The Creative Use of Idioms in Advertising

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1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the cognitive mechanisms that are involved in the creative exploitation of idiomatic expressions in advertisements.[1] The idioms are found either in the headline or in the body copy of the ads and occur in two main patterns, which I will refer to as extended idioms and altered idioms, respectively. The extended idioms are found in their original form, accompanied by an additional piece of text that is either a continuation of or a comment on the idiom, hence the label. This comment or complement provides an elaboration on the idiom itself, sometimes by drawing attention to its literal meaning, as in Burn the candle at both ends. Then get rid of the smoke. In the altered idioms, on the other hand, one lexical item has been replaced in a context where in normal cases it would not be replaced, for example in *Don't get your pantyliners in a twist*, or syntactically altered in a way that does not occur in regular use. In short, the main difference is the location of the creative or unexpected surface element—as a complement to the idiom or inside the idiom.

The material has been randomly selected from British magazines and the qualitative analysis is made within the framework of cognitive linguistics. In line with Grady et al. (1999), it is based on the complementing theories of conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending, each handling different aspects of the complex message. Assuming that idioms are motivated by conventional images and metaphorical mappings (cf. Lakoff 1987, Kövecses and Szabó 1996, Gibbs et al. 1997), it is argued that these conceptual metaphors help form the basis of a creative blend that is achieved through the alteration or extension of the idiom itself. These blends are similar to the type of conceptual blending referred to as "double grounding" by Feyaerts and Brône (2002) and Brône and Feyaerts (in press) in their analysis of headlines and cartoons. A short

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[1] This paper is largely identical to chapter 5 of my doctoral thesis (Lundmark 2005).

discussion of conceptual blending and double grounding will therefore be provided in section 3, preceded by a more general theoretical background in section 2, before turning to the analyses in sections 4 and 5.

2. Metaphor and idioms in cognitive linguistics

Within the cognitive linguistic framework, metaphor is understood to be a conceptual rather than a linguistic phenomenon, which means that the metaphorical expressions we find in language merely reflect the metaphors that exist at a conceptual level. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) first put forward this argument by presenting an analysis of a large number of words and phrases from the English language, which clearly showed the systematicity of metaphorical concepts. For example, they demonstrated that the conceptual domain of ARGUMENT is structured in terms of WAR based on linguistic evidence in the form of phrases such as *Your claims are indefensible*, *He attacked every weak point in my argument*, and *His criticisms were right on target* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 4). Here, WAR is understood to be the source domain, which is mapped onto the target domain of ARGUMENT. A conceptual mapping is a set of correspondences between elements in the two domains, where the source is a more concrete concept and the target a more abstract one. In this case, mapping knowledge from the domain of WAR onto the domain of ARGUMENTS allows us to reason about one in terms of the other (Lakoff 1993: 207). As regards terminology, the conceptual mapping is referred to by the term "metaphor," while the terms and phrases that reflect the conceptual metaphor in language are referred to as "metaphorical expressions". This is an unconventional use of the term metaphor, but a conscious one, since it emphasises the notion that metaphor essentially is a cognitive phenomenon (Lakoff 1993: 209). The conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is far from being an isolated example. In fact, Lakoff and Johnson claim that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical and that it not only influences our language, but also our everyday activities and our interaction with other people. In short, conceptual metaphors are concepts we live by (1980: 3).

Apart from the system of conventional metaphor, there is also a system of conventional metonymic mappings, and these are in turn reflected not only in language, but also in the way we think and act. Metonymy is thus recognised as a conceptual process similar to

metaphor, but it is understood as a conceptual mapping within one and the same domain instead of involving two separate ones. For example, the metonymy the face for the person is linguistically reflected in expressions such as *She's just a pretty face* and *We neeed some new faces around here* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 37). As with metaphor, metonymic mappings also form hierarchies, where one may be derived from the other. In the case of the face for the person, it forms an instantiation of the more general mapping the part for the whole. Initially, metonymy received comparatively little attention in cognitive linguistics, but it has been the object of increasing interest from the late 1990s onwards, and its significance is now widely recognised. In fact, it has even been suggested that metonymy might constitute a more basic cognitive process than metaphor (Taylor 1995: 124; Barcelona 2000: 4).

Turning our attention to idioms, the notion that they are "dead" metaphors has been disproved by cognitive linguists (e.g. Gibbs 1980, 1986, 1993a, 1993b etc.; Gibbs and O'Brien 1990; and Gibbs et al. 1997) and they are instead seen as a product of our conceptual system, where domains of experience rather than individual words are involved in the process of creation. That is, we make sense of idiomatic expressions using our embodied knowledge of the world around us (Kövecses 2002: 201; Kövecses and Szabó 1996: 330), and not by associating them with arbitrary meanings. If idiomatic expressions merely corresponded to a certain meaning in such a way, then the idiom *spill the beans* would have exactly the same meaning as its literal paraphrase reveal the secret, which in fact is not the case. This expression reflects the underlying metaphors the mind is a container and ideas are physical entities and is accompanied by a rich mental image, and there are therefore a number of entailments involved here that are lacking in the literal paraphrase. These entailments include information about the cause of the revelation, the manner in which the revelation is carried out and the fact that it is unintentional (Gibbs 1993a: 272). Moreover, it should be noted that apart from the underlying conceptual metaphors, the different parts of the expression also have metaphorical referents, in that *spill* refers to the act of releasing the information, and *the beans* to the information itself (Lakoff 1987: 451; Gibbs 1993a: 272-273).

Lakoff (1987) was (together with Zoltán Kövecses) among the first to draw attention to the systematicity and conceptual basis of idiomatic expressions, and his account of idioms concerned with anger (1987: 381-

395) nicely demonstrates how different idiomatic expressions, such as *You make my blood boil, He was foaming at the mouth*, *Try to keep a grip on yourself* and *Don't be a pain in the ass* are connected to each other. Although these expressions seem to be fairly diverse, Lakoff argues that we can still make inferences between them. For example, we know that if someone is being a pain in the ass it can make our blood boil and if someone is foaming at the mouth he might want to try to keep a grip on himself. These inferences are not based on the literal meanings of the idioms, but instead they are connected at a conceptual level via both metaphors, such as anger is heat, and various metonyms. A crucial point emphasised by Lakoff (1987: 448), Kövecses (2002: 201) and Kövecses and Szabó (1996: 330) is that although idioms are not arbitrary, they are not predictable either. Instead, the relationship between idioms and their meanings is expressed in terms of motivation, which is much weaker than prediction. It stems from cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor and metonymy and provides a link between the various domains of knowledge and the idiomatic meaning. Unlike prediction, motivation is not a blue-print that tells us exactly what idioms to expect and what idioms will be generated based on a specific metaphorical mapping, but it provides the background against which we can make sense of an idiom. This should not be taken to imply that all idioms are understood by every single speaker of English, only that it seems to be the case that most speakers make some sense out of most idioms. There are also idioms that are understood differently by different people, like the idiom *A rolling stone gathers no moss*, in which the moss can be seen as either a negative or a positive thing, hence resulting in two different morals, and there are other idioms with even more associated images (Lakoff 1987: 451).

The reality of these mental images and underlying conceptual metaphors and metonymies has been empirically verified in many different studies. For instance, Gibbs and O'Brien (1990), discussed by Gibbs (1993a:272-273), asked people to describe their mental images for five groups of idioms, each with similar types of meanings, i.e. meanings to do with concepts such as anger, insanity, revelation and secretiveness. They found that descriptions of images associated with idioms like for example *hit the ceiling* and *flip your lid* turned out to be "remarkably consistent" within the different groups, even though the actual events, flipping lids and hitting ceilings, can occur in many different ways. In addition, the participants were asked questions about the causes,

intentionality and manner of action as represented by their mental images. The answers to these questions also showed a high degree of consistency, in that pressure was often seen as the reason behind the events, that the build-up of pressure is difficult to control and that it is released unintentionally. This consistency and the fact that the responses clearly build on the notion of heated fluid in a container speak in favour of a metaphorical basis for idiomatic expressions. Also, it has been demonstrated that idiomatic expressions differ from literal expressions in this respect. In another study mentioned by Gibbs (1993a: 273), the mental images people associate with literal expressions turned out to be far more varied than the ones associated with idiomatic expressions, since the meanings of these expressions are not based on metaphorical mappings. This provides further proof in support of the metaphorical basis for idioms, because if they were "dead" metaphors with arbitrary meanings the results would be the same for idiomatic and literal expressions.

People's mental images also reflect the different underlying metaphors in cases where idioms with similar meanings are not based on the same conceptual metaphors. This has been shown by Nayak and Gibbs (1990) in an experiment designed to test people's choice of idioms in particular contexts. The participants were asked to rate the appropriateness of different idioms expressing anger in the context of different stories. The results showed a preference for idioms that reflected the same conceptual metaphor as was found reflected in the text as a whole. For example, *blow your stack* was rated higher in a story in which a woman's anger was described in terms of heat in a pressurised container, while *bite your head off* received higher appropriate ratings when the anger was described as a dangerous animal (Gibbs 1993a: 274). This means that not only do we seem to recognise that some idiomatic expressions share the same underlying metaphors, but we are also able to distinguish cases when idioms with similar meanings are based on different underlying metaphors. If these two phrases, *blow your stack* and *bite your head off*, were arbitrarily associated with the meaning "getting angry" without the involvement of conceptual metaphors, as in traditional linguistic theory, then both phrases would have been judged equally suitable.

The role of metaphor in the immediate production and understanding of idioms has been studied by Gibbs et al. (1997), who found that

metaphors are indeed accessed on-line (1997: 143-146). However, the findings only suggest that metaphors may be accessed in the process of understanding and using idioms, not that this happens automatically. In other words, idiom comprehension does not necessarily depend on this, in the sense that metaphors have to be accessed as a first step in the process of understanding idioms (1997: 149).

Finally, it should be mentioned that in addition to metaphor and metonymy, conventional knowledge often plays a major role in motivating idiomatic expressions. For example, the meaning of the expression *to have one's hands full* is based on the conventional knowledge we all share about the hand. We know that if we are holding something in our hands, it is very difficult to use them simultaneously for another activity, and there is also a limit to how many objects we can hold at one and the same time, hence the meaning 'to be busy' (Kövecses 2002: 207-208; Kövecses and Szabó 1996: 338-339).

3. Conceptual blending and double grounding

The theory of conceptual blending or integration was originally devised by Fauconnier and Turner (1994) and then developed through numerous articles (Fauconnier and Turner 1996, 1998, 1999, 2003 etc.; Turner and Fauconnier 1995, 1999, 2000), with the most comprehensive account to date given in *The Way We Think* (2002). The fundamentals of blending as described below can be found in these and in the works of other scholars in the area, for example Grady et al. (1999), Coulson and Oakley (2000) and Coulson (2001), where a more thorough account of the theory is found. Conceptual blending is described as a general and basic cognitive process that operates in a wide variety of conceptual activities, including categorisation, counterfactual reasoning, analogy, metonymy and metaphor. This means that blending processes are more basic than, and in fact form a prerequisite for, other types of conceptual projection, including metaphor (Fauconnier and Turner 1994: 3-4). Compared to the relatively stable and systematic relationship between domains in metaphorical mappings, blending usually involves novel, on-line conceptualisations. Instead of domains, it builds on the notion of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1994), which are temporary mental constructs that are

more limited and specific than domains.[2] There are typically four mental spaces involved in a blend, namely two input spaces, a generic space and a blended space. Instead of involving unidirectional mappings from one domain to another, selected information is projected from both input spaces to the blended space where it is integrated and where novel structure can emerge. This means that meaning created in the blended space may not necessarily have been projected from the source space alone. It is possible for the two input spaces to be related as source and target, and it is in this respect that the four-space model can be said to subsume the two-domain model in conceptual metaphor theory. The generic space contains structure shared by the two inputs, and thus represents what the two inputs have in common, which is a requirement for them to be involved in the blend in the first place. Not surprisingly, the generic space is often rather abstract, with a structure that is limited to an image-schematic level, including unspecified elements and relations between them.[3] The blended space does not simply involve the combination or mixing of the two inputs, comparable to the contents of two jars being poured into a third, but forms a middle space set up for cognitive purposes. The input spaces are still there after the blend has been constructed, so that all four spaces are active at the same time.

As regards the relation between conceptual metaphor theory and blending theory, the position taken here follows that of Grady et al. (1999: 120-122), who claim that blending theory and conceptual metaphor theory can be seen as complementary in the sense that the former addresses novel, short-lived and often unique cases, whereas the latter focuses on conventional, regular and more stable patterns. Conceptual metaphor theory can thus be seen as handling a subset or specific aspect of the type of processes handled by blending theory, which also allows us to see the connection between conventional metaphors and conceptual blending. More importantly, this means that

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[2] However, in specific cases it might be difficult to decide whether we are dealing with a domain or a mental space. I will assume that there is no sharp distinction between them, and this is also the reason why I use small caps as a notation for both constructs.

[3] The generic space is often omitted in blending diagrams and this paper follows that practice. On the whole, the diagrams I include are kept as simple as possible and for the sake of clarity they only illustrate the most important aspects of the analyses.

we can explain why novel, creative language use is often based on conventional mappings. They are simply results of blends that rely on conceptual metaphor for their input spaces and then elaborate that material to create a richer blended space (cf. Turner and Fauconnier 1995: 187).
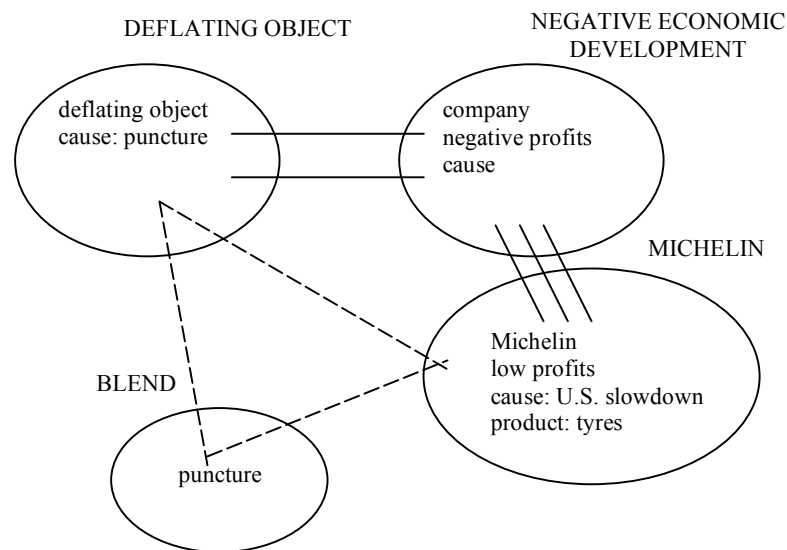

Figure 1. Michelin blend. Based on Feyaerts and Brône (2002: 329).

Conceptual blending networks come in many different shapes and forms (see Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 119-135), but due to space limitations I will not delve into the intricacies of these networks. The discussion here will be limited to introducing the type of blending constellation that Feyaerts and Brône (2002) and Brône and Feyaerts (in press) label double grounding,[4] since it bears some resemblance to the blending patterns displayed in my material. Double grounding is

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[4] As they point out, Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 282) discuss this phenomenon in terms of *opportunistic recruitment*.

discussed in relation to headlines and cartoons, and we will start by taking a closer look at an example of the former, which is a headline that reads *U.S. slowdown punctures Michelin profits*.[5] The verb puncture reflects the underlying conventional metaphor economic development is inflating or deflating an object, which in turn is an instance of a higher-level mapping between verticality and quantity that results in the metaphors more is up and less is down. However, this element is also meaningfully linked or grounded in a different input space that represents the Michelin company, whose products are tyres that literally can be punctured. This is what constitutes "double grounding". The blending process involved in this headline is represented in figure 1 above.

The first and second input spaces correspond to the source and the target of the underlying conventional metaphor, i.e deflating object and negative economic development, respectively. The third input space is an elaboration of the target space, and represents a more specific instance of negative economic development that applies to the Michelin company in particular. A salient element from the source, i.e 'puncture', is projected onto the blend, where it triggers the conventional metaphorical interpretation. When the blend is unpacked, the additional literal meaning is also activated in connection with the elaborated target, and it is mediated through a metonymic connection between Michelin and its product. This activation of the secondary literal meaning through metonymic tightening is described as a structural characteristic of all cases of double grounding. As pointed out by Feyaerts and Brône (2002: 334), it is not a straighforward task to decide when a separate elaborated space is involved, or when we are simply dealing with a more detailed specification of one of the elements within a single space. As a result, they state that in instances of double grounding

> the space configuration consists of source and target of a conventional metaphor (inputs 1 and 2) with additionally one or more inputs (contextualization) elaborating at least one of the inputs. (2002: 334)

When similar patterns occur in the idioms analysed in this paper, they seem to be mirrored, in that it is clear that there is an elaborated source

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[5] This example is discussed both in Feyaerts and Brône (2002: 328-330) and in Brône and Feyaerts (in press: 22-28), and I draw on both accounts in my discussion.

space involved, but sometimes less clear whether there is an elaborated target present as well. I will generally argue in favour of such an elaborated space, and in fact, the same solution is sometimes preferable in their analyses too. However, since the pattern in my material is mirrored, it follows that the actual double grounding effect is often missing, because it is only to be expected that an element is grounded both in the source of the conventional metaphor and in the elaborated source space. For the double grounding pattern to be completely mirrored in my examples, an element would have to be linked to the elaborated source space and to the target rather than the source of the conventional metaphor.

4. Extended idioms in ads

Three different ads with extended idioms will be analysed here. Extended idioms were described in the introduction as being featured in their original form together with an additional piece of text that somehow makes a comment on the idiom itself. This comment is often fairly concise and occurs in direct proximity to the idiom, either directly preceding or immediately following it. However, if the idiom is found in the body copy, as in the third example here, the comment may be found either in the headline or spread out across both the headline and the rest of the copy. The main effect provided by the comment is to draw attention to the literal meaning of the idiom.

4.1 Burn the candle at both ends, then get rid of the smoke

The first extended idiom to be analysed is found in an ad for a product by Comfort called Refresh (Marie Claire, May, 2000), which is sprayed onto clothes to remove smells, or as the slogan promises, it "puts freshness back into clothes". The entire background of the ad consists of a picture of a woman wearing a dress and a cardigan, but it seems to have been cut in two pieces, with the left half showing her at night in a dark and smoky room, her hair slightly dishevelled and her cardigan flailing open, revealing the straps of her dress. In the right-hand half of the picture it is daytime, she standing in a brightly lit room with a desk and a computer visible in the background. Her hair has been combed and her cardigan is

neatly adjusted. The woman is holding a spray bottle of Comfort Refresh in her left hand, spraying its contents towards the smoky left-hand half of the picture. The idiom itself, *burn the candle at both ends*, is written across the smoky half of the picture, while the comment, then get rid of the smoke, is superimposed on the other side.

The idiom is partly motivated by conceptual metaphor(s), but it is also possible that conventional knowledge plays a part in forming mental images, at least for some speakers. According to Kövecses and Szabó (1996: 332), the underlying metaphor behind this idiom is energy is fuel for the fire, but it is unclear exactly what they mean and they fail to give a more detailed analysis. Presumably, if we understand energy in terms of fuel for a fire, it means that we need energy to keep the fire burning, in this context perhaps the fire of life. My attempt at an explanation would be that if we burn the candle at both ends, i.e. use up too much energy late at night and early in the morning, there will not be enough left. Night-time is when we recuperate and gather more energy, and if that time is cut short there will be no fuel for the fire.

However, is it not possible that some other metaphor is involved as well, one that involves time rather than fuel for a fire? One very common metaphor we use in order to understand time is by seeing it as a physical object (Kövecses 2002: 33), sometimes more specifically as a container, which we can move in and out of, as in expressions such as *We're well into the century* and *He's like something out of the last century*,[6] or as a moving object. In my view, burning the candle at both ends could be partly motivated by this metaphor as well, if we think of a period of time as a bounded entity or slot, that can be shortened at both ends. The candle burning at both ends would then correspond to our night rest being shortened at both ends. Interestingly enough, the reference in this ad is not specifically to the lack of energy that is caused by late nights out and early mornings, but rather it addresses the problems associated with smoky venues and how to feel clean and fresh the next day. The focus is thus not on the short period of rest, but on the short period of time in which you must get your clothes feeling fresh again. What our conventional knowledge tells us, and which could influence our mental images associated with this idiom, is that it is often dark late at night and early in the morning. Being up at these times would therefore require

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[6] Examples from the Metaphor Homepage at http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/.

some form of light source, such as a candle, which then would have to be burned at both ends of the day.

Regardless of the exact motivation behind the idiom, it is clear that the element *smoke* in the comment is grounded both in the literal meaning of the idiom, according to which a candle is burning, and in the wider situation associated with the metaphorical meaning of the idiom, i.e. the knowledge that late nights are associated with going out to smoky bars or clubs,[7] which is information that is partly provided by the picture. Out of context, the idiom would perhaps be difficult to understand, since our attention is drawn to its literal meaning by the comment clause then get rid of the smoke. Gibbs et al. (1997), reporting on earlier studies by Gibbs (1980, 1986), point out that "people do not ordinarily process the entire literal meanings of idioms," which often results in a "double-take" when they encounter idioms in a non-metaphorical context (1997: 147). This is clearly what has been exploited by the makers of the ad in question. When reading the idiom *burn the candle at both ends*, we are more likely to access the metaphorical meaning, which is why we might react when we get to the word smoke, which triggers the literal meaning. This incongruity draws our attention to the underlying metaphorical mappings, and allows us to access the input spaces. The source domain object/fuel is elaborated as a candle space, which contains the candle, the process of burning, and the smoke, or perhaps rather soot, that results from it. The target domain time/energy is instead elaborated as a nightlife space, in which a person stays out late, frequents venues where people smoke cigarettes, and as a result end up with clothes that smell of smoke. In the headline, which may be understood as a conceptual blend, both these spaces are activated at the same time, and a humorous effect is created by the double literal interpretation of the element 'smoke' against both the inputs (see figure 2).

This makes this example similar to the double grounding constellation proposed by Feyaerts and Brône (2002) and Brône and Feyaerts (in press), and it might also be argued that there is metonymic tightening in the blend, since the smoke stands for the previous night out on the town. In that input space, the smoke was one element among

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[7] Note that this ad appeared in May, 2000, i.e. prior to the debate on an all-out ban on public smoking.

others, while in the blend it represents all the others, and in fact forms the evidence that has to be removed.
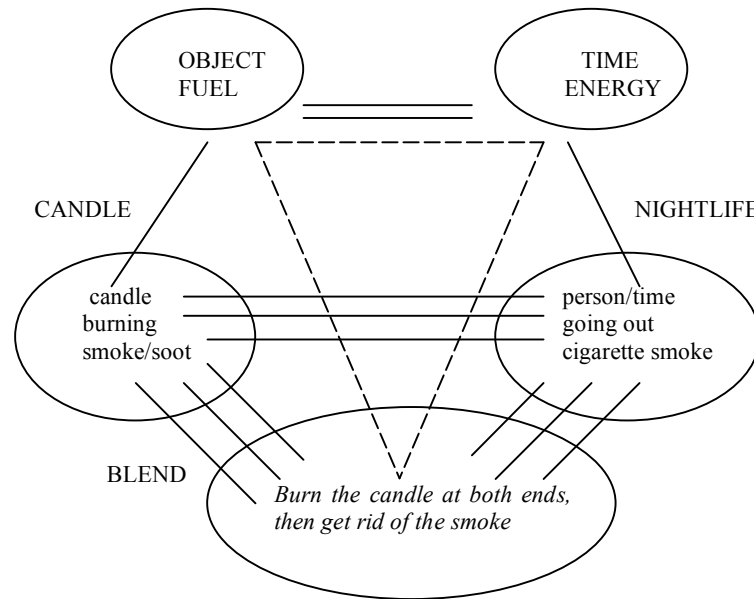

Figure 2. Comfort Refresh blend.

4.2 Make your website work harder. But don't break your balls doing it

Let us now turn to an ad for the services of PNC Tele.com, a telecommunications company, which appeared in GQ in July, 2000. Here, the accompanying phrase precedes the idiom in the headline, and emphasises the metaphorical context rather than turning our attention towards the literal equivalent of the idiom. The body copy says that "there is a painless way to get the best from your website" and goes on to explain what they can do to help you earn money, ending with:

> Pnc Tele.com offers everything you could want for a stress-free, profitable
> website. For all the benefits, and a free stress ball, get in touch today.
> You'll sit comfortably with your decision.

The ad also shows five cartoon drawings of different animals, a dog, a chicken, a snake, a beaver and a parrot, some of them performing various activities, such as using a pneumatic drill or talking on a mobile phone. They are all drawn around the image of a blue ball, which makes up either their head or their body or both. In the company logotype, the same blue ball forms the background of the letter C in PNC.

Now, the idiom *don't break your balls* is obviously metaphorical or at least figurative in some respect, but it is difficult to say what the underlying metaphor is. My guess is that the mental image associated with it has to do with the idea of physically exerting oneself to the point where the body, or more precisely a specific part of the male body, starts to break or fall apart. This might be due not only to severe exertion, but also to performing movements that should not be physically possible. In fact, it is not unusual to get a groin strain when performing strenuous activities, and this may also have something to do with the motivation behind the idiom. Making great efforts to achieve something positive, especially to please someone else, is also expressed metaphorically in terms of taking up awkward body postures, as in the expression bend over backwards. Taking into account the folk etymology of anger discussed in the previous section, we know that we have shared cultural knowledge about the way we conceptualise our bodies and their functions, presumably including knowledge about their limits. It could be speculated that this type of folk theory is what motivates the idiom *don't break your balls*. According to Kövecses (2002: 201), there are idioms without any conceptual motivation at all, such as *to kick the bucket*, meaning 'to die', and although that could hypothetically be the case here, it sounds unconvincing to me.

Returning to the analysis of the ad, the content moves between the mental and physical domains, and also between the abstract and the concrete (see figure 3).

CONCRETE
PHYSICAL

ABSTRACT
MENTAL

MANUAL

CREATIVE

physical exertion
manual labour
groin strain

mental exertion
creating website
breaking stress ball

BLEND

*Make your website work
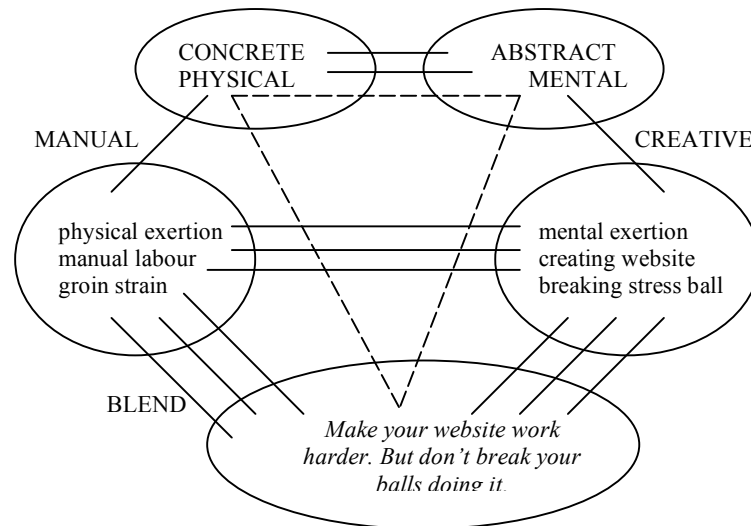harder. But don't break your
balls doing it.*

Figure 3. PNC Tele.com blend.

First, there is the idea of physical exertion, reflected in the use of the idiom, the comment (work harder), and also by the first line of the copy, "There's a painless way to get the best from your website." The cartoon beaver is also hard at work drilling a hole. The type of exertion that is the topic here, however, is mental exertion. Making your website work harder might exert you mentally if you have a limited knowledge about the web, but it would probably not be physically exhausting. The source domain is thus elaborated as a more specific space that perhaps may be labelled MANUAL LABOUR, and this includes some form of physical exertion, which is involved in a manual labour task (or some other strenuous physical activity), and which results in a groin strain (or some other kind of physical damage). In the elaborated target domain, CREATING A WEBSITE, there is an element of mental exertion, which is involved in building a website, and which may result in stress. In fact, according to the copy, new customers are given a free stress ball, and in the elaborated target, this ball might be broken if the stress gets too

serious. Again, we may analyse the headline as a blend, in which both these scenes are active, and where *Don't break your balls* may be interpreted against both inputs. In contrast to 'smoke' in the previous ad, the element 'ball' is not understood in an entirely literal sense against both inputs.

However, another important cognitive mechanism also involved in this advertisement is metonymy, which is reflected pictorially in that the blue circle in the company logo gets to stand for the company in the main image, where it forms part of the drawings. Hence, this means that the cartoon animals metonymically represent the company, and it creates an overall effect whereby the company can be seen to be hard at work for you, by making your website work harder, as suggested in the headline, or even building it for you, as suggested in the copy. There is even a metaphorical link between the company and the stress ball, whereby PNC tele.com is understood as a reliever of stress, and this is again based on the metonymic link between the company and the blue circle in the logo. Crucially, these metonymic mappings actually create the solution to the situation in the blend,[8] that is, they explain how the company can help us. In fact, the last line of the copy, "You'll sit comfortably with your decision," reflects a person being in a state that we can describe as mental and physical relaxation, which runs contrary to the state that is connected with the initial idiom, *break your balls*. There is also a connection present in their literal equivalents, in that it is more comfortable to sit down if your testicles are intact.

4.3 You pay through the nose when you buy trainers, so why do the same when you wear them

The final ad in this section is for Scholl foot odour control (Company, August, 1997) and it forms an example of intertextuality in advertising by including elements from another, well-known type of ad for a certain shoe manufacturer, Nike. Contrary to what we would expect to find in a Nike ad, a worn and frayed trainer is displayed here together with the

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[8] If it instead were part of the actual blend, the company would risk being connected to the groin or even the testicles in the elaborated source, which of course is undesirable.

slogan *Just smell it*, compared to Nike's *Just do it*. The idiom, which is found in the body copy, also refers to the prices that Nike and presumably other manufacturers of brand label trainers charge for their products. It is immediately followed by the comment clause and reads "You pay through the nose when you buy trainers, so why do the same when you wear them".

Again, it is difficult to determine the exact conceptual motivation behind this idiom, but it is possible that it is connected to the unnaturalness or awkwardness of the literal equivalent of the expression. Since the meaning of the idiom is not only 'to pay too much for something', but also carries the implication that you are somehow tricked, consciously or unconsciously, into agreeing on the price, it might be the element of deception that is associated with the nose rather than the expensive price. This happens in the Swedish idiom att *dra någon vid näsan*, literally "to pull somebody by the nose," which means 'to deceive somebody'. Other idioms in English that include the word *nose* provide
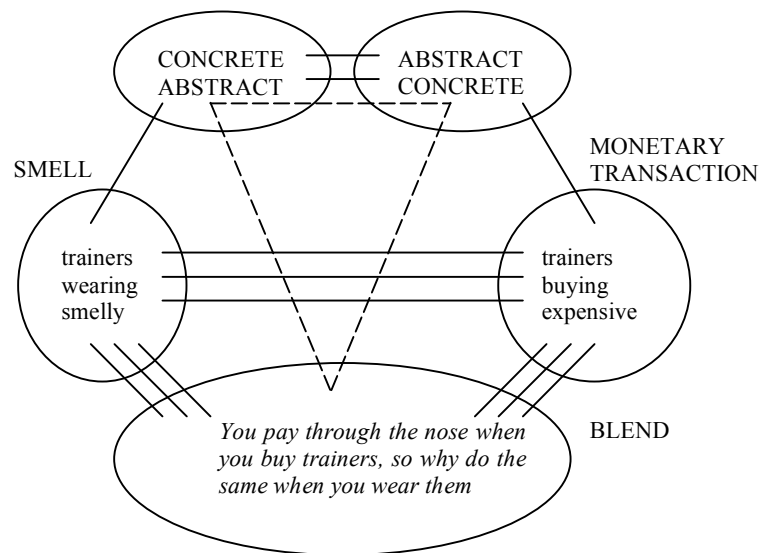

Figure 4. Scholl blend.

no clues, since the ones that are fairly opaque have to do with anger rather than deception, for example *to put somebody's nose out of joint* and *to get up somebody's nose*. Also, the domains of the underlying conceptual metaphor, if there is one, does not necessarily have to involve the nose or other body parts.

Even though it is difficult to establish exactly what conceptual metaphors are involved here, we may assume that, at a more general level, we are again dealing with the domains of abstract and concrete (see figure 4 above). It is apparent that there is an ambiguity between literal and metaphorical readings, as in the previous ads, and that these involve either the situation of wearing trainers that are worn and smelly, which is unpleasant, or the situation of buying brand label trainers, which are expensive. These scenarios then form the elaborated inputs, and may be labelled smell and monetary transaction.

However, it is more difficult to say which space is associated with the concrete source domain, and which space is a more specific instance of the abstract target domain, because both *pay* and *through the nose* are in themselves ambiguous between literal and metaphorical readings. While *through the nose* is understood literally against the smell space, and metaphorically against the monetary transaction space, the opposite holds in the case of *pay*, which is understood literally in relation to the monetary transaction space, and metaphorically against the smell space. The domains of abstract and concrete are therefore connected to both the elaborated spaces at the same time, and these are simultaneously active in the blend once the initially non-salient smell space has been activated. This is achieved not only through the comment clause, but also with the help of the image. Apart from filling this function, the sorry state of the trainer is yet another aspect of the play on the original Nike campaign, since it may be seen as a further comment on the quality of the trainer in relation to its price. In addition, the metaphorical interpretation of the expression *having to pay for something* is connected to the notion of suffering or punishment for mistakes, which here may refer to the mistake of buying expensive brand label trainers.

5. Altered idioms

Although I have chosen to refer to these examples as altered idioms, it should be noted that the emphasis is on the adjective rather than the noun, since the resulting phrase might have a literal as well as a metaphorical reading, and depending on which reading is preferred it may no longer be particularly idiomatic. The altered idioms differ from the extended idioms in that they simultaneously activate both the literal and the metaphorical meaning. I will analyse two such examples here, and it will become apparent that the idiomatic expressions in the ads are exploited in similar ways despite the fact that the advertised products are fairly different from each other.

5.1 Don't get your pantyliners in a twist

We will begin by discussing an ad for Libresse Bodyform Ultra pantyliners, which appeared in *Cosmopolitan* in July, 1996. The headline, which covers most of the page of the ad, is written in white against a cerise background and reads *don't get your pantyliners in a twist*. The letters that make up the last word are not entirely white, but seem to have been cut out of a photo of a pair of knickers, showing the waistband, the laced edges and the skin of the woman wearing them. The rest of the copy is found in the bottom left hand corner, intersected in the middle by the Libresse Bodyform Ultra logo, and reads as follows:

> Relax. Bodyform's Ultra Pantyliner is a revolutionary one-piece design.
> So when you move, it moves with you, and keeps its shape beautifully.
> It's your flexible friend.

The metaphorical meaning of an idiom is usually more salient than its literal meaning, but because the expected word *knickers* has been replaced by *pantyliners*, both interpretations are simultaneously activated. The literal reading involves the conventional knowledge we (at least women) share about pantyliners, including the qualities that good pantyliners should have and what can go wrong with them, for example that they might lose their shape and fail to stay in place. This is also

addressed in the body copy, which tells us that the Libresse Bodyform pantyliners will follow our moves, i.e. stay in place and keep their shape. The metaphorical interpretation is of course connected to the original idiom: to get one's knickers in a twist. This is at least partly motivated by the metaphor the cause of anger is physical annoyance (Lakoff 1987: 395), which involves a scenario in which person or entity (A) physically disturbs or annoys person (B). Person (A) acts incorrectly and is the one at blame, while person (B) is an innocent victim and also the one to get angry. Admittedly, the idiom *to get one's knickers in a twist* differs slightly from this scenario, in that many people would probably understand the anger to be caused by the angry person herself, [9], similar to expressions like *don't get yourself in a state* and *stop winding yourself up*, which are based on other metaphors. However, we can explain this if we consider the fact that the knickers are the offender, the incorrect action they undertake is to get in a twist, which in turn causes physical annoyance to the allegedly innocent wearer. But is the wearer really innocent? I would like to argue that it is the wearer of the knickers who ultimately causes them to move about and end up in a twist, which is consistent with the idea that the angry person causes the anger herself, although the knickers are the ones immediately causing the annoyance.

The link between the altered idiom *don't get your pantyliners in a twist* and the original idiom *don't get your knickers in a twist* is provided in three different ways. First, there is an obvious connection between pantyliners and knickers, in that the former are worn inside the latter, which constitutes a general conceptual association that would exist even outside of the context of the ad. In addition, there is also a visual link to the original idiom which is specific to this ad, namely the image of a pair of knickers that spells out the word *twist*. The illustration is a visual version of the linguistic expression *don't get your knickers in a twist* and could be described as a pictorial metaphor (cf. Forceville 1996). It partly builds on an additional conceptual metaphor, states are locations, which is seen reflected in expressions such as *They are in love* (Kövecses 2002: 135). Needless to say, the state of being in love is more abstract than the state of being (physically) twisted, but the use of the preposition in still indicates that it is conceptualised as a location. This relatively concrete source domain location is thus cleverly highlighted in the illustration in

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[9] It would typically be a woman, especially in this context.

the ad, where the picture of the knickers is actually located inside the word twist. Finally, there is a third and perhaps less conspicuous element present, which links the pantyliner to the same conceptual domain that knickers belong to, namely clothes or fashion. This is achieved by presenting the pantyliner partly in terms of a piece of clothing in the body copy, in particular by describing it as a "one-piece (ultra-thin) design" and through the phrase "keeps it's shape beautifully," which could also apply to a garment.

Since there is a connection here between the altered idiom and the original idiom, it is conceivable that the underlying metaphor is carried over to the altered version. In the same way as the knickers are understood as offenders, the pantyliners could be construed as a cause of anger if they do not behave like they should. As would be expected, this is not explicitly indicated anywhere in the ad, since admakers probably are reluctant to mention any negative characteristics that might be associated with the product they are trying to sell. However, drawing attention to possible shortcomings in a more implicit manner might be helpful in building the argument in favour of the advertised product by arguing against these.

However, let us return to the original idiom and the conventional metaphor that motivates it, i.e. the cause of anger is physical annoyance (see figure 5). In this particular case, the source domain may be understood to be elaborated as a more specific scenario in which someone's knickers get into a twist and cause physical annoyance for the wearer, while the target domain is elaborated as a space in which an offender performs an incorrect action that makes another person angry. In relation to the altered idiom, there are corresponding spaces, but here there is no annoyance and no anger. The second elaborated source space thus contains the pantyliners, which stay in place and lead to comfort, while the second elaborated target space represents a scenario in which a friend performs a correct action that makes another person happy and relaxed.

In contrast to the image associated with *get your knickers in a twist*, the emergent situation we find in the space of this ad is first of all that the pantyliner is our friend. This is explicitly stated in the body copy. As opposed to an enemy or an offender, it will do what it is supposed to do ("So when you move, it moves with you, and keeps its shape beautifully."), which in turn means that the user, i.e. you, the reader of the
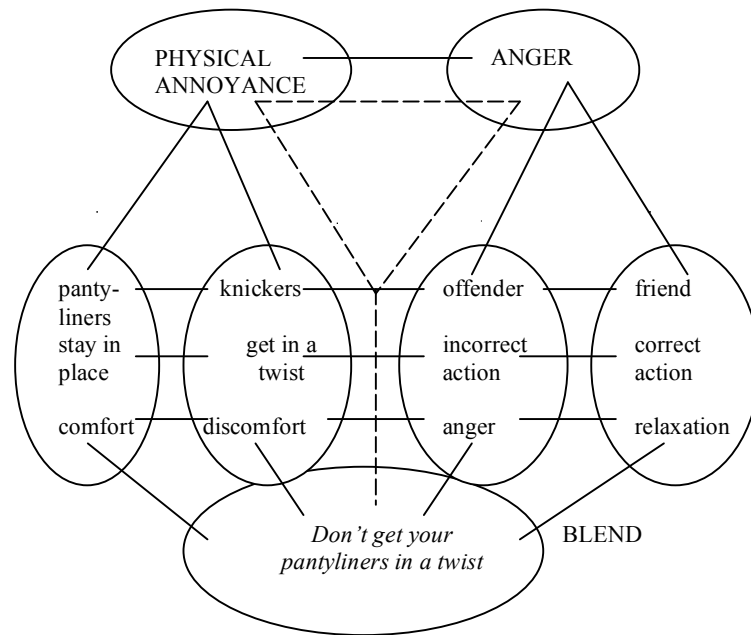
Figure 5. Libresse Bodyform blend.

ad, will have no reason to get angry or irritated. On the contrary, the pantyliner will make you relax, which is indicated in the copy.

5.2 Comfort is in the eye of the beholder

The next ad to be analysed in this section is one for Focus contact lenses, which appeared in *Marie Claire* in March, 1997. The main part of the ad is taken up by a picture of a woman dressed in a white knitted polo jumper, cuddling a fluffy toy animal that might be a teddy bear. The headline above the picture is written in white against a green background and reads *Comfort is in the eye of the beholder*, a variant form of the idiomatic expression or proverb *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*. As

with the previous ad, the headline is ambiguous and may be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. Again, the fact that the idiom has been altered triggers the otherwise non-salient literal meaning, but perhaps not as strongly as in the previous ad, since *Comfort is in the eye of the beholder* may actually be understood in an entirely metaphorical sense, as opposed to *Don't get your pantyliners in a twis*t, where a literal interpretation is inevitably highlighted.

Let us start with the original idiom, which is partly motivated by the conceptual metaphor 'feelings are objects' or in this case rather personal characteristics or abstract notions are objects. Being seen in terms of an object is what enables beauty to be located in different places, in this case in the eye of the beholder as opposed to in the face of a woman. Fittingly enough, contact lenses are also objects that are located in the eyes of some beholders, namely those with poor eyesight. The source domain objects is elaborated as a more specific space, which will be referred to as lenses, and it includes the simple scenario in which lenses are worn or placed in a person's eyes (see figure 6). In addition, we can identify two elaborations of the target domain feelings/ characteristics, where one may be labelled comfort and the other beauty. In the comfort space, there is the feeling of comfort, which exists in the opinion of the experiencer, while in the beauty space, there is the characteristic of beauty, which exists in the opinion of the observer. In the altered idiom in the headline, all these spaces are activated simultaneously, and contribute to the understanding of what it means to use the Focus lenses. Not only will they improve a person's eyesight, they are also comfortable for the wearer and make her/him look good in the eyes of other people.

Moreover, all three input spaces may be understood to be reflected in the image, in particular the comfort space, to which the warm jumper and cuddly toy belong, but perhaps also the beauty space, which in that case is reflected in the face of the woman, and possibly also the lenses space, if we assume that the woman in the ad is wearing them. However, they are also signalled in the text or slogan at the very bottom of the ad, which says "see better," "feel better" and "look better," and these are of course linked to the three different input spaces lenses, comfort, and beauty.

The altered idiom in the headline may also be seen as a comment on the image, which actually illustrates some examples of what comfort may involve, but at the same time asks what it really means for something to be comfortable. Is it wearing a warm jumper and cuddling a fluffy toy as

OBJECTS — FEELINGS/
CHARACTERISTICS

LENSES COMFORT BEAUTY

lenses
in the
eyes
wearer

comfort
in the
opinion
experiencer

beauty
in the
opinion
observer

BLEND

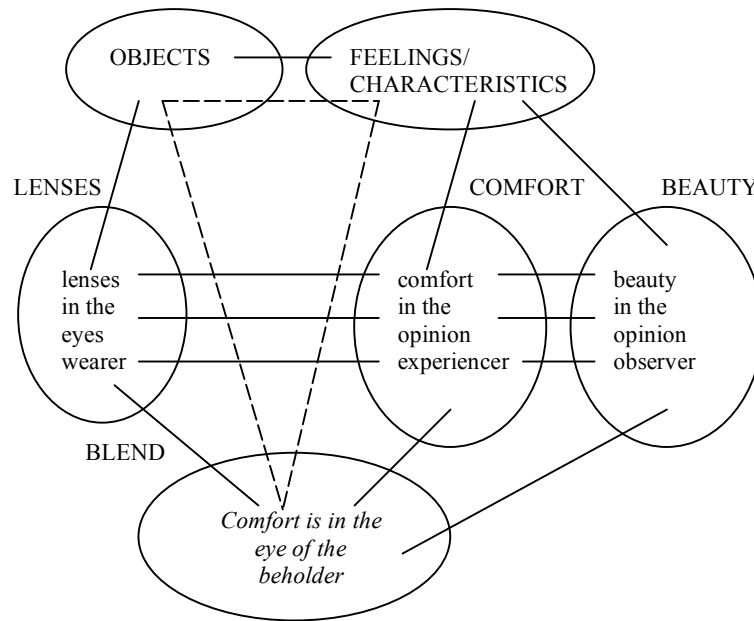*Comfort is in the
eye of the
beholder*

Figure 6. Focus blend.

the woman in the picture is doing, or is it something else? That is all up to the beholder, which of course carries a possible negative implication as far as the aim of the ad is concerned. Are the contact lenses really comfortable or is that also, metaphorically, in the eye of the beholder?

6. Conclusions

In the ads analysed in this paper, the literal meaning of the idiomatic expressions is triggered by either extending or altering the idiom. Since the metaphorical meaning may be assumed to be more salient, it is available slightly ahead of the literal meaning in the case of extended

idioms, while in the case of altered idioms, the two meanings are simultaneously activated. The signalling of the literal meaning reactivates the underlying metaphor, which is elaborated into two or more specific input scenarios. In the blended space, these scenarios are integrated, which either results in a claim about the product, as in the Libresse ad in section 5.1 or presents a problematic scenario that the product can alleviate, as in the Comfort Refresh ad in section 4.1. However, it must be pointed out that the distinction between the two variants is not sharp, and they may co-occur. In the extended ads, there may be a slightly stronger punning effect due to the surprise effect created by the secondary literal interpretation. The image plays some part in signalling one of the elaborated input spaces, usually the source, for example in the Scholl ad in section 4.3, where the worn and frayed trainer reflects the SMELL space. Meanwhile, in the Focus Daily ad in section 5.2, the picture of the woman wearing the warm polo jumper and cuddling a fluffy toy reflects one of the elaborated targets, namely COMFORT. Even so, due to the fact that we are dealing with fixed phrases, an alteration of it goes a long way in highlighting the literal meaning. This is apparent in the Libresse ad, for example, which would be understood equally well without the fragmentary image of a pair of knickers.

The role played by metaphor and conceptual blending in these creative examples shows that advertising language follows the same cognitive principles as everyday language, but many processes which are normally unconscious and therefore largely go unnoticed may be highlighted and made more noticeable (cf. Turner 1996: 91). However, it is important to note that this paper does not state exactly what features are mapped or which conceptual links are established each time a particular blend is deconstructed. Similarly, no claims are made as to how individual people would interpret the ads and there is no suggestion that everybody would understand them in exactly the same way, which means that there are many questions that still need to be answered.

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