

# What You See Is What You Get

## The Use of Multimodal Metaphors in Financial Advertising

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### Motivation

Advertisements of financial service providers and insurance companies promote abstract, intangible products or services that cannot be visually represented. This is why an extra communicative effort must be made to promote them and why the semantic organization of multimodal financial ads differs remarkably from multimodal ads in other domains. Our initial hypothesis was that abstract products or services take shape through metaphors that combine the cognitive potential of verbal and pictorial metaphors.

### Objectives

Our qualitative pilot study had two main objectives:

- Description of the metaphorical source domains that are used in financial advertising
- Assessment of typical strategies of meaning construction in multimodal metaphors

### Corpus

Our corpus consists of about 100 print advertisements (combining word and image) from the finance and insurance domain. The ads were published between August 2007 and February 2008 in the German weekly news magazine "Der Spiegel".

### Method

We performed a qualitative analysis of the advertisements with focus on the following aspects:

- Relation of verbal and pictorial elements
- Degree of metaphorical innovation
- Strategy of multimodal meaning construction

### Results

#### Most important metaphorical source domains

- Tangible objects (piece of art, house/home, rock, etc.)
- Family, partnership
- Sports, activity, competition
- Nature, climate, elements

#### Strategies of meaning construction through multimodal blending

- Revitalization (of lexicalized or conventional metaphors)
- Disambiguation
- Illustration

### References

- Cook, Guy (2001): *The Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge.
- Fauconnier, Gilles; Turner, Mark (2002): *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Forceville, Charles (1996): *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*. London/ New York: Routledge.
- Forceville, Charles (2006): "Non-Verbal and Multimodal Metaphor in a Cognitivist Framework: Agendas for Research." In: Kristiansen, Gitte; Achard, Michel; Dirven, René; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco (eds.): *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*. Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 379-402.

### Exemplary analyses



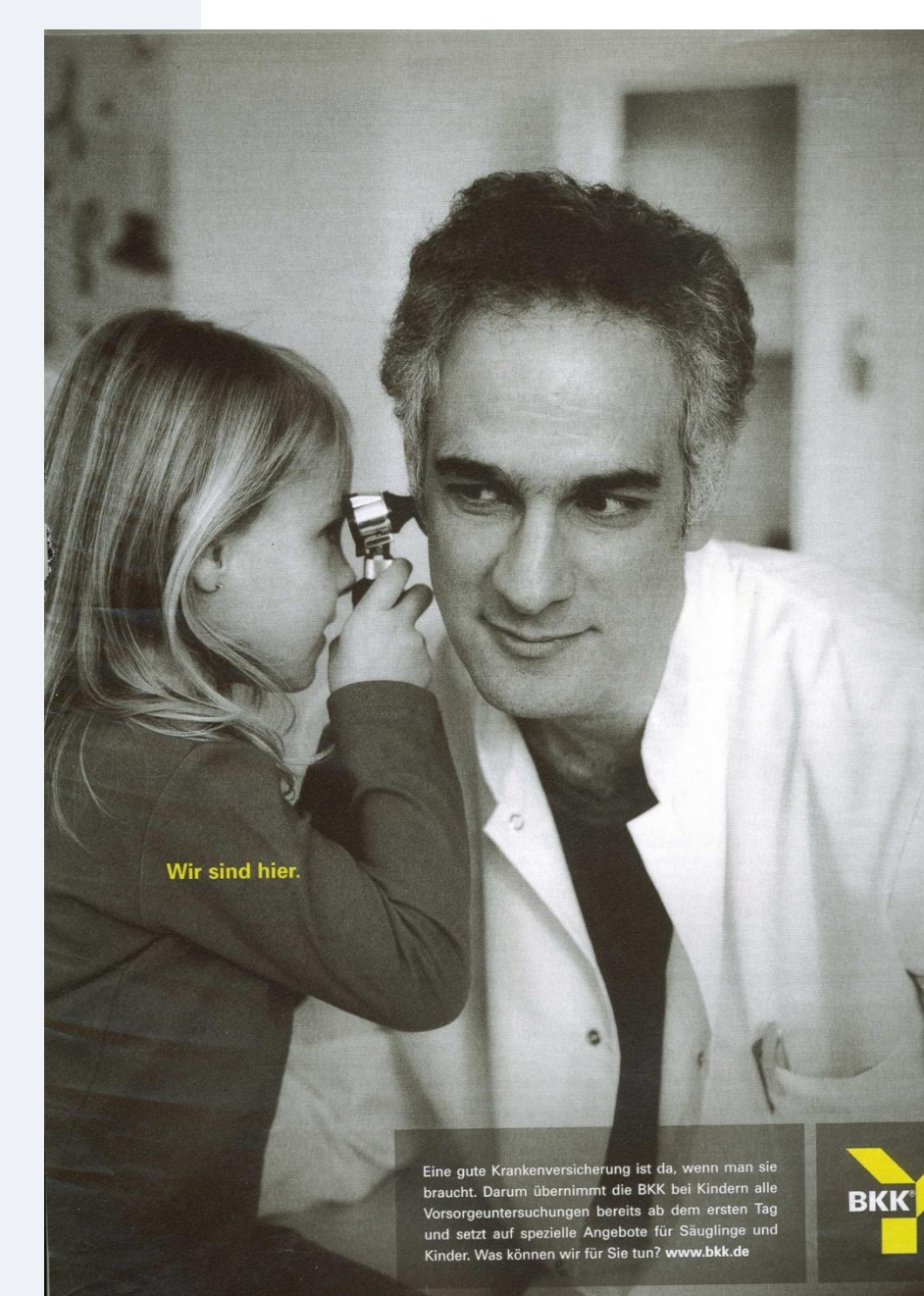
#### Revitalization/Illustration

- The image/text relation is symmetrical: pictorial (p) metaphor (stock market weather), p-topos ad auctoritatem (famous German football star Günther Netzer), verbal (v) metaphor („Börsenwetter“/stock market weather)
- Both modalities, image and text, carry metaphorical force
- Visual prominence of the p-topos ad auctoritatem
- Strategies of meaning construction:
  - Revitalization of the verbal metaphor „Börsenwetter“ (stock market weather) by multimodal contextualization
  - Illustration of the topos
- Monomodal elements (p-metaphor and v-metaphor) are conventional, their multimodal combination is innovative



#### Illustration

- The image/text relation is symmetrical: p-metaphor (spatial/physical proximity is intimacy), p-metonymy<sub>1</sub> (touching hands = partnership), p-metonymy<sub>2</sub> (embracing couple = partnership), verbal-pictorial (vp) metaphor (a life insurance is a lifelong partnership)
- Both modalities, image and text, carry metaphorical force
- Visual prominence of the p-metaphor and of p-metonymy<sub>1&2</sub>
- Strategy of meaning construction: Illustration of the conventionalized metaphor
- Monomodal elements (p-metaphor, p-metonymies<sub>1&2</sub>) as well as their multimodal combination (vp-metaphor) are conventional



#### Disambiguation

- The image/text relation is asymmetrical: p-metaphor (spatial/physical proximity is intimacy), p-metonymy<sub>1</sub> (changed roles in a play = closeness and confidence), p-metonymy<sub>2</sub> (child and doctor = preventive medical checkup for children), vp-metaphor (health provision is a matter of confidence)
- The image carries metaphorical force. However, the text is required for metaphorical meaning construction
- Visual prominence of the p-metaphor (spatial/physical proximity is intimacy)
- Strategy of meaning construction: Disambiguation of the image
- Monomodal elements (p-metaphor, p-metonymies<sub>1&2</sub>) are conventional, their multimodal combination (vp-metaphor) is innovative