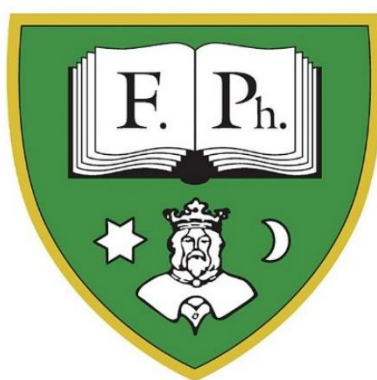


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Explicitation and Implication in Advertisements

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1. Introduction

“Advertising is fundamentally persuasion and persuasion happens to be not a science, but an art.”

William Bernbach

Nowadays, we encounter a multitude of advertisements throughout our lives, whether online, in printed forms, or through different other media. Although these platforms represent information through very different channels, their shared aim is to engage, influence and sometimes manipulate consumer behaviour. The way advertising works is complex, as advertisers use multiple techniques to make a variety of logical and emotional appeals. Professionals in marketing conduct extensive research in the realm of consumer needs, preferences, and trends in order to be able to design their campaigns to meet the needs of a specific demographic group.

Advertisers often apply language which goes beyond literal meanings, aiming to target cultural references and context-specific interpretations. Therefore, some advertisements contain several implicit hidden messages, increasing the effectiveness of the overall message itself, improving consumer attitudes, and increasing purchasing intent. This research is concerned with pragmatic frameworks that describe the multi-layered communication that takes place in advertising through the analysis of explicit and implicit messages targeting consumers with rational as well as emotional appeals.

In order to provide a solid foundation for my research, I would like to introduce linguistic frameworks such as the Gricean cooperative principles including the maxims of effective communication, conversational and conventional implicatures, presuppositions (Grice, 1975), as well as explicatures and implicatures based on Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) relevance theory. The overview of relevant literature is followed by a small-scale exploratory investigation of printed advertisements. The research aims to map out, on the one hand, what information is conveyed in the form of explicit verbal and visual messages in BMW advertisements, on the other hand, how BMW advertisements rely on implicatures to promote either a product, the brand or suggest a life experience.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Effect mechanism of advertisements

Advertising as a concept appeared thousands of years ago. Its existence before the Christian era is verified by an Egyptian papyrus that conveys the upcoming sale of a slave. Advertisements at that time were presented in both written and oral formats promoting a product or service (Feofanov, 2004). At the same time, the beginning of the mass communication period proved to be a decisive historical change in terms of the expansion of advertising. The most potential period for promoting was the 20th century (called the “century of advertising”) because as technological development was evolving radically, it needed the mediating mechanism of advertising. Thus, commercials became more professionally organized and better in quality, which progression has not stopped since then (Presbrey, 2009).

Based on an overview of related research, Bovée (1992) explained that advertisements promote products, services, or ideas in an impersonal way via media, which is supported by paid sponsors. Several studies have investigated the benefits of advertising and aimed to reveal both psychological and linguistic theoretical backgrounds. Shavitt (1992) distinguished four main functions of advertising and their degree of credibility: economic, societal, entertaining, and informative functions. The social and informative function of advertising generally increases the credibility of the advertisement, on the other hand, informative messages appearing in individual advertisements can influence consumers’ reactions to the products. As an entertainment function, advertisers consider consumers’ attitudes in relation to advertisements. Furthermore, commercials depend on the feedback and experiences of consumers after purchase, which also strengthens the credibility of the product.

In order to be effective, an advertisement must influence or stimulate a part of the brain so that the intended decision can be made (Cook, Warren, Pajot, Schairer, & Leuchter, 2011). Dijksterhuis (2004), Dijksterhuis, Bos, Nordgren, and van Baaren (2006), and Dijksterhuis and Aarts (2010) reviewed primary analyses and concluded that a significant part of processing and decision-making can take place outside of conscious awareness (Cook, 2011). This unconscious effect mechanism contributes to the effective promotion strategy of many advertisers.

In the literature of advertising research, two influencing mechanisms can be distinguished, which ensure the effectiveness of advertising. One of these directions can be linked to attitude research, called the **psychological effect mechanism**, while the other direction can be linked to the model of the cognitive school, in other words, the **linguistic effect mechanism**.

2.1.1. Psychological mechanisms

Despite the linguistic (mainly pragmatic) focus of the present research, it is worth mentioning the psychological or cognitive approach of this field. The psychological approach involves among others the concept of emotional effectiveness, or the approach of implicit cognitive processes.

In a psychological framework, the level of effectiveness in case of advertisements can be measured according to unconscious emotional responses produced by individuals seeing an advertisement, and as a result of providing emotional messages in publicity, the attention to the advertisement can increase, enhancing the product's appeal and generating a higher level in terms of brand recall (Otamendi & Martín, 2020: 1-2).

Relying on another concept, we can also mention the approach of subliminal messages used in advertisements. Subliminal messages are messages remaining in the minds of consumers in a subtle way without having been perceived directly by them. This is a reason why consumers might consider advertising and media promotions a form of manipulation with the aim of pushing them to purchase the items advertised (Maalik & Choughari, 2020). Therefore, the technique of subliminal messages aims to insert hidden messages (not consciously perceived by consumers) into the advertising content, manipulating viewers and thus modifying and increasing their purchasing behaviour or intentions (Maalik & Choughari, 2020).

The concept of **implicit memory** can add to the theoretical possibilities of this field as well, being another factor of unconscious processing of advertisements. Actually, at a basic level, the term implicit memory (also called nondeclarative memory) can be associated with the unconscious learning process, while **explicit memory** (also called declarative memory) can be connected to conscious learning, so basically, the concept of “unconscious learning” has been involved in the framework of processing advertisements (Percy, 2006: 111).

The existence and function of unconscious processing can be supported by the fact that in the case of an unconscious process, there is no clear evidence for identifying the target stimuli, which results “in priming effects induced by implicit memory without the consumer

consciously recognizing the source from which it originated” (Shapiro and MacInnis as cited in Yoo, 2008: 4). This mechanism is illustrated by Figure 1 below (adapted from Yoo, 2008: 4).

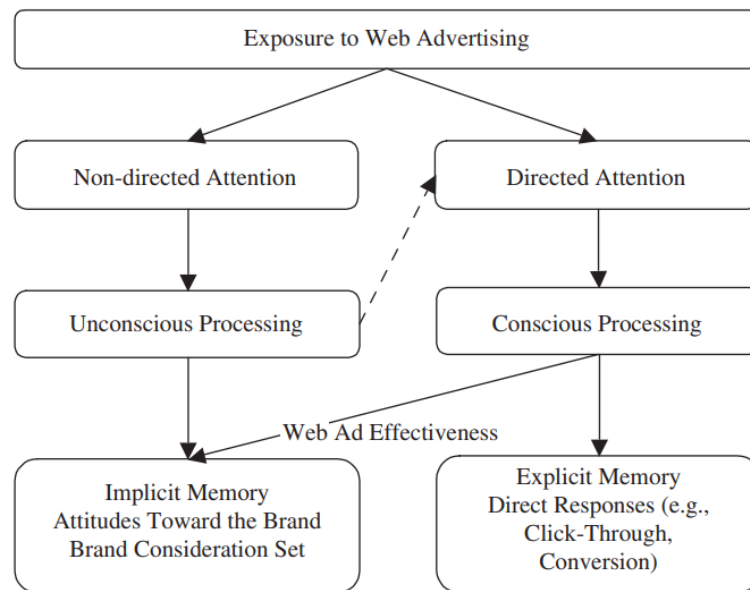


Figure 1. “A Conceptual Framework” (Yoo, 2008: 4)

This diagram can serve as a good illustration of influencing consumers’ memory processing. Consumers are exposed to stimuli that affect their non-directed attention, activating unconscious processing, which results in an implicit memory, shaping the attitudes toward a certain brand and product. It is worth taking a closer look at two crucial factors of this illustration, which are **unconscious processing** and **conscious processing**.

Starting with the term conscious processing, in this case, individuals can choose certain specific stimuli, to which they would like to direct their focus of attention in a conscious way, while in a situation of unconscious processing, incoming stimuli are not identified by the individuals, better said, receivers are not aware of them (Andreoli, Veloso, & Batista, 2014). Another term which can be mentioned in this regard is the so-called **pre-attentive processing**, which can be viewed as a sort of unconscious processing as well, generally happening with stimuli processed secondary, or not appealing to the receivers - not being relevant for them - in which case individuals can make a decision in terms of their focus of attention regarding the stimuli they want to process consciously, which results in the fact that the remaining stimuli get processed pre-attentively (Andreoli, Veloso, & Batista, 2014).

As a factor in the scope of unconscious perspective, we can mention the concept of subliminal processing again, which consists of the presentation of the stimuli intentionally

below the capacity of the receiver's perception (Andreoli, Veloso, & Batista, 2014). In order to make use of the concept of subliminal processing, the stimulus is displayed by the emission source either very rapidly or in a distorted way: This helps prevent the conscious processing of receivers, therefore, the emitting source, which intentionally discloses stimuli on a subliminal level, is responsible for the lack of awareness regarding the stimuli individuals receive (Andreoli, Veloso, & Batista, 2014). All this leads to the fact that neither the emission nor the stimuli are identified by receivers (Andreoli, Veloso, & Batista, 2014).

In other words, subliminal techniques have the goal of implanting certain images, themes or motifs into advertisements (Maalik & Choughari, 2020). All these techniques help make advertisements more marketable and attract the attention of potential consumers who do not notice the subliminal ways of gaining attention in advertising contents (Maalik & Choughari, 2020).

2.1.2. Linguistic mechanisms

After a brief overview of the psychological mechanisms in advertising, I will now go on to take a look at the linguistic background of advertisements. Language as a communication tool fulfills an important function in applying advertising techniques. The use of language makes it possible to transmit and receive messages, as well as to share emotions with the help of verbal or symbolic utterances. The mechanism of advertising language is in a similar situation, where language has a profound effect on people's behaviour and decision-making ability (Shariq, 2020). The following chapters present those linguistic aspects which contribute to the function of advertisements.

Verbal messages and their implications play an essential role in triggering psychological effects. For instance, Arinata and Sulatra (2022) examined **verbal** and **non-verbal signals** in advertisements, while Sun, Chen, and Lan (2022) researched the trend of green consumption through **explicit** and **implicit messages** in advertisements.

Arinata and Sulatra (2022) studied cognitive and denotative meanings of verbal and non-verbal signs based on the processing and investigation of advertisements for "Rexona Clinical Protections", while involving emotional, symbolic, and literal meanings. This research relies on three types of data analysis. The use and function of verbal and non-verbal signals are based on Saussure's semiotic theory, which emphasizes language as a system of signs (Saussure, 1959) and Barthes's theory, in which the author explores the study of signs and symbols (Barthes, 1977). For a better understanding of the investigation of denotative and connotative meanings, Arinata and Sulatra applied Wierzbicka's colour theory, which

examined a cross-cultural foundation for expressing colour concepts (Wierzbicka, 1996). First of all, in their research, Arinata and Sulatra emphasized the interplay between verbal signs and visual messages displayed in Rexona Clinical Protection advertising.



Figure 2. Rexona Clinical Protection advertisement (Arinata & Sulatra, 2022)

Visual messages have a significant role in conveying implied meanings, often utilizing bold, capital letters, and colour to influence the thoughts, ideas, and feelings of consumers. For instance, the expression '3x *STRONGER*' (displayed in the advertisement above) implies the information that the product provides three times as long-lasting an effect, subtly suggesting superior durability and effectiveness. This use of visual language not only catches the eye but also communicates a specific quality and advantage to potential buyers. Another example is the main slogan of this advertisement claiming that '*NOTHING CAN STOP YOU NOT EVEN SWEAT*', which implies the fact that the user can eliminate body odour and exercise without worrying about sweat. These verbal signs in advertisements serve to directly convey the essence of the message, building trust with consumers by assuring them of the product's reliability and performance. In this way, the marriage of visual and verbal elements creates a powerful impact on consumer perceptions and decision-making.

Non-verbal signs, such as the deliberate use of the white colour of the background, fulfil a pivotal role in the visual appeal of this advertisement. The dominance of colour white symbolizes cleanliness and light, conveying to consumers the consistently pure and refreshing experience associated with the product's usage. Additionally, the portrayal of a man who is exercising but still looks fresh and clean serves as a powerful visual representation, emphasizing the product's effectiveness in warding off sweat during physical activity. This imagery provides factual information about the product's functionality and adds an emotional and contextual layer, emphasizing the invigorating effect of the product on the user. In this way, the strategic incorporation of non-verbal signs goes beyond

conveying basic facts, contributing significantly to the overall effectiveness and appeal of the advertisement and making the product more attractive for consumers.

In terms of the difference between explicit and implicit messages (already mentioned in the psychological part of this research), explicit messages in advertisements provide direct and factual statements, through which consumers receive some clear and straightforward information about the effects, and potential benefits of the given product, while the unique indirect effect of implicit messages allows consumers to draw conclusions about the displayed product according to their own imagination (Chron, 2021).

Sun, Chen, and Lan (2022) claimed that explicit and implicit green appeals are common communication tactics in green marketing to inspire customers. This research states that explicit signs directly convey to the consumers that the product has clear advantages. Conversely, implicit signals are both useful and valuable and transfer information subtly and indirectly that are less clear, but potentially more effective in strengthening intentions toward advertising and encouraging consumers to purchase. The concept of these hidden or implicit messages is an essential factor in the research part of my thesis, therefore, the next chapter will focus on pragmatic approaches that allow for the identification and analysis of implicit messages.

2.2. Pragmatic frameworks

A great number of researchers have studied the linguistic background and structure of advertising, which provides an opportunity to examine implicit and explicit messages. Beginning with the theoretical basics of this field, pragmatics is the study of how utterances acquire meanings in distinct situations or through communication processes (Leech, 2016). Levinson (1983) declared that pragmatics is an academic discipline that examines the intricate connection between language and context, specifically, those factors that are grammatically embedded or encoded within the structure of a language. From another point of view, pragmatics plays a decisive role in the study of the speaker's intended meaning, or even "invisible meanings", for instance in the case of newspaper advertisements (Yule, 1985: 129). These "invisible meanings" or so-called implicit meanings have been studied based on the following two pragmatic theories: **Grice's cooperative principle** (Grice, 1975) and its further adaptation, **relevance theory** (Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

2.2.1. Grice's cooperative principles and maxims

Levinson (2005) points out that, according to Grice, the course of the conversation is guided by some overarching considerations. These likely result from a rational consideration for using language effectively and efficiently in conversation. In his seminal work, *Logic and Conversation* (1975), Grice stated that the purpose of the cooperative principles is to create effective communication that has to be informative and consistent for the participants to understand each other, which leads to the reduction of conflicts, thus resulting in a harmonious relationship between the participants. In order to establish the ideal communication mentioned above, Grice defined four different maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner within his cooperative principles. The maxim of **quantity** expects “your contribution to be as informative as required” (Grice, 1975: 45). The maxim of **quality** emphasizes that “try to make your contribution true [...] [so] don't say something you believe to be false or for which you do not have adequate evidence” (46). The maxim of **relevance** refers to the listener or utterance to “be relevant” (46). Last but not least, speakers must consider the maxim of **manner**, which represents the “avoidance of vagueness and ambiguity of expression” (46).

Although adherence to this cooperative principle and its maxims would lead to successful communication, participants often tend to break the maxims for various reasons. Grice (1975: 49-55) defined five forms of disregarding the maxims: violating, flouting, opting out, infringing, and suspending. Individuals often “violate” the maxims to mislead or embarrass the other participant in the conversation (Cutting, 2002: 40). The **violation** of maxims occurs when the speaker breaks a maxim for their own benefit, disadvantaging the other party, as in the following example:

Teacher: Why didn't you do your homework?

Student: May I go and get some water? I'm so thirsty.

This statement depicts how the student avoids or ignores the answer to the teacher's question by breaking the maxim of relevance. On the other hand, the speaker might choose to ignore or not to observe maxims with the purpose of encouraging the listener to see beyond the semantic level and look for profound meanings, resulting in **flouting** (Grice, 1991) demonstrated with the next example:

Ali: Where are you, Majid?

Majid: I'm in my clothes.

In that case, Majid tells the literal truth while flouting the maxim of quantity for the sake of humor (Khosravizadeh & Sadehvandi, 2011). **Opting out** commonly occurs in public

situations when the speaker, potentially due to legal or ethical constraints, is unable to respond as expected. The speaker aims to prevent creating misleading implications or coming across as uncooperative. The following lines can serve as a good representation of cases like this:

Doctor: Your husband is in the hospital, he was in an accident.

Wife: (Freaks out) What?! How could this happen? Tell me everything!

Doctor: Calm down, he is alright. He is safe, we have done the best and he is alive.
(Rosasenja, 2012).

Infringing the maxims might result from the speaker's imperfect knowledge or performance of language, for example, in the case of a foreigner, who has an imperfect command of the foreign language, as in the following lines:

English speaker: Would you like ham or salad on your sandwich?

Non-English speaker: Yes! (Nemesi, 2015).

Grice (1975) called **suspending** as the last form of disregarding the maxims: in such cases maxims are not expected to be fulfilled or broken, hence if a maxim is non-fulfilled, implicatures will not be generated. Examples include literary works or obituaries, just like the sentence "*I am always satisfied with the best.*" (Wilde, 2012).

Breaking the Gricean maxims affects the speech context but at the same time, provides a useful framework for the investigation of implicit messages in communication. Grice (1975) stated when a maxim is broken, an implicature arises, which he divided into two main categories: conversational implicature and conventional implicature. Their function is to protect the utterance from appearing in the conversation as an incorrect registration. On the other hand, Grice (1989) named another interpretation of implicatures when he made a distinction between "what is said" (28) and "what is implicated" (86) in the context. What is said is mostly to be understood as meaning, which has a specific sense and reference. What is implicated indicates the fact that certain conjunction words such as *but*, *still* or *even* function as built-in implications (Bach, 1999).

Conversational implicature refers to the message revealed by the mediator, i. e. the speaker. This type of implicature does not require prior knowledge for the implicit understanding conveyed in the utterance as the peculiarities of the context determine its explanation. This utterance is interpreted broadly, not based on the meaning of words used in the context (Blome-Tillmann, 2013).

Dona: Did you meet John and Cecile?

Tony: I met John.

The example above shows that the listener does not need prior knowledge, since the meaning unfolds from the context and the intention of the utterance. In this case, Tony had just met John for the first time but not Cecile yet (Wedananta, Nitiasih, & Kaewsa-ard, 2020).

Grice (1975) stated that **conventional implicatures** derive from concrete meanings, not from conversational circumstances and their interpretation does not depend on specific contexts. On the other hand, he also claimed that the use of the conventional meaning of the words determines what is implicated while assisting in determining what is said. This statement was further interpreted by Levinson (1983: 128) that conventional implicatures do not rely on assumptions about the context, but they depend on specific linguistic elements. For a better explanation, Grice used examples of conjunctions that contribute to the utterance of the implied messages in the conversational discourse. Here is an illustration of two different statements, involving conjunction words like *but* and *and*:

“Shaq is huge but he is agile.”

“Shaq is huge and he is agile.”

Starting with the first sentence, which contains the conjunction word *but* highlighting the opposition between *huge* and *agility* while generating a conventional implicature, this implicature conveys an expectation that someone is *huge* but may not be *agile*. In contrast, the conjunction *and* in the second statement indicates that both characteristics, *huge* and *agility* apply to Shaq without implying a contradiction or contrast (Bach, 1999).

In the Gricean framework, implicature can be comprehended as a type of inference, which differs from entailment and presupposition. The concept of **presupposition** originally arose out of a philosophical concern with the nature of “reference” and “referring expressions”, and two basic types of presupposition can be distinguished: semantic and pragmatic presupposition (Lafi, 2008). Based on the latter aspect, the concept of presupposition is analysed below.

The presuppositions of the utterance are the information that the speaker assumes to make the utterance meaningful in a given speech context. In terms of pragmatics, Stalnaker (1998) explained that presuppositions include the prerequisites for linguistic interaction in dialogue, such as using a shared language. Furthermore, pragmatic presuppositions cannot be easily interpreted by specific words or expressions, but arise from the general properties of the speaking context and the expectations of the participants (Potts, 2015). Presuppositions are fulfilled, if the participants in the communication already have certain background information due to the past or if the utterance is considered true based on the

assumptions and pre-existing knowledge of the speaker (Yule 1996). The following dialogue represents the use of presuppositions.

Dad: The refrigerator is empty. Where are all the bottles of yogurt?

Mum: It seems that Tom (the son) is satisfied today.

As the example shows, there is no connection between the stated question and the answer because the question from Dad refers to an expectation that in the refrigerator there were all the bottles of yogurt but now they are missing. The presupposition in this case is the fact that yogurts were previously found in the refrigerator. However, another presupposition emerges from the reaction of Mum as she expects that perhaps “all the bottles of yogurt were eaten by their son Tom” (Yingfang, 2007).

2.2.2. Relevance theory

Based on the study of human interaction, Grice (1975) concluded that the cooperative principle and its maxims might facilitate successful communication, which he interpreted as the sender and receiver successfully negotiating communicative intentions. These intentions reflect the main goal of communication, at the same time, their study constitutes one of the major purposes of pragmatics, namely how certain intended implications occur, and how they can be interpreted according to the audience’s perception.

Sperber and Wilson (1986) extended Grice’s theory with the so-called relevance theory to explain how listeners infer meaning from utterances by focusing on the cognitive processes involved in a communication context rather than emphasizing the cooperative nature of conversation and adherence to specific maxims. In terms of relevance, it is interpreted as a measure of how effectively a piece of information interacts with an individual’s mental context, leading to cognitive effects or outcomes that are deemed to be valuable or useful. Sperber and Wilson define this term by two general notions: “relevance in a context” and “relevance in an individual”. The context includes mentally represented information - beliefs, doubts, hopes, wishes, plans, intentions, questions, etc., which are built up during the comprehension process or selected by the individual from the ranks of possible contexts. These general notions should be considered basic in terms of relevance, which plays an essential role in both communication and cognition. “Relevance in an individual” emphasizes the subjective nature of relevance: information becomes relevant when it interacts with the individual’s contextual information, resulting in worthwhile cognitive effects, such as drawing conclusions, confirming suspicions, answering questions, making decisions, and so on. The more significant the cognitive effect and the lower the mental effort

needed, the more relevant the input will be to the participant in a communication context. The theory itself aims not only to determine the relevance of utterances but also to ensure the appearance of external or internal stimuli to promote human cognitive processes such as sights, sounds, smells, thoughts, memories, etc. (Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 3).

The fundamental core of the distinction between the Gricean cooperative theory and relevance theory is the notion of using explicit and implicit messages. Grice (1975) applied explicit messages which are directly claimed by the speaker with the intention of conveying a particular meaning while implicit messages are explained as an intended communicative function, where what a speaker intends to transfer goes beyond the basic sense and reference a particular utterance conveys. In extension of the Gricean theory, Sperber and Wilson (1986) approached communication in the relevance theory by condensing all the various types of meaning in the Gricean/neo-Gricean framework (such as what is said, conversational and conventional implicature, presupposition) into only two main groups: explicature and implicature. The role of **explicature** in terms of relevance theory is to showcase explicitly stated pragmatic messages and inferences that contribute to what is explicitly expressed and not only to what is implied (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182). On the other hand, **implicature** was defined in more detail as “those contextual assumptions and implications which the hearer has to recover in order to satisfy himself that the speaker has observed the principle of relevance” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 250), while the **principle of relevance** is expressed as “every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 158). Based on this, implicatures can be interpreted by identifying their **implied premises** and **implied conclusions**. The following examples illustrate this point:

Claire: Do you like The Sun also Rises?

Peter: I love all Hemingway's novels.

In this case, Peter does not serve a direct answer to Claire's question, but his statement must convey implied meanings while following the principle of relevance in order to become a coherent response.

“The Sun also Rises is a novel by Hemingway.”

“Peter loves The Sun also Rises.”

In the dialogue above, Peter did not explicitly respond to Claire's question, but has clearly shown an implied answer within the context, what is more, he could not expect his answer to be relevant unless he did it on purpose. Hence, it is evident that his utterance is intentional and mediates implicatures. “*The Sun also Rises is a novel by Hemingway.*” is represented

as an implicated premise, combined with Peter's response: "*I love all Hemingway's novels.*" resulting in the formation of the statement: "*Peter loves The Sun also Rises.*" as an implicated conclusion. Both implicatures lead to the proper interpretation of the principle of relevance. It is inevitable to note that not all implicatures are as obvious as the speaker pre-assumes to be. Sperber and Wilson (1986: 197) also highlighted that certain implicatures are strongly comprehensible, making it hard for the listener to miss them. Others are less obvious but if the listener pays attention to even some of weaker implicatures, the intended interpretation becomes clear (Pérez, 2000).

2.3. Pragmatic aspects of advertisements

The pragmatic frameworks mentioned above are utilized as key elements of advertising by providing a systematic approach to communication that goes beyond its literal meaning. In advertising, where the ultimate purpose is often to influence consumer behaviour, the use of concepts from pragmatics allows advertisers to consider the context, implicit meanings, and social cues in their message. Whether it is humour, persuasion, or emotional appeal, pragmatic frames offer advertisers an effective tool to navigate the complexities of human communication and enhance the effectiveness of their message in a diverse and dynamic market. Over the years, numerous scholars have studied the role and intention of advertisements from different linguistic perspectives.

One of the best-known research methods for investigating advertising is Grice's cooperation theory and the violation or flouting of maxims, resulting in implicit or hidden messages making products even more successful among consumers. These mechanisms were explored for example by Nastiti (2018), who concluded that the humorous effects of advertisements are created by flouting the maxims of Grice's cooperation principles and the use of implicature, which makes the consumer understand the intended meaning of the advertisements easily. Scholars, for example Safitri (2015), concludes that implicature plays a crucial role in creating effective cigarette slogans for advertisers, as it allows them to convey implicit meanings despite the restrictions on explicit persuasion. The data analysis points out the presence of implicature and the violation of maxims in all examined slogans, highlighting their strategic use by advertisers to circumvent advertising regulations. In another investigation, Chang, Schulz, Schirato, and Hall (2018) researched the implicit messages in Chinese food advertisements and then made the conclusion that repetition tactics and the appearance of implicit messages on premium offers increase the popularity of the food product but raise the risk of obesity by not focusing on the quality and nutrient

supply of the food, but only on the purchase. Considering the use of the relevance theory, Chang (2018) examined puns in English advertisements based on the investigation of two distinct commercial slogans. This study reveals that puns appearing in English advertisements are strongly followed the principle of relevance, which makes the advertisement successful and also captures the audience's attention. By using puns, advertisers create a cognitive riddle that prompts readers to actively engage with the ad to uncover the intended message. Through this process, puns not only provide humour but also deepen the audience's understanding of the underlying meaning of the ad, ultimately improving communication effectiveness.

The studies above greatly influenced and inspired my current research, which is based on the relevance theory through the investigation of explicit and implicit messages in advertisements. Efficient and harmonious communication can be achieved by not only applying the Gricean cooperative theory, but also following the principle of relevance. In this regard, the focal point of my study is the question of how explicitation and implicitation play a crucial role in crafting multi-layered messages within advertisements, which aim to increase the effectiveness of messages and influence consumers' emotional reactions.

3. The study of explicitation and implicitation in BMW advertisements

3.1. Aims and research questions

The pragmatic framework serves not only for successful communication and the effective usage of communication tools but also for other purposes such as awareness and promotion in terms of advertisements. In the following I shall examine how explicitation and implicitation contribute to creating multi-layered messages in BMW advertisements. The following research questions will guide the research process:

1. What information is conveyed in the form of explicit verbal and visual messages in BMW advertisements?
2. How do BMW advertisements rely on implicatures to promote either a product, the brand or suggest a life experience?

3.2. Data and data collection

For this exploratory study, I have chosen ten recent BMW advertisements, published between 2020 and 2023 with the idea that in the case of advertisements for the same brand, the target audience, their background knowledge, and assumptions, can be more easily identified. These advertisements are static and they appeared in newspapers, magazines, online surfaces and roadside billboards. The common feature of these static advertisements is that they rely on the immediate perception of visual and verbal information for the message. These advertisements will be submitted to an in-depth qualitative analysis to explore how strategies of explicitation and implicitation are applied to create complex messages.

The research is complemented with an interview study involving ten participants, who were asked to interpret the main messages of the ten BMW advertisements and also reflect on explicit and implicit messages they could identify in them. The participants represent a convenience sample, half of whom are males and the other half are females, who studied the displayed advertisements without prior knowledge and then answered the questions. The only prerequisite of participation was having their own car or being interested in driving and cars. The interviews took a maximum of 40 minutes per individual in person or online as required while their answers were recorded in writing. They were conducted in Hungarian, therefore all quotes in the analysis will be presented in my translation.

3.3. Data analysis

The steps of the investigation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Steps of investigation

Step 1: Identifying explicit visual messages	Identifying explicit visual messages based on the research of Arinata and Sulatra (2022) as the model to investigate the meaning of colours and visual images Examining what types of advantages are highlighted in the form of explicit messages (Sun, Chen, & Lan, 2022) Classifying visual messages based on the aspects of reality they refer to (features of the product, benefits of using the product, features of the advertising company etc.) Analysing interviewees' perceptions of explicit visual messages based on interview questions 1, 4 and 5
Step 2: Identifying explicit verbal messages	Identifying explicit verbal messages at three text levels: title/subtitle, text body, footnote based on the research of Arinata and Sulatra (2022) as the model to investigate verbal messages according to font size Examining what types of advantages are highlighted in the form of explicit messages (Sun, Chen, & Lan, 2022) Classifying verbal messages based on the aspects of reality they refer to (features of the product, benefits of using the product, features of the advertising company etc.) Analysing interviewees' perceptions of explicit verbal messages based on interview questions 1, 4 and 5
Step 3: Identifying implied messages	Identifying implied messages evolving from explicit verbal and visual messages Classifying what aspects of the reality the implicatures refer to (features of the product, benefits of using the product, features of the advertising company etc.)

	Analysing interviewees' perceptions of implicit verbal and visual messages based on interview questions 2 and 3
Step 4: Identifying the main message of each advertisement	Identifying interviewees' perceptions of the main messages of the advertisements based on interview questions 2 and 3

3.4. Results and discussion

The results will be presented and discussed based on the research questions presented in section 3.1. Analysis will focus on the pragmatic aspects of explicit and implicit messages appearing in the advertisements, as well as the interviewees' perceptions and interpretations of these messages.

3.4.1. What information is conveyed in the form of explicit verbal and visual messages in BMW advertisements?

The use of explicit messages or explicature is an essential strategy in the world of advertising. The primary function of these messages is to create a strong and direct connection between the advertised product and the consumers, by prominently expressing the statements with both visual and verbal effects, thereby grabbing the audience's attention (Usrey, Palihawadana, Saridakis, & Theotokis, 2020). Sperber and Wilson (1995: 182) in their further research expressed that "what is said" explicitly or literally is called explicature, while other scholars, for example, Yan Hung (2012), who investigated the use of explicature conveyed through an utterance and depends on a shared communication context.

My corpus of BMW advertisements strongly relies on the use of explicature in both visual and verbal forms. Table 2 reveals the explicit visual messages appearing in the ten BMW advertisements, classified in three main categories: context, objects, actors and their subcategories, for example, urban high-tech areas, BMW cars, drivers etc. Each number marks the occurrence of the messages in the ads.

Table 2 Explicit visual messages

Context	Objects	Actors
Urban high-tech areas: - urban centres (1) - interior of supermarkets (1) - interior of garages (1) Backgrounds related to driving: - drivers sitting in their cars (1) - interior view of cars (2) - rugged mountains (2) Mono-colour backgrounds: - sparkling gold backgrounds (1) - orange backgrounds (1)	BMW cars: - sports cars (4) - SUV (4) BMW logo (10) Other companies' logos: - YouTube (1) - MM (1) - Rolls-Royce (1) - SIXT (1) Objects related to the car: - steering wheels (3) - seats (1) - dashboard in cars (2) - graphic of car functions (1) Casual objects: - balloons (1) - flags (1)	Drivers: - female and male drivers (1) Racers (1) Passers-by (1) Afro-American woman (1) A superhero's hand (Flash) holding the steering vehicle (1)
10	31	5

Table 2 above demonstrates the appearance of explicit visual messages nicely, which can be classified into three main categories, including “context”, “objects” and “actors”. The total number of visual messages belonging to these categories can be observed after having been examined in the advertisements: the “context” category contains ten messages, the “objects” category 31, and the group of “actors” includes five visual messages in total.

Considering the “context” category, in three cases of the examined advertisements, the urban high-tech area can be seen, which either depicts a city centre with modern technology, or the interior of a garage, or even the inside view of a supermarket, reminding of the urban high-tech atmosphere due to the glass-metal design. Other types of background related to driving can be examined in five cases where the products are shown together with their drivers, or sometimes on the move between rugged mountains. At the same time, the interior view of each car can be mapped in terms of their equipment. The last visual message within the “context” category is the mono-colour background, which is noticed in two cases and where the context itself cannot be identified as a specific environment since the products in the advertisements are shown against a sparkling gold or orange background.

The second category is the “objects” one, where one of the visual messages is the BMW logo, which appears in all ten advertisements, representing the brand itself, although there are also logos of other companies that are visible in only four cases, including YouTube,

MM, Rolls-Royce, SIXT. There is another type of object that can be examined in a larger proportion, which involves the BMW cars themselves, such as sports cars or SUVs, coming into view in eight cases in each advertisement, affecting the imagination of consumers by presenting the offered product. Within the presentation of the products, in a total of seven cases, certain accessories related to them, such as steering wheels, seats, dashboards or even the functions of the car, are presented in order to further strengthen or convey the advantages of the offered product to the audience. The two remaining visual messages, the casual objects, can be noticed in two cases within Advertisement 1, including balloons and flags, which symbolize the celebration while promoting the new image of the BMW brand related to the support of equality.

The final category is “actors”, where individuals are featured in five cases in the advertisements and play a crucial role in attracting the attention of the audience, including illustrations of female and male drivers, racers, or passers-by enhancing moments and experiences of driving. On the other hand, there are advertisements which depict an Afro-American woman or a superhero’s hand (Flash) holding the steering vehicle, suggesting the perspectives and desires of the new generation, which also contributes to gender diversity, and modernization, making an impact on society’s minds and assumptions about BMW’s profile.

Besides the explicit visual images, several verbal messages can also be discovered in the ten BMW ads, which play a remarkable role in understanding the messages of each commercial. Table 3 below demonstrates these explicit verbal messages, referring to the product, brand, or life experience (one message can belong to more than one category e.g. suggesting both the brand and a life experience).

The second classification is in terms of different font size categories, which include “title/subtitle”, “text body” and “footnote”. The first category is the “title/subtitle” font size, which is related to text segments located in the central place and typed in the largest font size on the surface of each advertisement and it is often capitalized (uppercase), but not in every case. The next font size category is the “text body”, which contains messages that serve as a detailed or short description. They can usually be seen below the “title/subtitle” messages and are marked with a medium font size compared to them. The last category is the “footnote” font size, where messages function as additional information related to the main idea, mostly marked at the bottom of the ads, with the smallest font.

Table 3 Explicit verbal messages

	Product	Brand	Life experience
Title/subtitle	Call for action: - In statements: “CHOOSE YOUR ROAD TO THE BMW X1.” (A6) Slogans: - Main slogans: “EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.” (A9); “PEACE OF MIND IN ONE PACKAGE.” (A7) Promoted products: “New BMW M3.” (A8)	Slogans: - Main slogan: “WE ARE” (A4); “OUR BRANDS. OUR STORIES.” (A5); “EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.” (A9) - Highlighted by hashtag: „#DrivenByPride” (A1) Call for action: - In statements: “GO BACK TO MAKING BMWs.” (A3); “DON’T RENT A CAR. RENT THE CAR.” (A10)	Call for action: - In questions: “CAN’T WAIT TO PLAY THE BIG GAME?” (A6) Slogans: - Main slogan: „Pride is here and everywhere.” (A1); “EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.” (A9); “PEACE OF MIND IN ONE PACKAGE.” (A7) - Sub Slogans: “BOXER IM HECK TRIFFT AUF BENZIN IM BLUT.” (A5) - Highlighted by hashtag: “#DrivenByPride” (A1); “#JUSTCANTWAIT” (A6)
	4 (24%)	6 (35%)	7 (41%)
Text body	Information: - Additional information: „EASY START PLAN {...} BMW ADVANCED HYGIENE PACKAGE.” (A6) Promoted products: “Explore the 2022 BMW X7.” (A9); “BMW SERVICE & REPAIR {...} WITH THE 7.” (A7);	Call for action: - In questions: “OK, Boomer. And what’s your reason not to change?” (A3) Slogans: - Main slogan: “OUR ANCESTORS’ WILDEST DREAMS” (A4) Promoted products: “BMW SERVICE & REPAIR {...} WITH THE 7.” (A7)	Mottos of other companies/social groups: “STAY SAFE! STAY HOME! STAY PROUD!” (A1) Information: - Additional information: “We asked the world’s most advanced AI Software, DALL·E 2 to generate images of a “Car Driver.” These were the images we received.” (A2) Call for action: - In questions: “OK, Boomer. And what’s your reason not to change?” (A3)

	“The Adventurous BMW X1” (A10)		Slogans: - Sub slogans: “A Vehicle created for real speed experts.” (A8)
	4 (36%)	3 (28%)	4 (36%)
Footnote		Signatures: „Ayelet Zurer” (A2) Information: - Additional information: „Design by Michelotti, {..} bmwgroup-classic.com/stories” (A5) Website links: „Learn More” (A9); „SIXT.COM” (A10) Mottos of other companies/social groups: „rent the car” (A10); „Pride” (A1)	Slogans: - Sub slogans: „Sheer Driving Pleasure” (A7) - Highlighted by hashtag: „#GENERATION JOY” (A4) Call for action: - In statement: “Hey AI, women make half of the world. You still have some way to go.” (A2)
		6 (67%)	3 (33%)
Total:	8 (22%)	15 (40%)	14 (38%)

Table 3 above clearly illustrates the tendency of the representation of explicit verbal messages in each of the ads examined, divided into three main categories - “product”, “brand”, “life experience” and seven different subcategories - “call for action”, “slogans”, “promoted products”, “information”, “signatures”, “website links”, “mottos of other companies/social groups”, which consist of additional classes that enable these verbal messages to be more easily identified and classified into the three main categories. Within the three main categories, the advertisements convey 22% the product, 40% the brand itself, 38% life experience, but some verbal messages can be classified into more than one category, such as ‘DrivenByPride’; ‘OK. Boomer. And what’s your reason not to change?’; ‘PEACE OF MIND IN ONE PACKAGE.’; ‘BMW SERVICE & REPAIR {...} WITH THE 7.’; ‘EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.’ (see Advertisement 1, 3, 7, 9). These messages not only reflect on the promoted product but also suggest the benefits and advantages of the brand

itself by conveying a sense of adventure that consumers can experience if they decide to BMW.

Considering the last classification in terms of different font sizes where “title/subtitle” refers to verbal messages featured in the centre of the ads, appearing in the most prominent font size, often written in capital letters. This category contains verbatim messages, with 35% representing the brand itself, for example, ‘*OUR BRANDS. OUR STORIES.*’ (see Advertisement 5) which implies BMW’s valued history and heritage, 41% a life experience, ‘*CAN’T WAIT TO PLAY THE BIG GAME?*’ (see Advertisement 6) reflecting on a game-like sense of driving, and only 24% advocate a product, ‘*CHOOSE YOUR ROAD TO THE BMW X1.*’ (see Advertisement 6) suggesting that ‘*BMW X1*’ will take you anywhere both in a spatial and a social sense.

Verbal messages belonging to the “text body” font size category mostly perform as a detailed or short description, they stand out with a medium font size compared to the “title/subtitle” category. In this section, 36% of verbal messages related to a product, for instance, ‘*Explore the 2022 BMW X7.*’ (see Advertisement 9) which promotes a product by encouraging readers to look for additional details, also 36% a life experience demonstrated by a slogan: ‘*OK, Boomer. And what’s your reason not to change?*’ (see Advertisement 3) firing up readers while proposing modernization, and 28% of the messages in this font size category refer to the brand itself: ‘*OUR ~~ANCESTORS~~’ WILDEST DREAMS*’ (see Advertisement 4) which implies that the ever-developing BMW products might be the dreams of newer and newer generations of drivers.

Last but not least, the “footnote” font size category includes messages that function as additional information related to the main idea of the ads, marked with the smallest font size. Within this category, 67% of messages touch upon the brand, for example, ‘*Learn More*’ (see Advertisement 9) suggesting the BMW website, allowing the whole representation of this brand profile, and 33% of these messages refer to a life experience such as ‘*Sheer Driving Pleasure*’ (see Advertisement 7) which further implies the enjoyment of driving, and verbal messages within the “product” category is completely left out. These results demonstrate that advertisers strive to display verbal messages in the most directly visible and striking form, with the aim of transferring the main intended message to the audience, serving in the majority of cases as a representation of the brand itself in terms of its heritage, benefits, respected profile, and modern design.

During the research process, an interview with ten chosen participants contributed to the broader investigation of how different messages are perceived by consumers. The further

analysis of explicit visual and verbal messages, summarized in Tables 2-3 above, will be facilitated by three questions of the interview:

1. *What piece of information was the first that caught your attention on this ad, which text or image was it?*
4. *Does this advertisement provide enough information to judge whether this product is useful for you?*
5. *What do you think this advertisement conveys best: a product, the brand itself, or a life experience (e.g.: desire for adventure)? (see in the Appendix).*

The responses to question 1 suggest that explicit visual or verbal messages are the first to catch the majority of interviewees' attention. Based on the results, 70% of the participants noticed explicit visual messages, while 30% identified explicit verbal messages at first sight. The most striking visual object was directly displayed BMW products, which appear with a frequency of 50% in the ten ads (see Advertisement 1, 6, 7, 9, 10). Another visual element that most respondents noticed was one of the superheroes' hand (Flash) holding the steering vehicle, which is classified into the "actors" category (see Advertisement 8). Considering the explicit verbal messages, where the respondents mostly caught sight of two highlighted elements, 'WE ARE' and 'DON'T RENT A CAR. RENT THE CAR.' presumably due to the messages' large font size, which is directly visible to the audience at first glance. (see Advertisement 4, 10).

According to the answers of the respondents to question 4, 60% of them could not decide whether the depicted product is useful due to the lack of information provided, and 40% stated that Advertisement 6 and 7 include enough information about the product's usefulness. Here are some opinions expressed by the interviewees: "*No, because it doesn't write a specific type, price, and I can't find enough information about the service.*" (M); "*No, because this is more of a marketing ploy to promote the brand rather than to present the product.*" (F); "*Although there is only a small amount of text, the combination of the text and the image support the usefulness of the product in a good way.*" (M); "*I think it proves useful based on the text as a whole and the symbols.*" (M).

Question 5 asked about the aspect of reality the advertisements refer to. The respondents stated that 38% of the analysed advertisements suggest the product, 35% the brand itself, and only 27% life experience. These results include respondents' opinions who classified one advertisement in more than one category. The following reviews from some participants prove these exceptional cases: "*It emphasizes all three together, with the slogan 'EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.', which applies not only to the offered product but also*

to the BMW brand so that if you buy a car from them, you will not be disappointed.” (M); “A life experience, the ‘STORIES’ creates a personal experience which shows that the customer is appreciated and not just one of many and it suggests the brand too because the BMW logo is on there.” (F). “Firstly, the brand, because BMW supports Pride, which conveys the vision and mission of the brand, that they stand up for equality. Secondly, a life experience, since the Pride is a divisive issue, therefore it also raises social issues.” (F).

Based on the aggregated results of the responses to the interview questions mentioned above, the explicit visual messages were the most dominant forms, which immediately caught the respondent’s attention, especially where a directly visible BMW product can be observed (see Advertisement 1, 6, 7, 9, 10). Of these ads, participants stated that Advertisement 6 provides the most information about the offered product, in terms of its usefulness. Furthermore, according to the opinion of the respondents, these five advertisements conveyed the product in 59%, the brand in 29% and life experience in only 12%, some of them were also listed in more than one category. It proves that by the use of explicature in advertisements, advertisers make their products outstanding and conspicuous as much as possible for successful sales.

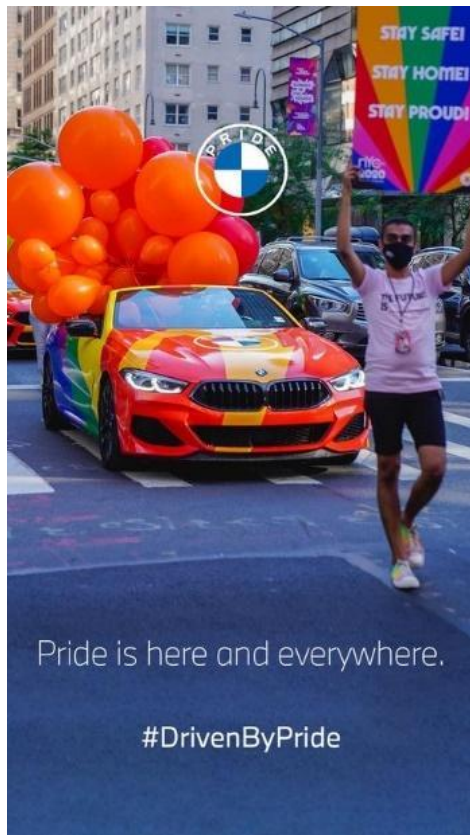
3.4.2. How do BMW advertisements rely on implicatures to promote either a product, the brand or suggest a life experience?

Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle defined effective communication with four maxims - quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. Their purpose is to establish an informative and consistent interaction between participants in a communicational context. Individuals often break these maxims, resulting in the formation of implied meanings, in other words, implicature, when the speaker expects the hearer to make inferences beyond what is explicitly expressed. Sperber and Wilson (1986) extended the Gricean theory by creating the Relevance theory, highlighting the implications that the hearer has to recognize in order to interpret the utterance appropriately while the speaker follows the principle of relevance.

These implicit messages will be interpreted in each advertisement based on the interview subjects’ point of view, contributing to the analysis of the remaining two interview questions:

- 2. How do you interpret the main message or purpose of this advertisement?*
- 3. How much the message of this ad is transmitted in pictorial or textual forms or did you have to rely more on your prior knowledge to understand the message? (see in the Appendix).*

All ten advertisements will be depicted and analysed below based on the respondents' point of view.



Advertisement 1



Advertisement 2

Considering Advertisements 1-2, the majority of respondents suggested the expression of acceptance and equality as the main message of these ads through the pride and feminist movements. *“Everyone should be proud of who they are, let’s show our individuality!”* (F) (see Advertisement 1). *“It tries to speak out against gender inequality and for equal treatment.”* (M); *“Getting rid of common stereotypes and highlighting the role of women in society.”* (M) (see Advertisement 2). In order to formulate these main messages, the respondents needed to rely on implied premises to develop the implied conclusions. Implied premises refer to assumptions or background information that go beyond the explicit meanings and are necessary to interpret the communicated message. On the other hand, implied conclusions are inferences that are relevant to the speaker’s or hearer’s background knowledge and context (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Based on the explicit visual messages (see rainbow flag), the respondents defined the implied premise that the flag symbolises the pride movement, from which they drew the implied conclusion that the BMW company

wants to present itself as a socially sensitive company by supporting social diversity. *“The message comes clearly from the direct image, such as the rainbow flag representing pride.”* (M). Regarding Advertisement 2 where the respondents also determine the premises with the use of visual messages conveyed (see a female driver in the centre, surrounded by many male drivers) and then originate the implied conclusion that the BMW brand suggests gender equality and emphasizes the importance of women in society. *“Besides men’s rights, this ad also considers, evaluates, and stands for women’s rights.”* (F). These observations prove that participants shared the same implied premises or pre-knowledge referring to either the LGBTQ+ community or a gender question considering feminism which results in the implied conclusion that both ads marked by Advertisement 1-2 concentrate on the idea of current social sensitivity, promoting the image of the company more intensively than the product itself.



Advertisement 3



Advertisement 5



Advertisement 4

Advertisers often situate their advertisements in a new and modern environment, which the respondents excellently noticed during the analysis of the BMW advertisements. Modernization and the rapture of the modern “Z” generation enjoy priority in several advertisements, e.g. Advertisements 3-4. In order to understand the leading purpose of each commercial, participants had to rely on verbal (see ‘BOOMER’) and visual (see Afro-American woman) messages to come up with the following implied premises. On the one hand, these premises address the age group of the 60s through social media with the term ‘BOOMER’; on the other hand, they symbolize the social and ethnic diversity of the new generation by displaying an Afro-American woman. By sharing the same implied premises in both ads, respondents’ answers result in implied conclusions that suggest modernization and innovative thinking, as well as the BMW’s adaptation to ever-evolving technology. “‘BOOMER’ is aimed at the core consumers of the brand to accept their changes.” (M); “BMW is depicting the future here, that car production is already moving towards self-operating, more advanced technology.” (M) (see Advertisement 3). “It appeals to a new

*generation full of new ideas and dreams.” (M); “The brand doesn’t only want to conquer one target group but also attract the attention of the younger generation.” (F) (see Advertisement 4). Similar to Advertisement 4, Advertisement 5 also depicts an individual as one of the main elements of the ad (see man in a red suit with a red old car in the background), some of the interviewees defined the premises as referring to the individual’s personal history, or narrative with BMW, intensifying the relationship between the brand and consumers. “Working at BMW is worth it.” (M); *It’s about personalizing the experience of belonging to BMW so the reader can better identify with the brand.*” (F). Another part of the participants’ assumptions where implied premises were inferred from the textual forms, ‘OUR BRANDS. OUR STORIES.’ advocate BMW’s rich history and heritage. “This ad suggests that BMW has quite a long history and heritage.” (M); “It refers to the company’s traditions” (M). Drawing inferences from different implied premises (e.g.: red suit man or ‘OUR BRANDS. OUR STORIES.’) often leaves behind the same implied conclusion, illustrated by the main message of Advertisement 5, which evokes emotions and desire, encouraging the audience to associate themselves with the brand’s image and values.*



Advertisement 6



Advertisement 7



Advertisement 8

Considering all ten advertisements, the respondents considered Advertisements 6 and 7 to be the most informative commercials. They argued that both advertisements were clearly trying to sell a specific product by providing detailed information through verbal or visual messages. Advertisement 6 puts its explicit verbal messages on display that result in implied premises prioritizing durability and reliability of the offered product, ‘BMW X1’ which leads to the implied conclusion encouraging consumers that by purchasing this suggested model, they will experience freedom, excitement, immediate gratification and adventure. “*I feel like they’re trying to convince me to buy the product through both ‘CAN’T WAIT TO PLAY THE BIG GAME?’ and ‘#JUSTCANTWAIT’.*” (M); “*The advertisement calls for a gigantic*

driving experience.” (M). During the examination of Advertisement 7, the respondents paid much more attention to the main verbal messages (see ‘*PEACE OF MIND IN ONE PACKAGE.*’) where the implied premise was revealed in the ‘*PACKAGE*’ relating to the service offered by BMW, drawing the implied conclusion that these services guarantee safety and carefree driving, also the durability of the product: ‘*PEACE OF MIND*’. “*This ad wants to illustrate the quality and durability of the BMW car.*” (M); “*If you choose this brand, you don’t have to worry about any problem that may arise.*” (F). Participants relied more on the visual messages of Advertisement 8, which suggests an implied premise that the red hand showcased belongs to a superhero named Flash, whose super skill is speed. Thus, the interviewees were able to interpret the main message and describe the implied conclusion of this ad which refers to the modernization of the BMW highlighting the speed of the latest model, ‘*BMW M3*’. “*For those consumers who are aware of the DC comics, advertisers illustrate to them how fast the BMW M3 is.*” (M); “*BMW follows the continuous development of technology concerning speed.*” (M). Respondents who did not recognize this character associated acceleration with car racing, as represented by the red glove and the text at the bottom of the ad: ‘*A Vehicle created for real speed experts.*’. “*The colour red refers to speed, contributing to the lowercase text which promotes the newest function of the BMW M3 car.*” (M); “*Showcasing the sports car, as car racers use such gloves.*” (M). Even perceiving an alternative implied premise, the respondents could draw the same conclusion. This means that the red hand is an effective image with multiple interpretation possibilities, which will all lead to the desired conclusion.



Advertisement 9



Advertisement 10

The remaining two commercials examined during the research are Advertisements 9 and 10, in which the explicit verbal messages are displayed in similar forms. This similarity contributes quite a bit to the interpretation of the same implied conclusion, related to a lifestyle element. The interviewees stated that advertisers tried to affect the reader's emotions and desires by highlighting the main slogan of Advertisement 9 and 10 (see *'EXCEED EVERY EXPECTATION.'*, *'DON'T RENT A CAR. RENT THE CAR.'*). These catchwords contain similar implied premises that reflect on the innovation and uniqueness of the advertised products. *"Its message is related to the power and grandeur of this BMW SUV."* (M) (see Advertisement 9); *"The picture of the 'BMW X7' is related to the word 'THE' so you can imagine what 'THE' car is like."* (F); *"If you rent this type of BMW, you rent the car itself, that is to say, the best car."* (M) (see Advertisement 10). At the same time, other verbal messages (see *'Explore'*, and *'Adventurous'*) include implied premises associated to the sense of adventure and excitement, allowing consumers to be involved in an exceptional driving experience. *"If you are adventurous and dreamy, choose the BMW and soar above heaven."* (F); *"This product is fitting for all challenges and circumstances."* (M) (see Advertisement 9). *"If you have a thirst for adventure, this car will make it possible for you."* (F) (see Advertisement 10). Advertisement 9 and 10 also prove that relying on different implied premises results in the same implied conclusion, in this case, both ads suggest a conscious marketing strategy that focuses on presenting a lifestyle element and brand identity aiming to resonate with potential consumers.

The results above were based on the responses of the ten interviewees who formulated the advertised messages in different ways with the aid of explicit visual and verbal messages, contributing to the interpretation of implicit meanings. For some respondents, it was enough to rely only on visual or verbal messages, although at certain points, it was essential to utilize both explicit and related implied messages or prior knowledge to understand the main purpose of the advertisements. These findings established that 45% of the participants relied on explicit verbal messages, 25% on explicit visual ones, and 30% on both explicit verbal and visual messages during the analysis of each ad. In order to understand and formulate the main message of the advertisements, 39% of the explicit visual messages and only 11% of the explicit verbal messages required prior knowledge. The additional results prove that the most dominantly promoted idea in advertisements is the offered product in 38% of cases, which relies on explicit visual and verbal messages in 81% and implied messages in 19% based on the interviewees' perspectives.

4. Conclusion

Pragmatic frameworks such as explicitation and implicitation in terms of relevance theory offer practical guidelines and strategies enabling advertisers to effectively navigate the messages in a dynamic environment. The aim of the present research was to explore how these complex messages are constructed and interpreted in ten BMW advertisements. The novelty of the approach lies in the combination of these two perspectives: the analysis of how meaning and function are constructed by visual and verbal signals complemented by the perception of these messages by potential consumers.

In the course of this research, one of the important findings is that advertisements do not always promote the product at all, in many cases, the brand stands in the centre of promotion, e.g. by emphasizing the company's social sensitivity or technological development aspect. Certain advertisements showcased social aspects such as the LGBTQ+ community, or the issue of gender (in)equality; these cases highlight BMW's nuanced approach, using explicit verbal and visual messages to engage consumers in meaningful conversations about certain social issues. At the same time, relying on consumers' imagination and pre-knowledge, BMW advertisers try to present their promoted products from a more interesting and exciting perspective. Whether it supports a change of perspective on generational differences, celebrates progress and self-realisation, or conveys an emphasis on the rich history and traditions associated with the brand, BMW touches the psyche of the audience. This approach not only strengthens brand loyalty, but also positions BMW as a company which understands and connects with its consumers on a deeper level.

As the aim of this small-scale research was to explore the topic from several different angles, many new questions have been generated which can open up further research perspectives. These new directions encompass investigating the effects of displaying different colours in advertisements, understanding how explicit and implicit messages interact within visual messages, and examining how advertising strategies observed in the present small-scale research concerning a single brand appear in other advertisements.

5. Összefoglaló

Dolgozatom egy olyan jelenséggel foglalkozik, amely a mindennapi életünkre nagy hatást gyakorol, és amivel akarva vagy akaratlanul is szembe kerülünk, ez pedig a reklám. A reklámozás működése alapvetően egy bonyolult folyamat, hiszen a hirdetőik különféle stratégiákat alkalmaznak annak érdekében, hogy érzelmi reakciókat kiváltva készítsék fogyasztóikat a vásárlásra. A különféle platformok, mint az online hirdetések, plakátok, vagy akár televíziós csatornák többféle módon továbbítják a kívánt üzenetet a befogadók felé, miközben túlmutatnak a szó szerinti értelmezéseken. Mindezen jelentéseket, következtetéseket “implicit”, azaz rejtett üzeneteknek nevezzük, melyek célja a reklámok hatékonyságának biztosítása, a fogyasztók reakcióképességeire, valamint attitűdjére gyakorolt hatása és annak fokozása, növelve a vásárlási szándékot. Ennek tekintetében kutatásom jelentős hangsúlyt fektet a reklámozásban alkalmazott többretegű kommunikációt leíró pragmatikus keretrendszerekre, ezeken belül az “explicit”, közvetlen, és “implicit”, rejtett üzenetekre, amelyek értelmezésük során jelentős hatást gyakorolnak a fogyasztók döntési képességére. Tanulmányom során többek között olyan szempontokat érintek, mint a Grice-i kooperatív elvek, a hatékony kommunikáció maximái, konverzációs és konvencionális implikációk, presszupozíciók (Grice, 1975), valamint a relevancia elmélet alapján értelmezett explikatúrák és implikatúrák (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Kutatásom alapját képezi a BMW márkát bemutató (statikus, angol nyelvű újságban, folyóiratokban közzé tett) tíz reklámanyag. Az elemzés során beazonosítom a reklámokban található explicit verbális és vizuális üzeneteket, majd megvizsgálom hogyan bontakoznak ki a valódi üzeneteket hordozó implikációk követve a relevancia elméletet, melyet egy tíz résztvevőből álló interjú alkalmazása segít elő.

Összességében, ezen kutatás egy kis adatbázison végzett, feltáró jellegű tanulmánynak felel meg, amely a felvetett kérdések vizsgálatát nagyobb adatbázison is indokoltá teszi, ugyanakkor számos olyan további kérdést is felvetett, amelyek új kutatási irányokat jelölhetnek ki. Kutatásom során olyan pragmatikai vizsgálati módszereket alkalmaztam, amelyek lehetővé teszik a nyelvi reklámstratégia mélyebb vizsgálatát, és betekintést nyújtanak a hatékony reklámozás mechanizmusába.

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7. Appendix

Sources of the BMW advertisements

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Interview questions

1. What piece of information was the first that caught your attention on this ad, which text or image was it?
2. How do you interpret the main message or purpose of this advertisement?
3. How much the message of this ad is transmitted in pictorial or textual forms or did you have to rely more on your prior knowledge to understand the message?
4. Does this advertisement provide enough information to judge whether this product is useful for you?
5. What do you think this advertisement conveys best: a product, the brand itself, or a life experience (e.g.: desire for adventure)?