideration in order to mirror online advertising. The same might be true if one widened the corpus to be analyzed to include other fields of online communication.

In order to find out how language is used in the interaction with users, it was necessary to define online advertising and to categorize different types of web ads, namely “static”, “animated”, and “interactive web ads”, and to look at their distinctive features and functions. “Web ad traps” and “pop-up windows” as special variants of web ads were included in this classification.

Apart from creating a positive image and product awareness, as well as recognition, I have shown that web ads principally fulfill three functions in order to be effective. First, they are intended to attract the users’ attention; secondly, web ads aim to motivate users to click; and thirdly, they should contain concrete information about what the users may expect on the linked web page. These three functions are part of the persuasion process with which web ads lure their addressees to the merchandiser’s page. I have focused on these persuasive functions from the linguistic perspective and grouped them into two categories.

The first dealt with the linguistic integration of the addressees. There are forms of personal user addressing through means of personal and possessive pronouns, imperatives and questions, which, in the end, all call for an im-



mediate feedback from the addressees, inviting them to interact with the web ad. I included the use of deictic terms in this part since these are personal and position-dependent markers of locations and time from the sender's and receiver's point of view. Their meaning is not always clear, even in spoken communication (Haase et al. 1997:68). Used in speech acts in web ads, the interpretation of deictic terms can also be quite ambiguous due to the missing pointing function. In contrast to direct interpersonal communication, on the Internet, it is impossible to clarify deictic meaning by gestures.

Perhaps this is a reason why short and concise directive speech acts, whose instructing meaning is easier to grasp, are very frequently found as linguistic forms of user addressing. They are not only included in the advertising message as the final explicit user instruction, e.g. *click here*, but also in the body copy or headline. In a very small space – in comparison to print ads – they linguistically appeal to the users by telling them to participate in the interaction.

Abbreviated sentences and acronyms speed up communicative exchange in chats. They are also used in the advertising communication of web ads. Since in asynchronous online advertising, an immediate exchange is not as necessary as in synchronous chats, the use of abbreviated sentences or words has a different purpose. One reason might be that they are used in particular branches, and directed to a special target group that is familiar with these meanings.

The second part looked at linguistic persuasion through emotional appeal. Web ads use certain motivation strategies to persuade the users to click. For instance, they offer online games for entertainment purposes, create curiosity and suggest saving money and time. Persuasion in the form of motivation strategies is a linguistically implicit way of calling upon the users to activate the hyperlink.

Another form of emotional appeal by linguistic means is the employment of “trigger words”. Their usage derives from response-orientated, direct advertising in direct mailings, and as such, they are adopted and also very frequently found in web ad communication. I called them trigger words to describe their activating function and linguistic impact, which is associated by terms, such as the adjective *free*, the imperative verb *win*, or the noun *discount* etc. Most of them implicitly call upon users to act.

Another linguistic phenomenon I found in web advertising was the aspect of language simplifications. These are, for instance, single letters or numbers which abbreviate words, exploiting their similar or homophonous pronunciation, like *U* and *4* for ‘you’ and ‘four’. A special type of simplification is the use of mathematical symbols or formulas in combination with abbreviated sentences or words. These shortenings and symbols are not completely

new phenomena as they are employed in chats and SMS communication. In hyperadvertising, they have a pragmatic impact. Nevertheless, not all of these acronyms have found their way into advertising communication. Empirical research could be carried out about what kind of abbreviations these are and to what extent they are used in advertising.

My analysis of online communication has shown that, not only on the technical, but also on the language level, web advertisements make use of the interactivity provided by the Internet. Tracing back the short history of web ads, from less interactive, i.e. static, to animated and to more interactive ones, it can be expected that the communicative potential will be further exploited.

The language used in online advertising is a result of the new forms of communication on the Internet, which are also affected by the new multi-linear structure of online information. I have outlined that hypertext structures differ in several points from conventional texts. The presentation of online texts is, therefore, a new challenge to hypertext producers if they want to prevent the users from becoming 'lost in hyperspace'.

In my definition of text, I have concentrated on those aspects which were relevant to the exposition of the hypertext structure and its perception. With regard to text and hypertext functions, I have shown that hypertexts have the same textual functions as traditional texts have. Often, hypertexts combine various functions. I defined the entertainment function as an additionally important text type to Brinker's (1997:93) text categorization. As a motivating strategy for users to activate web ads, this text function is often found in online advertising.

Hypertexts are open-ended, multi-linearly structured, and decentralized. This new information structure is also applied to the hyperadvertising message in online advertising. I have argued that the hyperadvertising message creates quite a novel way of communicating with a target audience.

Coherence in hypertexts is process-oriented. This applies to the hyperadvertising message and is also true for the printed advertising message. Due to technical and structural differences between them, in particular the infiniteness of the online advertising message, it was necessary to divide the hypermessage into three parts: the initial advertising message (IAM), the linked advertising message (LAM), and the extended advertising message (EAM). The initial advertising message on the web ad, which corresponds to the fixed advertising message in traditional media, is the same for all users. What differs completely is the further expansion of the message through the connected hyperlinks. It is also new that in this expansion, the users play a decisive role. The creation of hypertext paths turns the former passive addressee into an active message

constructor. Coherence in hyperadvertising is, therefore, also realized by the users. Their path is a sense continuation of the meaning of the trigger (IAM) and its connected anchors (LAM and EAM) on the target web site. These individual path creations are the reason why it would be too complicated to treat the extended advertising message in this analysis.

Hyperlinks also give hypertexts their interactive function. In addition to aspects such as web ad sizes, their placements and environments, different motivation strategies, comprehension, knowledge or simply interest, the selection of hyperlinks takes place through their inherent semantic proposition and the expectations or associations which they arouse in the user. I have exemplified this by the initial advertising message of a pop-up ad and its connected, linked advertising message. Grammatical cohesion might only be seldom found, at least in my data. This seems apparent since one trigger element is connected with a complete target web page on which several anchors, as new further triggers, are integrated. Grammatical cohesion from “one-to-many” links seems difficult to realize on the Web, whereas lexical cohesion in the form of repetition is a more common phenomenon.

I would like to round off this study by paraphrasing the quotation from Jucker (2003: 129) referred to at the beginning of this book. This study reveals that the Internet has revolutionized communication by facilitating new forms of communication on a new hypertext structure. The possibility of direct interaction is, especially in advertising, the most important innovation. Interactive mass communication is affected and reflected by the language used in the interaction among human beings and between the medium, and redefines the roles of online communication partners.

Advertising on the Internet is a new form of online communication in the advertising sector. I have exposed how hyperadvertising is based on, and exploits, aspects of traditional advertising, such as its rules, requirements and certain linguistic means and strategies. Web ads, however, are hyperlinks which take advantage of the new interactive potential on the Internet in order to communicate with individuals in segmented target groups.

I discovered this single-click skyscraper web ad (Figure 7.1, downloaded on 13 July 2004),<sup>2</sup> which summarizes various research parts that have been dealt within this book.

As visualized, in this ad, there are different types of ads integrated, such as “faked application web ads” (A) and “static” ones (B). With regard to linguistic means, the ad exploits implicit (C) and explicit (D) activation instructions, e.g. *play now*, *click here*, directive speech acts (E), e.g. *Play And Win Cash Online*, even “trigger words” with each word capitalized (F), such as *FREE*,

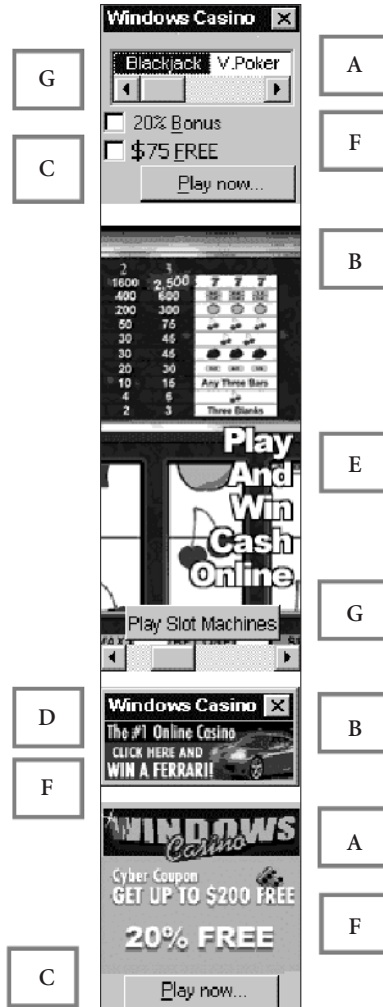


Figure 7.1 Summarizing web ad

*Bonus*, *WIN*, and other “motivation strategies” (G) that try to lure addressees into clicking by “entertaining” them, offering games and the chance to “save money” with a *20% Bonus*.

It is rather doubtful whether web ads will become more dynamic in terms of technical attention getting devices, such as highly animated graphics, blinking and flashing elements. When certain studies (e.g. Nielsen 2000a; Benway & Lane 1998) found that increasingly used animations were more annoying than

useful, and that users were starting to ignore web ads, a reduction of these elements could be realized. The structure of information needs to follow the users' cognitive capacity. Not everything that is technically feasible corresponds to what users can or want to cope with. There are, for instance, different, graphically diversified navigation solutions on web sites, but in fact, these are hardly ever found on most popular sites. Since there is a great need for web ads to call users' attention, additional devices are necessary to accomplish this requirement, but perhaps with an even higher potential of interactivity. With steadily faster downloading capacities, more complex sound files might be used as more appealing devices. Another future scenario could be the integration of short sequences of spoken language to address users. One could also imagine that new advertising formats similar to TV-commercials (sound and motion) will become much more common. I expect, however, further developments and integrations of interactive and customizing elements in web ads that will give the users more freedom to choose between certain options.

With regard to future developments, it is not likely that the language use and forms of addressing in online advertising will change tremendously. If the sizes of web ads do not increase enormously, advertisers still have to cope with a small, limited space to get their message across. Moreover, hyperlinks, as parts of the advertising message, will still require an activation to display their LAM or EAM. It does not matter whether these linking anchors can be found on the target web sites or on the ad itself, programmed as a separate hypertext that is carried or jumped out of another web site. Considering these two aspects, it can be supposed that web ads will continue to use short and concise directive speech acts in their communication with the addressee, for reasons of space and the need to lure users to action.

The same consistency might apply to explicit activation instructions, such as *click here*. Although, on the one hand, one could expect this directive to find less usage due to its almost redundant meaning, especially if one considers that this treatment and, thus, the aim of web ads, is now commonly known among users. On the other hand, even during the short 10-year history of web advertising, there does not seem to have been an urgent need to eliminate this speech act. While currently surfing web ads, it still catches one's eye. These instructions have meanwhile become an integral part of the hyperadvertising message and will, therefore, be continuously used to direct users – just as calls to action used in direct advertising have been employed for a long period of time.

There are various aspects which appear to have considerable relevance for analysis in the near future. In this study, I have mainly concentrated on the singled-out advertising messages and have considered only to some extent,

their context, i.e. the web page on which the ad was located. For my focus on the linguistic means used in the initial advertising message, this extract was intended since it is the web ad which achieves an activation and not its environment. In order to reach a special target group web ads, as well as print ads in traditional advertising, are often strategically placed in a corresponding environment. That means cosmetic products may be advertised on sites that deal with this topic or with similar products. In addition, studies have shown that in a matching context, the click rates are higher than in non-matching ones. Of course, this is connected with users' involvement. Nevertheless, to look at any kind of semantic and linguistic relation between the ad and the web page could be a fruitful form of research.

Moreover, one could conduct a comparative analysis of web ads placed in different environmental sectors, either within one web site or among different ones, such as financial web sites, news and sports sites etc. Dissimilarities or similarities with respect to forms of potential customer addressing, selection of speech acts or any other striking linguistic strategies could be the focal points of analysis.

In this connection, advertising in online newspapers could be treated. For instance, is the extent and the way in which qualities and tabloids differ also reflected in the web ads?

In some cases, visual semiotics should be incorporated in the linguistic analysis – even though the limited space of ads still restricts the implementation of complex key visuals, but perhaps this will change in the future. However, the format of pop-up ads already allows visual communication through images.

From the advertising perspective, one could ask in which way and to what extent online advertising expands or influences integrated communication, i.e. the contextual and formal coordination of all instruments and media used in the advertising communication strategy (e.g. Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 100ff.)

There are still many aspects which remain unanswered and open for future research. Moreover, my linguistic analysis of web ads cannot serve as a complete description of language generally used on the Internet. In this study, only a restricted part of linguistic Internet communication could be covered. Besides, not only the Internet is subject to fast change, but language on the Internet, too. My synchronic analysis is, therefore, only a small representation of a current reality. Nevertheless, it clearly reflects the linguistic use and developments of web ads which could be further examined from a diachronic perspective.



# Notes

## Chapter 1

1. The term “online advertising” will be synonymously used with “advertising on the Internet” and “hyperadvertising” throughout the study.
2. The term “web ad” will cover digital four-sided-images, also often called “banner ads” or just “banners”, and “pop-up ads”. It is clear from the context that the use of the individually mentioned term “ad” in this study refers to digital (web) advertisements.

## Chapter 2

1. Since radio is based on spoken language, it will be mentioned as part of media history, but not treated explicitly in this book.
2. Town criers have not disappeared. In Hamburg, for instance, town criers or *Marktschreier*, are still very common and profitable; and besides a very famous tourist attraction.
3. The first British print ad was published in 1622 (Nevett 1982:8).
4. Marketing-mix is a company’s marketing strategy in which it defines the combination of marketing variables within its product, distribution, communication, and price policies; e.g. Meffert (2000:969ff.), Jenkins and Yadin (2000:7f.).
5. Although these figures are taken from the same institution, ZenithOptimedia (former Zenith Media), the amount of expenditure varies. For instance, in Figure 2.1 approximately 142,000 million US dollars had been spent on the US market in 2001, whereas in Figure 2.2 the same period is marked by an investment of about 152,000 million US dollars. The divergence continues for the following years. A reason for this is that the figures presented in Figure 2.2 are based on estimations, whereas Figure 2.1 quotes data from the past. In addition, expectations vary by nature because of different methodologies, basis and figures of estimation, as well as unforeseeable events which might have a certain effect, like the Gulf Crisis of 1990/91, the 11th September 2001, or the Iraq war in 2003. Nevertheless, both tables show the same trend of a growing US advertising market with increasing advertising expenditure.
6. I will use the term “sender” as a generic term which applies to “speaker”, “producer”, and “author”. The notions “receiver” and “recipient” also have a generic meaning. Both apply to the terms “hearer” and “reader”.



7. The USP describes a distinctive selling argument taken from the product or service itself (one or more specific characteristics).

8. See also Section 3.4 on motivation strategies and Section 6.2.2 on text type functions.

9. *DAGMAR* is the acronym for 'Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Results'. It divides advertising effectiveness into four steps: awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action which are supposed to affect the action of buying.

The FCB Grid (Foote, Cone, & Belding) incorporates high and low involvement in relation to consumers' thinking and feeling with focus on the consumer response theory. For other concepts see Niepmann (1999).

10. For further reading and more detailed information about newspapers see e.g. Boyce (1978), Bell (1991), Jucker (1992).

11. Involvement describes the commitment to which people turn their attention to an object or an activity (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 133). See Section 3.4.

12. "Coverage waste" is any misguided advertising contact, such as an audience which does not belong to a defined target group.

13. Offering feedback channels was rather unusual for traditional advertising, depending, of course, on product and branch. It is heavily applied in direct advertising. However, with the emergence of the Internet, there is a clear tendency to observe that advertising companies include at least their Internet address in print ads and TV-commercials – although the insertion of a company's web site address might be intended to be an additional information source rather than a call to response.

14. The activating potential is narrowly connected with the involvement of ad observers. The higher the involvement concerning the advertised product, the more the interest can be attained and vice versa.

15. Shorter TV-commercials of 3–5 seconds are "trailers" or "reminders". Reminders are shortened repetitions of the original, often longer commercial or known brand presenter. For instance, some beer brands are so commonly known that a mere presentation of the product might be enough to keep the product in the viewer's mind. Trailers are announcements to promote a specific program, e.g. film premiers.

16. See Section 3.4.2.

17. For instance, like software programs that turn off web advertisements, there is a real-time TV-commercial blocker which switches from the current program to another one without advertising, as soon as a commercial break starts, and returns to the previous one when the break has finished (Postinett 2004; <http://www.handelsblatt.com/pshb/fn/rehbi/sfn/buildhbi/cn/GoArt!200012,201197,754554/SH/0/depot/0/>; accessed 04.07.04).

18. "Telephone advertising" is used to contact customers by phone, offering information and services or to sell products. There are two ways of contact. First, the advertiser calls the customer or secondly, addressees are requested to call the sender for information; in most cases, call centers are responsible for answering particular requests. Customers often get the telephone number via print ads, television commercials etc. "Personal selling" or "face-to-face selling" is direct and oral one-to-one interaction with buyers, e.g. the presentation and

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selling of products at diverse locations, namely at home, in the supermarket etc. Selling relies on personal contact. See e.g. Stone et al. (1995), Meffert (2000).

19. See Section 5.6.2.
20. Both studies are not comparable due to differing figures, media, products advertised etc.; and also the question of what elements were personalized and how they were personalized. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in direct print mailings, as well as in direct e-mailings, the response rate is definitely influenced by means of personalization.
21. Surname and address have been deleted or made undecipherable.

## Chapter 3

1. I will use the term “web advertisements” or “web ads” as a cover term to refer to the different forms, sizes, shapes and display mechanisms of those online ads which have certain similarities with the makeup of print ads.
2. URL is the abbreviation for ‘Uniform Resource Locator’ and defines an addressing scheme used by world wide web browsers to locate resources on the Internet (<http://www.netdictionary.com>).
3. Hyperlinks are clickable elements that take the user from one place on a web page to another. They can connect pages within the same web site or to other external documents. Jumping between documents is called *surfing* or *browsing*. The latter derives from special browser software, like *Internet Explorer* or *Netscape Communicator*, which is necessary to follow hyperlinks. Web ads are hyperlinks, too. A detailed definition of hyperlinks is given in Section 6.3.4.
4. “E-mail is the use of computer systems to transfer messages between users (...)” (Crystal 2001: 10).
5. Chats are online discussions in which users interpersonally communicate by using written language.
6. See also Section 3.4.3 on “web ad placements”.
7. HTML means ‘HyperText Markup Language’. It is the language used on the Internet to produce and format, for instance, pictures and texts on a web site.
8. See Figure 3.7.
9. Major parts of this analysis concentrate on the initial advertising message. Due to its infinity I will mainly leave out the extended advertising message, although in a wider sense, it also belongs to a web ad’s advertising message.
10. In agreement with the IAB, I will only use the term *banner* when it refers to particular types of web ads – although in literature, many scholars expand the application for the term *banner* to web ads of various forms and sizes (e.g. Skrzypek 2000).
11. Due to formatting reasons, it was necessary to alter proportionally the sizes of web ads and screenshots analyzed. They are not one-to-one realizations.

12. *Argos* or *Argus* is a Greek mythological character who might be related to the name of the company. He was a giant with 100 eyes who was ordered by Hera to watch out for Io. Since Io was one of Zeus' lovers, Hera turned Io into a cow. Hermes murdered Argos following Zeus' order while Hera transferred Argos' eyes to a peacock (<http://www.wispor.de/wpx-ku91.htm>). From Argos' legendary role, the simile *to watch like a hawk* is derived. *To hawk* means 'to persuade people to buy (...) something (...)'. (Macmillan English Dictionary 2002: 657). Transferred to the ad's context, Argos is supposedly someone or something who 'examines something very carefully' and, therefore, might have the best offers. Nevertheless, it also seems most probable that Argos is just the name of a company, whether or not it is derived from Greek mythology.
13. Please note that this banner representation is a scan because the original banner was no longer available. Especially on the Web, it is difficult to fall back on online elements or examples if these have not been archived.
14. See also Section 4.3.2 on interpersonal communication.
15. For the activation of this ad it was presumably not necessary to click precisely on the place referred to because any click on the ad may have linked the user to the connected web site.
16. GIF (Graphics Image Format) is a graphic format which allows the presentation of compressed data. Animated GIFs are easy to integrate in the web page and, therefore, often used on the Web.
17. The web address <http://www.newyorktoday.com> did not work in June 2003, instead search engines offered the URL <http://www.nytimes.com>, which did work.
18. More detailed information on "interactivity" can be found in Section 4.5.5.
19. See Section 3.4.2.
20. See Section 5.6.2 and Leech (1966:52, 58).
21. The situation has changed only recently. Television viewers still cannot stop a commercial break, but like web users, they can avoid advertising automatically. Since June 2004, after a five-year lawsuit between the TC Unterhaltungselektronik AG and the German television channel RTL, which lost the legal battle, the use of a real-time TV-commercial blocker has been possible. As soon as a commercial break starts, this technical device switches from the current program to another one without advertising and returns to the previous one when the break has finished (Postinett 2004; <http://www.handelsblatt.com/pshb/fn/relhbi/sfn/buildhbi/cn/GoArt!200012,201197,754554/SH/0/depot/0/>; accessed 04.07.04).
22. Webopedia (<http://sbc.webopedia.com/TERM/i/impression.html>, 2003) defines "impression" as "[a]n advertisement's appearance on an accessed Web page. For example, if the page you're on shows three ads, that's three impressions. Advertisers use impressions to measure the number of views their ads receive, and publishers often sell ad space according to impressions (...)."
23. In Chapter 5, a similar web ad is analyzed (see Figure 5.11).
24. It is only my personal impression that the number of faked application ads has decreased since 2000, when I started collecting material for this study.

25. See Section 4.4.2.
26. As quoted before, the average noting time of web ads is 1.1 seconds, for print ads 1,5–2 seconds (Kroeber-Riel & Esch 2000: 13).
27. The results gained in this study are based on 746 participants who were asked about three different web pages of <http://www.stern.de> into which, in each case, one of four different web ads (two different argumentative web ads and two different image web ads) had been integrated.
28. This method is called CPM meaning “cost per thousand” (e.g. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/C/htmlC/cost-per-thou/cost-per-thou.htm>). For instance, a price of \$250 CPM refers to every thousand times an advertisement is displayed. The cost for web ad displays can be calculated in the same way; they are generally much lower.
29. A server is a computer that provides information to client machines. For example, there are web servers that send out web pages, mail servers that deliver e-mail, list servers that administer mailing lists, FTP servers that hold FTP sites and deliver files to users who request them, and name servers that provide information about Internet host names (<http://www.netdictionary.com>).
30. The IP-number is the address of a computer. It consists of strings of four numbers separated by periods.

## Chapter 4

1. See Chapter 5.
2. See also Döring (2003:266f.) on different attitudes with regard to Internet usage.
3. The term *organon* derives from Platon’s *Kratylos*, *organum* meaning ‘language’ (Bühler 1999 [1934]:24).
4. The term “message production” is seen from the author’s or writer’s perspective, i.e. the message producer who sets up a message or information. The notion “message construction” refers to the receivers’ part as they decisively participate in the creation of a message, for instance, by selecting information units, articles etc.
5. Maletzke quotes himself (Maletzke 1963:32).
6. Further empirical research is needed on the extent to which these trigger words, explicit directives, second person pronouns etc. are used in web ads, as well as their analysis in comparison to conventional ads.
7. See p. 87.
8. There are also written forms of interpersonal communication. These are synchronous or asynchronous, need a transfer medium, and do not require the communicators’ physical presence. Nevertheless, they are part of interpersonal communication since there is a reciprocal exchange of information between individual communication partners, e.g. chats, e-mails, letters, notes.

9. "ICQ – the largest multi lingual community on the Web" (<http://www.icq.com>; accessed on 19.08.2003).
10. More examples can be found in Rosenbaum (1999).
11. In 1980, the first smiley was used by Scott Fahlman in a news article which was distributed by a private mailbox system in the US (Haase et al. 1997:64 quote Raymond 1996).
12. It is not my aim to go into detail. For further reading on "chat-communication", see e.g. Beißwenger (2001), Kresic (2000), Runkehl et al. (1998), on "e-mail communication" and language use, see e.g. Baron (1998), Gains (1999), Günther and Wyss (1996), Davis and Brewer (1997).
13. Physical absence might turn into visual presence with improving technology. Currently, communication partners are already making use of web-cameras. Here, possibly spoken communication is very close to face-to-face communication because of the partners' eye-contact, although a medium is interconnected. However, web-cameras are not very frequently employed yet and the transfer of spoken, written, and visual communication is rather time-shifted.
14. Koch and Oesterreicher (1990:12) classify two modes of a language transfer, i.e. "graphic" in the sense of 'written' and "phonic" meaning 'spoken'. For these forms of language realization, they introduce the term "medial". This term must be clearly differentiated from the notion of "medium" (e.g. Dürscheid 2003:38–39) such as newspapers, books, television, radio etc. which carry information.
15. See Section 6.3.2 on the structure of hypertexts.
16. See also Wirth (2002:72), who explains certain user expectations aroused by calling a hyperlink *contact*.
17. See e.g. Figure 4.10.
18. It is not my aim to go into further detail about the requirements of hypertext in this chapter. This is examined in more detail in Chapter 6. I only want to outline that senders like journalists, advertisers etc. are faced with new requirements in online communication.
19. See Section 3.3.5.
20. I introduced "filters" in Section 2.4.3 on direct mailings.
21. See Section 3.4.6 on log-files and cookies.
22. URL: <http://www.crayon.net>
23. By registering, the web company receives valuable data about the user which can be further used for advertising purposes, for instance, electronic mailings, in which they can offer additional customized products, services, or news.
24. Of course, the model makes some generalizations since the return of a response element in direct advertising can be faster than the answer to an e-mail. Nevertheless, with respect to the technical capabilities of the transfer media, it visualizes feasible feedback in relation to time.

25. This is a perfect example because it works. There are also web ads which generally lead the user to the homepage or pages which have absolutely nothing to do with the originally entered search criteria.
26. See Chapter 6, p. 182f.
27. This model is only applicable if the linking process works and search entries match the connected web site; otherwise, this could be described as a kind of miscommunication since a non-matching search result might initially confuse the user.

## Chapter 5

1. See e.g. Section 3.4.5 on click-through rates.
2. In this study, it is not my aim to discuss comprehensively the differences between spoken and written language, but rather indicate tendencies and characteristic features of spoken discourse used in written online advertising. See e.g. Hughes (1996), Crystal and Davy (1969).
3. Runkehl et al. (1998) analyze the German language on the Internet.
4. See also Chapter 4, p. 85f.
5. See Section 4.4.2.
6. This does not mean that former methods of user addressing have been replaced. Today, they are still used side-by-side, depending on the environmental context, user structure etc. Nevertheless, the production of web ads and its messages has been further developed.
7. See Section 3.4.2 on banner blindness.
8. As a matter of fact, most web ads do not exclusively employ only one linguistic method but use various combinations of them. Thus, in the analysis, categorical overlaps will unavoidably appear.
9. Even though *perhaps* also seems a possible response for yes/no-questions in general.
10. A similar game was also used in web ad (Figure 3.8).
11. See also the KISS-principle 'Keep it simple and stupid' in Chapter 3, p. 73.
12. Even in the rapidly-evolving environment of the Web, the instruction *click here* found in my data collected between 2000–2002 is yet not outdated. Today, this directive is still in use. Perhaps there has been a move away from this explicit linguistic form to more implicit ways of telling users to activate an ad. As their appearance and technical functions on the Web have become so common, some web ads do not even use an instruction at all. However, an empirical study to validate my observations would be necessary.
13. See Section 3.3.5 on user comment.
14. See also example Figure 6.13 in the next chapter.
15. The URL <http://www.ibeauty.com> ceased to work at the end of August 2004.
16. This is still true today, but due to technical improvements and the offer of flat-rates, surfing the Web is becoming cheaper. A flat-rate is a fixed amount of money often paid on

a monthly basis which allows access to the Internet without any time limit, recommendable for heavy users who spend several hours a day on the Net.

17. See also Chapter 4.

18. A *hacker* is defined as an expert programmer who likes to spend a lot of time figuring out the finer details of computer systems or networks, as opposed to those who learn only the minimum necessary (<http://www.netdictionary.com/html/h.html>).

A *hacker* is also “a person who breaks into, or attempts to break into, or use, a computer network or system without authorization (...)”; ([http://www.atiss.org/tg2k/\\_hacker.html](http://www.atiss.org/tg2k/_hacker.html); accessed 13.05.2003).

## Chapter 6

1. The prefix *hyper-* will be transferred to other relating notions in online advertising as it expands the meaning and functions on which it is based and symbolizes the new way of realization. In this case, the traditional advertising *message* becomes a *hypermassage* in *hyper-advertising* because it relies on traditional advertising, but operates with new text structures and functions of the Internet. The prefixed word formation “hyperadvertising” will be used synonymously with “online advertising”.

2. According to Fritz (1999:222) a *path* is a “sequence produced by travelling through (...) a network (...)”.

3. These types of text can also be found in electronically stored forms on CD-Rom or the Internet, like the OED or online telephone books.

4. For more detailed information see e.g. de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:50ff.), Vater (1994:32–41).

5. According to Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2000:145), the time needed to grasp the content of simple pictures lasts a fraction of a second which corresponds to the reading of one word; 1.5 to 2.5 seconds are needed to access a complete picture of medium complexity, similar to reading ten words.

6. Acoustic stimulus is the first receiver contact in television and radio commercials.

7. This is also accomplished in direct advertising.

8. Nelson took up the idea of this concept that had been originated twenty years earlier by Vannevar Bush (2000 [1945]).

9. *Textual elements* (e.g. Fritz 1999:223; Jucker 2002a:38) are synonymous with the term *e-texts* (Storrer 1999:38–39).

10. See Section 6.3.4 on hyperlinks.

11. See e.g. Schmitz (n.d.).

12. See p. 164f.

13. See Table 3.1 on main online usage, p. 45.

14. Of course, the functions of texts with regard to their corresponding text types are also not clear-cut. Informative texts can be appellative or have other additional functions. Nevertheless, this applies even more to hypertexts as outlined in this and the previous chapter.
15. See also Kuhlen (1991:107).
16. See also Section 4.5.5 on interactivity.
17. I use, synonymous with Jucker's terminology of *root text*, the notion *source text*, likewise *source* for *trigger*.
18. Certainly, single closed text units like news articles or sentences include cohesive markers, but these units are structured like linear texts that are electronically stored (e-texts).
19. See Section 3.3.1.
20. I added the three dots to visualize the open-endedness of the sentences started.
21. Of course, these cohesive linguistic items are part of the advertising message on the trigger, and are not single hyperlinks.
22. Jucker (2002b) made a comprehensive link definition and description of how hyperlinks create coherence.

## Chapter 7

1. It was not intended to compare print ads with web ads because they differ too much with respect to the transferring medium, the roles of the target audience, and ways of message presentation, apart from the written language of which both make use.
2. This ad was placed in the web search sector of the web site About.com. About.com is a "Guide System that features 23 content channels and promotes original content from more than 475 topical advisors or "Guides" (<http://ourstory.about.com>; accessed 18 July 2004). Perhaps this web ad has been created to visualize different functions and design possibilities, but nevertheless, it was definitely programmed as an internal link. One week later, when I visited this web page again, it had disappeared as it is often the case in online advertising.





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