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A multimodal perspective

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# Iconicity in independent noun phrases in print advertising

## A multimodal perspective

Jana Pelclová

This chapter studies the interplay of multimodal iconic signs that construct the meaning of independent noun phrases in advertisements promoting food products. The methodology consists in approaching the diagrammatic iconicity found in language through the perspective of Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001) analytical framework of multimodal text and the perspective of typeface design and impression variables as described by Henderson, Giese and Cote (2004). The analysis reveals that independent noun phrases iconicize the process of production, the ingredients used, the variety of products, and gustatory perception. The language diagrammatic iconicity in the analyzed advertisements is achieved by a sequential ordering of modifiers that mirrors either chronological order or the order of importance, and by means of figurative language, lexical cohesion, and a lack of explicit syntactic relations. Both typographic and visual iconicity tend to objectify the semantic dimension of the diagrammatic iconicity. At the same time, the visual iconicity mirrors a close spatial relation between the consumer and the product.

**Keywords:** language iconicity, visual iconicity, typographic iconicity, noun phrases, premodification, postmodification, multimodality, advertising discourse, persuasion

### 1. Introduction

Regardless of whether commercial advertisements inform, entertain, please, misinform, warn, bother, or bore us, they share one quality: their primary function is to persuade us to buy a product or service. This primary persuasive function is often disguised by non-persuasive ones, which makes one-way, public mass marketing communication seem more private and personalized (e.g. Tellis 1998; Goddard 2002; Janoschka 2004; Arens 2005). In order to achieve a persuasive effect,

an advertiser can exploit numerous discursive techniques, such as hybridization (Urbanová 2006; Pelclová 2011), humor (Speck 1991; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004; Gulas and Weinberger 2006), facework (Leciánová 2008; Hopkinson in this volume), metaphor (Dąbrowski 2002; Ng in this volume), modality (van Leeuwen 2005), and many others. Approaching the topic of persuasion in advertising from the point of view of semiotics, this chapter endeavors to demonstrate that iconicity is one of the strategic means worth employing in marketing communication owing to its potential to enhance the persuasive impact on the consumer.

Generally speaking, the term iconicity refers to a relation that is based on a resemblance between a representation of an object (the signifier) and the object itself (the signified). Typical examples of icons are visual signs – for instance, pictures, images, photographs, statues, sculptures, or depictive gestures – because the resemblance between these signs and the objects they imitate is easily identifiable for their natural and non-arbitrary characterization (Giardino and Greenberg 2014). Besides visual signs, an idea, an attitude, an object, or an event can also be mirrored in verbal signs. Needless to say, however, linguistic iconicity is not limited to a resemblance between sound and its verbal expression, such as in onomatopoeic words, for example. Indeed, linguistic iconicity extends beyond the level of phonology, as was suggested by Peirce (1992) himself in his theory of semiosis. Since Jakobson's seminal work *Quest for the essence of language* (1971), in which he shows that iconicity functions as a motivational factor also in morphology and syntax, scholars have been focusing on iconicity in higher linguistic units such as texts, narratives, and even discourses.

Recent studies on both visual and language iconicity discuss several theories, principles, and mechanisms relating to iconicity-driven signs, e.g. the principle of experiential iconicity as discussed by Enkvist (1981, 1987) and further developed by Prado-Alonso (2008), the proximity principle (Givón 1995) and the mechanism of economy (Givón 1990), Sonesson's (2008, 2010) distinction between primary and secondary iconicity, and Ljungberg's (2005) discussion of the indexical and iconic character of photographs in narratives, etc. This complex theoretical framework also comprises contrary perspectives such as of iconists and iconoclasts as well as discussions about the fragile characteristics of icon, index and symbol (for instance Sonesson 2010).

Following De Cuyper and Willems (2008: 4), who state that iconicity is "conceived as the main structuring principle of language in general", it might be said that iconicity offers an explanation as to what motivates us in our choice of communication signs. Iconicity enables us to communicate effectively; we can express in a logical and coherent manner what we experience in the real world or in the world of the imaginary, and how we maintain a relationship with our interlocutors.

Take, for instance, the famous *veni, vidi, vici*, in which the sequencing of verbs reflects the sequencing of three consecutive events, or the imitation of participant relationships, such as the social power or social distance between the speaker and the hearer as shown in using T-V distinctions (Haiman 1985). Moreover, expressions and structures that are based on iconicity are “easier to process, retrieve and communicate” (Givón 1995: 189).

Applying the theories of iconicity to the discourse of print advertising, one that takes advantage of verbal texts, pictures, and photographs as well as of numerous typographic features, the chapter studies the advertiser’s choice of the language, visual and typographic means of iconicity in print advertisements for food products. Following Leech’s (1966) concept of disjunctive grammar, its major interest is in the iconicity found in independent noun phrases, since these forms are the most typical linguistic items employed by the advertiser (Cook 1992; Myers 1994; Rush 1998). Independent noun phrases are defined as units that do not enter into explicit syntactic relations but, owing to the involvement of other semiotic modes (such as pictures, photographs, typeface, etc.), situational factors, and cultural context, they are able to express a complete thought (Rush 1998: 156). Drawing upon Halliday’s framework of systemic functional grammar (1994: 394–397), independent noun phrases in advertising create little texts that accumulate both factual and interpersonal types of information. In terms of Cognitive Grammar, independent noun phrases represent complex construals that convey the advertiser’s summary viewpoint on the product being offered (Langacker 2008: 319). On the basis that the analyzed adverts promote food products, the chapter presupposes that independent noun phrases convey both factual and subjective types of product information. In particular, the chapter studies how structural relations between modifiers and the head, or among heads and modifiers across a complex phrase (the signifier) reflect a product’s factual features and/or the advertiser’s experience with the product as created in the extralinguistic reality (the signified). The chapter also focuses on the semantic aspects of the iconicized features, since the semantic relations between the modifying expressions and the head, or among the modifiers used, also function as means of language iconicity. At the same time, all these features of language iconicity are discussed in relation to visual and typographic means of iconicity. When necessary, the chapter also pays attention to independent adjectival phrases that often accompany the independent noun phrases.

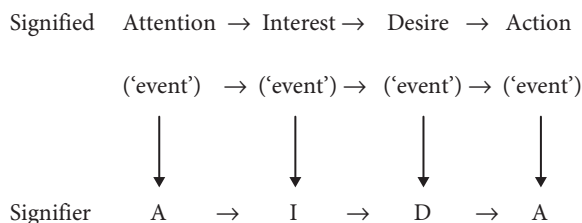
Before embarking upon the analysis itself, the chapter briefly comments on iconicity and its role in advertising, introduces the corpus and the methodological approach used, and articulates the objectives.

## 2. Iconicity and its role in advertising

Concerning iconicity in language, Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxii) distinguish two types of relation between the signifier and the signified – the direct and the indirect relation. The former, which is known as *imagic iconicity*, conveys a resemblance in sound between a form and its content. In the analyzed advertisements, this type can be found in expressions such as *crisp* and *crunchy*, in which the initial consonant clusters are believed to imitate the sound one makes when biting into a freshly baked cookie (Piller 1999). The latter type, on which the chapter focuses most, stems from an indirect relation between form and meaning. It takes advantage of the structural or schematic pattern of an event or thing that is imitated in a structural pattern of language representation. In this sense, syntactic structures represent diagrams that embody our perception of the world around us. This type of iconicity is known as *diagrammatic* and is simultaneously motivated by both the structural and semantic aspects of extralinguistic concepts (Marzo 2008: 176). In other words, diagrammatic iconicity has both structural and semantic dimensions. As Nöth (2008: 73) points out, diagrams in language are “both cognitively necessary and rhetorically efficient since icons are superior to other signs when clearness of representation and coherence of argumentation is concerned”. In this sense, iconicity-driven independent noun phrases have a greater persuasive potential than non-iconic units. Additionally, it is important to realize that diagrammatic iconicity operates on a more abstract level than the *imagic* type due to the concordance of the structural patterns and semantic aspects of the conceptual domain of extralinguistic reality and those of the linguistic domain (Nöth 2008: 88). Diagrammatic iconicity is thus a matter of conceptual complexity, which in fact results in adding “extra meaning on a textual level” (De Cuyper and Willems 2008: 7). In order to infer the extra meaning of an iconicity-driven text, the consumer has to invest their own mental effort in the decoding process, which makes them become more active participants in the overall advertising communication. Influencing consumers’ cognitive states via iconicity can reduce the risk of rejection that might otherwise arise from the high number of advertising messages that the consumer is exposed to every day.

Considering the fact that texts operate within particular discourses, the idea of adding extra meaning might also be extended to the discourse level. To illustrate this point, take for instance the acronym AIDA. In the marketing industry, AIDA represents a four-stage model that defines four cognitive processes a consumer experiences when engaged in advertising communication, namely *attention*, *interest*, *desire*, and *action* (cf. Dragon 2011). Following Fischer and Nänny’s (1999: xxii) explanation that diagrammatic iconicity is based on “the (horizontal) relation(s) on the level of the signifier and the (horizontal) relations on the level of the signified”,

both the structural and semantic dimensions of the iconic principle that motivated the existence of this acronym are illustrated in Figure 1:



**Figure 1.** Diagrammatic iconicity of the acronym AIDA

The horizontal arrows between *Attention*, *Interest*, *Desire*, and *Action* illustrate the temporal order of the individual stages (events) as they take place in the real world. The vertical arrows signal the transformation of this temporal relation (the signified) that occurs in the conceptual domain of extralinguistic reality into the domain of linguistic representation, where the very same temporal relation is iconicized by the sequence of the initial letters A, I, D, and A (the signifier). Moreover, the ease of pronunciation and memorability of the acronym imitates the ease of understanding an advertising text is recommended to have in order to be easily ‘consumed’ and at the same time memorable, and thus to stay in the consumer’s memory until the final stage, the action, is achieved. This is the extra meaning De Cuypere and Willems (2008) talk about and which Sonesson (2008, 2010) identifies as secondary iconicity. The term AIDA iconicizes not only the chronological order of the individual stages, but also the economy and effectiveness of advertising discourse practice. Simply put, one word is capable of expressing the whole philosophy of advertising communication.

It is important to realize that imagic and diagrammatic iconicity do not represent a form of binary opposition. On the contrary, they “form a continuum on which the iconic instances run from almost perfect mirroring (i.e. a semiotic relationship that is virtually independent of any individual language) to a relationship that becomes more and more suggestive and also more and more language-dependent” (Ljungberg 1997: 3rd paragraph). As Hermerén explains “iconicity is often a matter of degree and has to some extent to be learned, which is an indication that it is partly based on cultural conventions” (Hermerén 1999: 72). Within the realm of visual communication, the degree of diagrammatic iconicity thus goes hand in hand with the visual aspects that accompany a verbal text. Depending on what type of product is being promoted, the advertiser is free to choose to what extent they visualize the product. In other words, the product can be visually communicated by a photograph of its packaging and/or the product itself, by an illustration accompanying a

photograph, and by showing the ideal consumer, etc. In addition, page layout, the arrangement of pictures, the relations between the objects depicted, as well as the relations between the images and texts used are also crucial in message delivery and interpretation. Moreover, all these means of visual communication are gradable and thus have an impact on the level of modality through which the message is perceived (van Leeuwen 2005: 165–171).

Apart from pictures, what also matters in visual communication combined with words is typography and typeface. Despite the lack of conceptual frameworks that would offer a broader insight into the relation between types of fonts and their semantic associations, scholars agree that typefaces do have an impact on advertisement and brand perception and attitudes (e.g. McCarthy and Mothersbaugh 2002; Childers and Jass 2002; Henderson, Giese and Cote 2004; Doyle and Bottomley 2004, 2006; Kang and Choi 2013). Therefore, the role of typeface in marketing communication, including advertising, should not be underestimated. Celhay, Boysselle and Cohen (2015: 169) see the benefit of typefaces in the fact that they “produce signs that are simultaneously words and images or, to use semiotics concepts, simultaneously verbal and visual signs”. As McCarthy and Mothersbaugh (2002: 665–667) claim, all typeface characteristics including font, style, weight, stress, color, spacing, the positioning of words, etc. result in a particular typographic outcome that affects not only the appearance and legibility of an advertisement, but also the consumer’s semantic associations that are salient in persuasive communication (for another example of font-based semantic association, see the chapter by Veloso and Feng in this volume). According to Henderson, Giese and Cote’s (2004: 64) study in which they offer an empirically-based guideline on choosing a typeface congruent with a corporation’s policy, fonts that are usually used in marketing communication work with impression variables of pleasing (such as warm and attractive), engaging (e.g. interesting and emotional), reassuring (formal and honest), and prominent (strong and masculine). As suggested by the above-mentioned studies, typeface works as a means of typographic iconicity, the functionality of which lies in conveying the connotative meaning embedded in the expressions used. For instance, a brand called Cook Italian uses a handwriting-style font in order to reassure the consumer about the ingredients authenticity communicated in the phrase *Authentic ingredients from Italy, for real Italian taste*. Its typographical rendering demonstrates what Fischer (1999) calls graphological iconicity: the organic handwritten letters that are not joined together and that are slightly slanted towards right give the impression of an authentic handwritten text. Based on the cultural stereotype of Italy being “associated with good food and a positive attitude toward life” (Piller 2003: 173), the authenticity of the text also connotes easygoingness and casualness. The intention is to invoke the very same style of cooking for which the range of the products is designed: the ease and simplicity of Italian cuisine. The postmodified

prepositional phrase *from Italy* explicitly announces the place of origin. If the advertiser had chosen *authentic Italian ingredients* the denotation of *Italian* could raise the question of whether the adjective refers to a place of origin or to a type of ingredients (for further discussion on structuring in pre- and post-modification, see e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 588–609; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 452–455; Langacker 2008: 323–327). In the case of *real Italian taste*, it is obvious that what matters here is not the denotation, but rather the connotation related to a cultural stereotype about Italian cuisine mentioned above. This connotative meaning is reflected in the choice of the handwritten-like font. In this sense, typographic iconicity is able to objectify the semantic dimension of the expressions used.

To sum up, language iconicity, especially the diagrammatic kind, and visual iconicity, including the typographic kind, play a crucial role in communicating the advertising message successfully. What is communicated, and thus iconicized is up to the advertiser, since they are the ones who initiate the communication and thus initiate the AIDA process. Considering the strategies of classical rhetoric, as discussed by Žmavc in this volume, purely factual information about a product does not sell the product. Therefore, when discussing independent noun phrases in print advertising, the chapter presupposes that the relation between the head and its modifiers as well as the relations between the individual modifiers interlinked with visual iconicity have a potential to imitate not just factual product information (i.e. what types of product or ranges of products are being advertised), but also the advertiser's personal experience of, and attitude towards the product being offered (the advertiser's viewpoint). The questions that arise here are how exactly these traits are iconicized in independent noun phrases and how the cooperation between their morphosyntactic structures and their graphic designs are achieved.

### 3. Data and methods

The chapter analyzes 190 advertisements for food products printed in *Tesco Realfood* (2013), and in *Food Family Living Tesco* (2013), both published by Tesco, and in *Specialty Food* (2012 and 2013), published by the Specialty Food Association. The intention of the magazines is to inform their readerships about the latest trends in the food industry, such as the advantages of organic and bio products and the availability of gluten-free products; to offer seasonal recipes; and to help readers find where to buy commodities from local producers, etc. In short, the magazines' aim is to educate their readers in terms of the preparation and consumption of quality food. The advertisements published in the magazines tackle the very same issues. They promote companies and brands whose reputations are established on quality ingredients, a solid position on the market, and fair relations with their customers.



The foods promoted in the advertisements range from sweets (e.g. chocolate bars, cookies, candies), canned products (e.g. pickled peas, olives, etc.), and pasta to pre-packaged foods and fresh food products such as eggs or meats.

As mentioned above, what is accentuated most in both magazines' articles and adverts is the quality of food products. Not only is this feature reflected in the abundant use of expressions such as *100% organic*, *natural*, *no preservatives*, *no artificial flavor* etc., but also in the quality of the photographs, pictures, and images (the visuals) used. The original, and in most cases also artistic photographs of the products increase the aesthetic appeal through which the reader's visual, and hence gustatory perceptions are addressed. Consequently, the analysis of an advertising text in terms of iconicity must take into account both the verbal and the visual aspects of the given text. This multimodal approach thus allows the functionality of the iconic principle in the advertising discourse to be understood in a broader perspective.

With regard to methodology, first independent noun phrases were identified in all parts of verbal texts; that is, in headlines and subheadlines, body copies, and signature lines. Even though these three subtexts have different communicative functions (Goddard 2002) – i.e., to attract attention, to provide information necessary for the purchase, and to refer to the producer by displaying its logo, respectively – these are in fact subordinated to the primary persuasive function every advertising text has. Regardless of its position within a text, an independent noun phrase in print advertising is a means of persuasion and its effectiveness depends on the cooperation between its verbal and visual modes. For the purpose of this chapter, a noun phrase is understood as a group of one or more words, of which the major element, the head, is represented by a noun. The head is able to bind other elements in order to signify its referent as accurately as possible. The head is the central component that these other elements can precede, thus premodifying it, or follow, thus postmodifying it. Modifiers can be composed of words (e.g. determiners, adjectives, enumerators, etc.), phrases (e.g. genitive phrases, prepositional phrases, etc.), and even clauses, such as the relative clause in *The only cheese that's 100% Natural, 100% from Switzerland and 100% Le Gruyère* (Le Gruyère cheese). Owing to this formal and functional variability, a noun phrase can consist of a major phrase whose head stands for the major element of the whole phrase, and of subordinated phrases, i.e. phrases that are included within a major phrase, for example *a mix of handcrafted, perfectly baked Moravian cookies enrobed in artisan chocolate and topped with crackled candies* (Salem Baking), which in fact includes eight subordinated phrases. As Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad (1982: 59) claim, this chaining of phrases within a phrase results in structural complexity.

The total number of phrases in the analyzed advertisements was 419. The next stage of the analysis consisted in scrutinizing the selected phrases through the

lenses of language iconicity, especially diagrammatic iconicity, and visual iconicity, including typographic iconicity. As mentioned above, adjectival phrases were taken into account whenever it was considered necessary for explaining the iconicity of the analyzed independent noun phrases. Diagrammatic iconicity involved studying the semantic and the syntactic relations of the words used in the phrases. This means that the chapter examines the structural relation between the head and its modifiers as well as the relations between or among the modifiers themselves. Additionally, it investigates the denotative and connotative meanings of the head and its descriptive and classifying modifiers. While the former convey subjective characterization that adds “colourful and attractive descriptions of the product or service, and so communicate more on an emotive level” (Rush 1998: 161), the latter classify the head in terms of objective characterization (i.e. what is inherent to the content of the head).

The analysis of visual iconic signs consisted in examining the visuals that are communicated together with the text (photographs, images, etc.), and the overall page design. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the choice of typefaces in which the analyzed phrases were provided. This means that the study concentrates on their universal design characteristics such as serif vs. sans serif, organic vs. geometric, ornate vs. plain, curved vs. angular, etc.; regularity (regular, italics, bold); height; and color. When possible, the fonts used are referred to by their names; for precise font identification, the web page [www.myfonts.com](http://www.myfonts.com) was consulted. Drawing upon Henderson, Giese and Cote’s study (2004) described above, the typefaces were also studied in terms of the impression variables (pleasing, engaging, reassuring, and prominent).

Not all 419 phrases can be interpreted as iconic, however. It is not possible to provide an exact total number of phrases that display iconicity, as it might be difficult and also questionable to evaluate the extent to which the form of a phrase mirrors its content. The chapter thus offers a qualitative analysis of those independent noun phrases whose visual representations interact with their structural and semantic aspects to such a degree that is believed to be iconic. Drawing upon Restrepo Boada’s (2014) study on the importance of graphic design in written communication, independent noun phrases in print advertising function as graphic statements or graphic signs whose iconicity, if employed and recognized by the consumer, contributes to persuasion. The objective of the chapter is to discover which means of language iconicity (e.g. the complexity of phrases, the condensation of facts, figurative language, etc.) and visual iconicity (e.g. the choice of typeface, the articulation of details, sharpness, colors, etc.) participate in imitating both factual data and the advertiser’s viewpoint and how the iconicity of the product features is distributed across language and visual iconicity.

#### 4. Results of the investigation

Before discussing the iconicized items and the interplay of visual and language iconicity in more detail, this chapter briefly comments on the overall page orientation of the print advertisements under investigation. As already mentioned, the adverts promote various food products, including dairy products, and canned, prepared, and fresh foods. Concerning the exact elements that are visualized, i.e. displayed on a page, all the analyzed advertisements depict the product or the range of products they promote and, in the case of canned food or pickled vegetables, also the major ingredients the product contains; only a few depict people, either as satisfied consumers or as chefs. The preference for product/ingredient depiction and the consequent absence of people is to a certain degree iconic, because what the advertiser in fact communicates with this choice is the importance of the product itself, rather than the identification of the target audience. The salience of the product/ingredients is also reflected in their location; their photographs occupy the central portion of the page, which enables the advertiser to achieve a high degree of salience (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 210) and to present “the nucleus of the information” (Martínez Lirola and Chovanec 2012: 495). Moreover, their photographs are always articulated in sharp detail and in close-up, which makes the product/ingredients appear bigger than they actually are. This ‘overdimension’ of the depicted size has a persuasive effect, since it appears as if the product/ingredients were placed very close to the reader and at eye level. Najafian (2011: 12) explains that this proximity conveys engagement with the product. Drawing upon Ljungberg (2005: 134), the relation between the consumer and the photograph reflects diagrammatic iconicity since it imitates the scene in which the consumer is just about to consume or use the product. Consequently, this newly established spatial relation between an advert and the consumer bridges the gap between the fictitious world of advertising and the real world of the consumer (Cook 1992: 177–178). This process is also supported by displaying photographs of the product packaging and the company’s logo. Owing to their location at the bottom part of the page, they are perceived as real objects that can thus be purchased in the real world (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 210).

Regarding page layout, it is also important to say a few words about the distribution of language and its relation to the photographs. In the majority of the advertisements the verbal texts are placed above and below the product pictures, the latter occupying a central position. This overall vertical orientation of both visual and verbal modes enables the advertisements to be read from top to bottom within a single column, rather than in long lines. This vertical reading is claimed to recall actual food consumption, and thus to evoke positive values (Goh 2001).

Considering the visual mode, it might seem that print advertisements for food products iconicize ‘only’ the existence of the product itself, its ingredients, and to a certain extent also the consumption of the product. To understand how iconicity governs an advertising text, it is necessary to take a more detailed look at the language. Unsurprisingly, the independent noun phrases in question iconicize ingredients (or materials and substances used), the variety of products, and product consumption, as the visuals do. Besides these traits, however, the analysis reveals that independent noun phrases are able to iconicize two other features. To be more specific, they can also mirror the process of product creation and as far as product consumption is concerned, they are able to imitate the gustatory sensation the consumer is supposed to experience when consuming the product. As a result, four traits are iconicized:

- a. production process
- b. ingredients
- c. variety of products
- d. gustatory perception

The following subchapters comment on these individual iconicized traits. It is important to keep in mind that there is no clear-cut boundary between the categories since more traits can be iconicized simultaneously in one phrase.

#### 4.1 Iconicity of production process

The phrases that imitate the process of product creation have a tendency to be complex in structure, with the chaining of subordinated phrases, and to contain past participles in both pre- and post-modifying positions. In terms of bracketing, the complex subordination of the individual phrases is illustrated in the following example, found in the advertisement for the Signature Collection from the Salem Baking Company:

- (1) (a) mix (of (handcrafted, perfectly baked Moravian cookies (enrobed (in (artisan chocolate)))) and (topped (with (crackled candies))))))

The major phrase is represented by the head noun *mix*, which is further specified by a very complex postmodification. Its complexity consists of eight subordinated phrases with the following hierarchical order: one prepositional phrase *of* that directly follows the major head *mix* and which itself embeds a subordinated noun phrase with the head *cookies* (or maybe *Moravian cookies* since the expression *Moravian* indicates a type of cookie); this noun phrase is both premodified

(*handcrafted, perfectly baked*) and postmodified. Its postmodifiers consist of two past participle phrases (*enrobed* and *topped*) that are connected paratactically by the conjunction *and*. Both of these phrases then include other prepositional phrases (*in* and *with*, respectively) that of course embed two noun phrases with the head *chocolate* and *candies*, respectively. Both of these subordinated noun phrases are premodified by the adjective *artisan* and by the past participle *crackled*.

From the description above, it is obvious that past participles dominate the modifying positions in this complicated noun phrase. According to Langacker (2008: 120), the advantage of past participle modifiers is that they “adopt a posterior vantage point”, which enables the advertiser to communicate what has already been done for the benefit of the consumer – well-prepared cookies. What is iconic about the past participle modifiers in this example is that the linear order in which they appear within the phrase copies the real order of creation: *handcrafted* – *baked* – *enrobed* – *topped*. The iconicity thus lies in the imitation of chronological order.

In terms of the semantic aspects of the individual processes, first the cookie dough was handcrafted, i.e. it was prepared manually, not by machine. As a result, each cookie is to be perceived as an original. Yet, in view of the company’s array of items and flavors, the term *handcrafted* is meant to invoke what Woodward and Denton (2014: 266) describes as “fond memories of Mother’s baking”. Advertisements are full of expressions such as *home-made*, *fresh-baked*, and *hand-cooked*; the intention is not to inform the audience whether the product is good or bad, but to hint at the appropriate connotation.

Second, the cookie dough was baked. This might seem a redundant piece of information, since a proper cookie must be baked or it could not be labeled as this specific type of pastry, distinctive in its shape, ingredients, and texture. Here, the advertiser chose to modify the past participle in order to draw the consumer’s attention to the fact that the cookies were not just baked, but were baked in a perfect manner. The adverb of manner is a subjective evaluation, hence communicating the advertiser’s viewpoint regarding the manner in which the product has been prepared. The apparent irrelevance of providing the factual information that the cookies were baked is compensated for by presenting an assessment of the final outcome. The descriptive premodifier *perfectly* stresses the advertiser’s stance towards how the baking of this product should be perceived.

The post-baking steps are indicated by the expressions *enrobed* and *topped*, whose paratactical relation suggests their equal position as far as their relationship towards the head *cookies* is concerned. As with *handcrafted* and *baked*, their ordering is iconically motivated, i.e. the stage of *enrobing* precedes the step of *topping*. Moreover, the premodifier *crackled* in the last phrase refers to the posterior perspective, i.e. what was done to the candies prior to finalizing the topping.

Unlike the diagrammatic iconicity of the production process that is conveyed in the sequential order of past participles, what is visualized in this particular advert is the final outcome – a single cookie in the shape of a Christmas tree. While the edges of the cookie and the background are slightly blurred, the fully articulated detail of its chocolate coating with white and red crackled candies are at the focus of the consumer's visual perception. In addition, it is this distinctive topping that relates the language iconicity to the visual iconicity. The symmetrical character of the serif typeface used for the phrase evokes harmony, and thus strengthens the positive connotations of *handcrafted*, *perfectly baked* and *enrobed in artisan chocolate*. To sum up, the complex production process is mirrored in the structural complexity of the postmodification, and is given a reassuring air by the typeface chosen for the graphic design of the phrase, while the visual accentuates the final step of the production, the distinct topping.

#### 4.2 Iconicity of the ingredients used

Like in the production process, the mechanism of sequential ordering can be found in phrases that communicate what type of ingredients, substances, or materials the product consists of or for which it is considered distinctive, e.g.:

- (2) Coconut flakes. Rich cream. Milk chocolate. (Noix de Coco by Ritter Sport)

The purity of the ingredients used, *coconut*, *cream* and *chocolate*, are iconized by means of successive simple noun phrases, the simplicity of which lies in the usage of a single modifier and the head. Moreover, the phrases are separated by full stops, which means that they are not loaded with exact syntactic relations. The lack of explicit structural relations between the phrases used allows each phrase to stand on its own. Nevertheless, the repetitive structural pattern indicates that the heads are to be perceived as conceptually related. The structural independence between the individual heads is balanced by the consistency of the internal structures, each one comprising a single premodifier and the head; that is, this consistency functions as a cohesive link among the phrases. The verbal choice of *coconut*, *cream* and *chocolate* and their suggested relation imitates the advertiser's approach towards the product. The harmonious combination of the ingredients used is unique, for they can be easily distinguished and recognized in the gustatory experience of the product. Simply speaking, when enjoying the *milk chocolate*, one can tell it contains *coconut flakes* and *rich cream*. Typed in bold Century Gothic font in blue, not only does the typeface link the photograph of the blue packaging placed above the phrases to the textual part, but it also mirrors the harmony of the ingredients and their richness

since this type of font is evaluated as reassuring with respect to the content of the words used as well as pleasing (Henderson, Giese and Cote 2004: 67).

In the Walkers Natural Shortbread advertisement, the mirroring of the ingredients' purity goes even further as the head nouns are the only elements that establish a noun phrase. The headline placed in the upper central part of the copy consists of:

- (3) Butter. Flour. Sugar. Salt. Natural. (Walkers Natural Shortbread)

The first four phrases refer to the ingredients necessary for the production of pure shortbread. Even though the last phrase, which underlines the purity of the product, does not represent a noun phrase but an adjectival phrase, it will be discussed owing to its function within the headline.

The simple phrases are without premodifying elements, such as determiners, numerals, nouns, or adjectives that would specify the quality or the amount of ingredients necessary for production. In other words, the lack of any classifying or descriptive adjectives, or even measuring partitives, iconically reflects the purity of the substances invoked by the head nouns. This purity, or rather the naturalness of the advertised shortbreads, is conveyed in the very last adjectival phrase, *natural*, which differs from the four previous words both in the word class that establishes the head and in the color used. The noun phrases are printed in black; the adjectival phrase is in red. The balanced typeface of a serif font connotes the balanced character of *butter* and *flour* as the fundamental ingredients of the product. Unlike in the processual type of iconicity, the order of the phrases does not imitate chronological order. Instead, it signifies which substances, or rather which aspect of the substances, are the most salient. Therefore, it might be concluded that what is iconicized in this particular advertisement is the order of importance. In other words, the last trait to be mentioned, *natural*, is the most important regarding the communicative value of the advertising message, as indicated by its red color.

### 4.3 Iconicity of the variety of products

Besides advertising a particular product, the corpus also includes advertisements that promote ranges of products (e.g. pasta or canned foods by Cook Italian) as well as ranges of flavors of a particular product (e.g. Ritter Sport chocolate). Expressions like *mix*, *mixture*, *collection*, *variety* etc. are chosen as heads of noun phrases post-modified by the prepositional phrase *of*. These phrases accompany photographs of the available varieties that occupy most of the page layout. For example, the advertisement for Koppers Balls starts with the headline:

- (4) The World's Widest Array of Gourmet Malted Milk Balls. (Koppers Balls)



It is situated in the left upper corner and typed in sans serif Helvetica Neue-Roman font, which, with its rather plain geometric characters, is believed to invoke a generally lower degree of emotional load (Tantillo, Di Lorenzo-Aiss and Mathisen 1995) and to be less attractive (Henderson, Giese and Cote 2004). Even though its typographic characteristics seem not to reflect what the phrase refers to, the content of the phrase is mirrored in the presentation of the colorful balls that are arranged in nine lines. The spacing between the individual balls as well as between the lines are constant throughout the advertisement; thus the overall outcome imitates a textual arrangement. This 'text', which in fact extends the linearity of the verbal to the visual, finishes with the image of three balls of smaller size. These last three balls imitate the punctuation marks of ellipsis, the function of which is to convey that the 'text' can go on. In other words, the advertiser's intention is to communicate the endlessness of the product variety. To sum up, the meaning of the expression *array*, which is "an impressive display or range of a particular type of thing" (oxforddictionaries.com), is imitated in the display of the individual milk balls in an augmented size arranged in a linear order.

#### 4.4 Iconicity of gustatory perception

This type of iconicity is motivated by the way the product is experienced. Of course, what is iconicized is the advertiser's experience. The advertiser thus shares their viewpoint with the consumer, which is supposed to make the text more friendly and thus to increase the level of persuasion.

An example of experiential iconicity can be found in the Ritter Sport advertisement promoting its Cocoa Mousse chocolate bar:

- (5) Bigger squares. Bigger taste. Bigger enjoyment.

(Cocoa Mousse by Ritter Sport)

The order of its main text imitates the way the consumer experiences the product, from sensual perception to a satisfactory state of mind. First, the visual sense is addressed. Cocoa Mousse is special in the number of squares the chocolate bar has. In contrast to other Ritter Sport 100 gram bars, this bar has three rows of squares instead of four, hence the number of phrases. This means that the squares are bigger than those in the usual Ritter chocolate bars. According to the advertiser, this increase in the physical size is reflected in the taste, hence the phrase *bigger taste*. The rendering of this gustatory experience in this way is of course questionable, because of the semantic incompatibility of the expressions *bigger* and *taste*. While the comparative *bigger* is primarily used with expressions designating physical objects having size and extent, the expression *taste* lacks these properties as it primarily



refers to the sensational quality of a substance, as perceived orally. Therefore, the question is how taste, which is a very subjective quale, can be measured. The third phrase in the row is the aesthetic experience; the pleasure from consuming the product is encoded in the phrase *bigger enjoyment*. It works with the same semantic incompatibility of subjective aspects as the preceding phrase: something tangible and something abstract, respectively, are combined in order to communicate the outcome of product consumption.

Even though the phrases are grammatically independent, since each is separated by a period and there is no linking expression such as a conjunction that would make their grammatical relation more obvious, the order of the phrases, and especially the repetitive pattern of the comparative *bigger* in the premodified position, signify that they are semantically related. In addition, the repetitive pattern can also be found in the lack of the prepositional phrase *than* in the postmodified position. As Goddard (2002) and Hermerén (1999) point out, this shortening of comparative structures is typical of the discourse of advertising, the function of which is to make the advertising message more interactive and the consumer more engaged in the communicative process.

The repetition of premodifiers supports the grammatical relation and also has an aesthetic function. This anaphoric relation between the phrases used creates a rhythmic pattern that consists of two successive cretics (*Bigger squares. Bigger taste.*) and finishes with a dactyl followed by a trochee (*Bigger enjoyment*), actually postponing the most important aspect of the product – the enjoyment the consumer will experience after eating the chocolate – to the very end of the textual part, and thus achieving a certain degree of suspense. The structure and the order of the phrases are iconic since they imitate a certain degree of expectation the consumer experiences when consuming the product. The order of the phrases copies the linear order in which the product is experienced. Simultaneously, it postpones the most salient aspect to the very last phrase. Therefore, it might be concluded that both chronological order and order of importance are functional here. Going beyond the linguistic and rhetorical analysis, the regularity of the structural pattern of an adjective premodifying different noun heads resembles the regularity of the squares. Like in the phrases found in the other Ritter Sport advertisement described above, Century gothic font is again here believed to have a pleasing effect (Henderson, Giese and Cote 2004: 67) and thus to iconicize the balanced taste of the product.

Means of figurative language are prominent in the next advertisement, which promotes a product from the Peanut Shop of Williamsburg:

- (6) Double Delicious. Handcooked Virginia Peanuts double-dipped in rich milk chocolate. (Chocolate Covered Peanuts)

The most salient aspect of this product is that the peanuts are dipped twice in a rich chocolate so as to create a rich chocolate coating. The advertiser thus guarantees a unique gustatory experience, as indicated by the descriptive *double delicious*. The semantic relation between the product and the enjoyment arising from its consumption is precisely what is iconicized here. This is achieved by the use of two independent phrases whose relation is conveyed by means of lexical cohesion, namely by the repetition of the expression *double* in both the pre- and postmodified position. On top of that, the alliteration in the first phrase emphasize the delicacy as well as the quality of double-dipping. Without doubt, the photograph of a handful of chocolate-covered peanuts placed in the bottom part of the copy underlines the characteristics iconized in the morphosyntactic structure of the words used. The trait of ‘doubleness’ is also imitated in the use of two versions of the same font. While *double delicious* is provided in Adobe Caslon Pro Regular font, the other phrase takes Adobe Caslon Pro Italics. The font is believed to have a pleasing effect (Henderson, Giese and Cote 2004: 67) and to connote the intended association with a rich gustatory experience. Like in the case of the Salem Baking advertisement, the usage of the past participle in the pre- and post-modifying positions mirrors the process of production. In this sense, more than one trait can be iconized in independent noun phrases as well as in their typeface and accompanying images.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter endeavors to bring a new insight into the topic of iconicity from a multimodal perspective. Attention is paid to the means of visual, typographic, and verbal signs through which independent noun phrases in print advertising can iconicize those product features the advertiser considers to be the most salient, and thus the ones to be appreciated by the consumer. The chapter demonstrates how the strategic alignment of these phrases functions as a persuasive device that is meant to make the advertising communication more interactive and personal. The cooperative relation between the multimodal signs is subordinated to the intended persuasive effect.

Owing to the functional congruity of the modes, the noun phrases take the form of graphic signs that, in the analyzed advertisements, iconicize (1) processes necessary for product creation; (2) ingredients used that make the product unique and distinctive; (3) the variety of products/ingredients; and (4) product experience, especially the gustatory perception of the product as experienced by the advertiser. As far as language iconicity is taken into consideration, the above-listed traits are iconicized through a sequential order of modifying expressions and head, which

represents the structural dimension of diagrammatic iconicity, and through the means of classifying and/or descriptive modifiers, and figurative language, which represents the semantic dimension. The ordering reflects either the chronological order or the order of importance. While classifying modifiers refer to objective aspects of a product, such as its type, origin and inherent features, descriptive modifiers evaluate the product itself, thus communicating the advertiser's viewpoint. The means of visual iconicity comprise a close-up photograph positioned in the central part of the advertisement, usually accompanied by a text above and/or below the picture. The major function of this visual arrangement is to imitate the closeness of the spatial relation between the product and the consumer. Concerning typographic signs, their means of iconicity are represented by the universal design characteristics exhibited in typefaces (e.g. handwritten-like fonts, serifs, spacing, size, etc.). These means participate in mirroring the trustworthiness of the words used and of the photographs displayed, particularly by reassuring the consumer about the harmony and balance of the ingredients and the taste.

With respect to how the visual, verbal and typographic forms of iconicity are distributed among the iconicized traits, the chapter offers the following findings. When the process of production is articulated, it is the language, namely the employment of past participle modifiers, that iconize this trait. The linearity of the participles resembles the same chronological order in which individual processes are executed. In order to emphasize the individual steps that guarantee the originality of the product, the advertiser chooses complex noun phrases with complicated subordinated relations. The photograph used does not imitate the process, but draws the consumer's attention to the final outcome, the product and its distinctiveness. The language iconicity of ingredients is realized via simple noun phrases whose structure is rather limited. While some of them consist of the head modified by a single classifying adjective, there are also phrases that take the form only of a non-modified head. The ordering of phrases reflects the importance of the substances or materials used. Their syntactic relation is not expressed explicitly, but must be derived by means of lexical cohesion such as repetition or by a repetitive structural pattern. The connotative meaning of richness, balanced ingredients, and authenticity is achieved by means of typography. The iconicity of variety is predominantly provided by visual means, namely by photographs that exhibit the range of original packages or that show the variety of products available in a single package. The trait of gustatory experience is iconicized equally by all the signs employed. The language sign combines the order of importance and the chronological order of the sensual perception of the product, postponing the outcome of the gustatory sensation towards the final phrase. The connotation of descriptive modifiers and devices of figurative language are supported by both visual and typographic signs. It is needless to add that one phrase can iconize more features simultaneously.

Given its primary function to mirror one's thoughts, language as a semiotic sign is able to iconicize any of the features described above, independently of their visual surroundings. On the other hand, visual and typographic signs iconicize the connotative meanings of the words used. As a result, a comprehensive choice of visual and typographic signs enables the consumer to comprehend the advertiser's viewpoint on the product being advertised. In short, harmony among all the iconic means used personalizes the advertising communication, which undoubtedly has a positive impact on persuasion.

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