

Metarepresentation and echo in online automobile advertising

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1. Introduction

Advertising has been traditionally regarded as a permeable type of discourse (Bhatia, 2004; Cook, 1992; Goddard, 1998; Kuppens, 2009, *inter alia*), which means that an advertisement can deliver its message by reference to another text, as can be seen in example (1) from Goddard (1998: 129):

(1) To be in Florida in winter, or not to be in Florida in winter.

It is generally agreed that, to be effective, potential recipients of (1) should be able to locate its origin in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Depending on the theoretical viewpoint adopted, this case of 'repetition' will be treated as intertextuality, interdiscursivity, metadiscourse or resonance. But consideration of close identity to the source leaves aside cases such as (2):

(2) Celebrated as being the UK's best-selling car of all time, the Ford Fiesta combines up to date technology with a range of fashionable colours and finishes, meaning it's perfectly on trend every season.¹

where its origin is neither overtly marked nor directly retrievable by the receiver; yet, about which readers can probably 'have the impression' that the advertised car evokes the depiction of an item of clothing. A second interesting consideration usually associated with intertextuality (or any of the various other labels) refers to the effect it produces on the audience. Arguments in favour of eliciting a light-hearted, humorous effect, an intention to attract consumers' attention and enhance the advert's memorability (Liu and Le, 2013; Nemcoková, 2014), an effort to conceal the advertisements' appearance (as illustrated, for example, by advertorials, commercial texts which simulate the editorial format of a publication, such as its design, visual content, presence or absence of

¹ <http://www.ford.co.uk/Cars/Fiesta>. Last access 2-8-2016.

labelling, type size of the label, etc.) in order to influence readers and gain credibility through the implicit approval of the magazine where they are placed (Erjavec, 2004) or an attempt to single out the product in a highly competitive field (Crook, 2004) are often exerted in relation to instances employing intertextuality. While this interpretation template may suitably apply to (1), it appears too narrow for cases as (2), which confronts readers with a fairly long stretch of text difficult to remember, whose humorous intention is dubious and which uses a strategy that can currently be traced in automobile advertising.

Then the aim of this paper will be to offer a principled account of the interpretation problems of source and effect associated with advertisements that are not infused with references to pre-existing texts. This will be done from the pragmatic perspective of Relevance Theory (henceforth RT). It should be noted that, while a number of studies have identified the key role of pragmatics, especially of RT, in accounting for 'repetitions' in such disparate areas as literary texts (Caink, 2014; Koutrianou, 2009; Kreml, 1998; MacMahon, 2009a, 2009b;), academic lectures (Bu, 2014; Ifantidou, 2005), second language acquisition textbooks (Parham, 2016), television interviews (Maruenda Bataller, 2002) or even biblical texts (Pattimore, 2002), the extensive research on advertising from the relevance-theoretic viewpoint — whose weight deserves a separate heading in the comprehensive online RT bibliography run by Yus (<https://personal.ua.es/francisco.yus/rt2.html>) — has, to the best of my knowledge, largely neglected this kind of analysis, with the notable exception of Conradie (2012, 2013). Nonetheless, my approach differs from his in that it specifically focuses on the relevance-theoretic notions of metarepresentation and echo to expand them beyond the traditional spheres of RT literature, that is, indirect speech, negation and, above all, irony. In particular, this paper examines design-related aspects in online automobile advertising as metarepresenting and echoing fashion descriptions. In effect, I advance the hypothesis that design-related passages of car advertising will achieve relevance via the addressee recognising their allusive nature, attributing them to some source and identifying the addresser's attitude towards them; a characterisation that RT has mainly attached to ironic utterances. The particularisation on fashion and online car advertising does not mean that other

fields do not lend themselves well to this judgement, neither does it purport to exclude alternative advertising venues (i.e. print, television, radio, etc.); but the joint choice of fashion and online car advertising is based on the belief that they may offer an interesting and up-to-date outlook on the discussion.

By way of clarification, it should be specified that, even though information in most advertisements and in fashion is conveyed through texts and images, this work centres solely on the verbal dimension in an effort to highlight how the addressee's perception of the advert may be conditioned by the words used. It should also be made clear that the present paper does not constitute an attempt to delineate the defining features of the discourse of fashion, a doubtlessly exciting venture but one that would exceed the purpose of this research. Contrary to this, the topic organisation proposed in the analytical sections stems from data contained in examples belonging to the online advertising of automobiles, which will be then compared to and contrasted against fashion excerpts gathered from fashion websites. Thus, it can be argued that the proposal is more example-driven than discourse-based. To this respect, an additional difficulty met in the course of this investigation has been the limited number of resources on the discourse of fashion, since it is only recently that linguistic inquiry has been undertaken in this field and the works available restrict themselves to the use of false Anglicisms (Balteiro, 2014; Balteiro and Campos, 2012) or to the role played by borrowings (Lopriore and Furiassi, 2015; Author, 2015, 2016). In this sense, taking a broad scope on fashion to include clothing, as well as footwear, accessories, jewellery and leather goods, the present paper aspires to identify a promising area for further development.

The text shows the following organisation: section 2 offers a characterisation of the advertising of automobiles in websites. Part 2.1 initially introduces the issue of persuasion in advertising in order to put it in relation to the useful notions of stylistic rhetoric, covert communication and tickle. In order to gain a better insight into the choices that have motivated this study, section 2.2 begins addressing the particularities of online advertising itself, moving on to the present social relationship between fashion and the car industries. The theoretical part of the paper is substantiated in section 3. Section 3.1 defines

the concept of metarepresentation in the framework of RT, while section 3.2 outlines the concept of echo. The details of the data supporting this research are laid out in section 4, while section 5, divided into seven subsections, is entirely devoted to the analysis of the examples. Section 6 closes the paper with a conclusion.

2. A characterisation of online automobile advertising

In their attempt to provide an accurate understanding of advertising as a result of the changes that this phenomenon has experienced in the past decades, Dahlen and Rosengren (2016: 334) identify three variables to be taken into account: the incessant incorporation of new media and formats, the new behaviour of consumers, and what they call the “extended effects” of advertising, that is, the persuasion issue. The three elements appear intertwined, each of them having a direct bearing on the other two. Even though theirs is fundamentally an economic approach to the topic, the following subsections adhere to this proposal, but will adopt instead a linguistic and communicative treatment.

2.1 Persuasion, the ‘black beast’ of advertising?

Inevitably, any discussion on advertising lands on the issue of what its function should be. If some years ago the heated debate raged between the weight that information (Williamson, 1978) ought to have over persuasion (Dyer, 1982), a decade or so later, Cook (1992: 5), in a conciliatory attitude, pointed out that “even if the majority of ads have the function of persuading their addressees to buy, this is not their only function. They may also amuse, inform, misinform, worry or warn”. Of course, those words did not settle the controversy surrounding persuasion in advertising, rekindled from time to time through its long-lasting association with rhetoric. Rhetoric’s poor reputation as a synonym for a flowery but empty message dates back to ancient Greece: Plato conceived this discipline as the necessary skill to win an argument, regardless of its truth or beauty (Mauranen, 1993). This may explain why advertising, a type of communication “designed to persuade the receiver to take some action”

(Richards and Curran, 2002: 74) is not infrequently paired with adjectives as 'deceitful' or 'manipulative' (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001: 1292; Theodorakis et al., 2015).

From a different standpoint, as already argued, Dahlen and Rosengren (2016: 336-337) also feel uncomfortable with the notion of persuasion in advertising. In their view, this notion puts too much emphasis on consumers' individual behaviour (i.e. attitudes to brands, liking of advertisements or buying intentions). Accordingly, this would make such a notion unsuitable to characterise modern advertising, which is less concerned with persuasive purposes, yet increasingly of a social, interactive nature. Consequently, these researchers suggest that the word "persuasion" should be replaced by "impact", a term which, according to them, suitably covers the modern effects exerted by advertising, such as green and healthy consumption or charitable and benevolent behaviours.

In the framework used here, advertising is persuasive because it focuses on style (i.e. how to say things). Thus, rhetorical strategies are understood as stylistic choices. This is the core matter of advertising: it does not exemplify spontaneous communication, rather its claims result from careful and thoughtful thinking. Still, as RT explains, rhetorical devices are not "codified departures from the ordinary use of language, but ordinary exploitations of basic processes of verbal communication" (Sperber and Wilson, 2012: 96). Moreover, within the context of RT, there is nothing uncommon in the planning that characterises advertising or rhetoric, since teaching rhetoric would have "only one undisputable consequence: it makes people do self-consciously what they were already doing spontaneously" (Sperber and Wilson, 2012: 96).

But persuasion lies behind the need for commercial advertising to empathise with consumers, a relationship that will be explained along the lines suggested in Simpson's (2001) reason-tickle distinction. Conceding that every advertisement is a mixture of both, this author argues that the former contains rational argument, while the latter stimulates emotion, imagination, desires, etc. and is more dependent on indirect expression. Simpson (2001: 605) further states that "tickle advertising may prove especially useful for the promotion of those luxury or nonessential products whose immediate necessity or efficacy is

not obvious". Given that this paper seeks to assess the use of the discourse of fashion as a rhetorical strategy in online automobile advertising, it is my contention that car copywriters will try to win their readers' empathy resorting to fashion to describe design-related aspects as luxurious additions to the vehicle (regardless of the vehicle type and brand) and, hence, as an appeal to tickle. Equally interesting is the fact that Simpson's characterisation of tickle as indirect expression can be equated with Tanaka's (1999) idea of 'covert communication', an implementation of Relevance Theory into advertising. In essence, covert communication claims that the communicator's intention "is to alter the cognitive environment of the hearer [...] without making this intention mutually manifest" because the sender of the message "does not publicise his informative intention" (Tanaka, 1999: 41) (but see Crook (2004) for a critical view on this account). Consequently, the addressee takes more responsibility in deriving the addresser's meaning, relying heavily on implicatures (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 182), namely, the propositions that contribute to the intended meaning but are not explicitly communicated by the utterance. These observations will have a bearing on the analysis of metarepresentation and echo put forward in section 5.

2.2 Media format, consumer's attitude and automobile advertising

Since advertising language gradually started to raise scholar's attention (Dyer, 1982; Leech's, 1966; Vestergaard and Schrøder, 1985, *inter alia*), this field has been in continuous evolution. Thus, the advent of the so-called 'new technologies' has increasingly expanded the traditional interest in print advertising and headlines to more recent preoccupations, such as how to present information effectively in the new media (Dijkstra et al., 2005; Huh et al., 2015).

The choice of medium poses a challenge with respect to more traditional forms of advertising, both written and audiovisual. In the first place, digital technology has radically transformed consumers' behaviour into a dynamic process, where people are in control not only of what information they gather to make the purchase, but also where, when and how they decide to be informed. Secondly, nowadays copywriters are confronted by a new generation of techno-

literate consumers who, at the click of a mouse, have the possibility to know about a brand using independent sources (i.e. browsers, search engines). This may enhance the credibility of the data offered at a manufacturer's website and gives the chance to check that the observed also remains possible, thus, minimising consumers' proverbial scepticism towards advertisers' claims. Lastly, having information available at the time of purchase influences the decision-taking process, which becomes more stimulus-based than memory-based (Faber and Stafford, 2005). A fundamental consequence derives from these observations: unlike most print advertising, the texts in the online subgenre have not been conceived as short, catchy phrases; by contrast, they exhibit a certain length, have a strongly descriptive nature and possess a highly informative value (Fortanet et al., 1999; Janoschka, 2004; Labrador et al., 2014).

As for automobile advertising, it has been examined from various angles, for example, the metaphorical perspective — where the car would symbolise either the female body (Gill, 2008) or the body of a (usually) wild animal (Piller, 1999) —, the car's communion with nature — where the natural environment is envisaged as playing a key role, in such a way that the vehicle itself or its technology appears in perfect harmony with nature (Garland et al., 2013; Gunster, 2004; McLean, 2009) —, or cross-cultural differences in persuasive tactics, for instance, Jaganathan et al.'s (2014) comparison of Malaysian-English vs. German car advertising in magazines. Martin (1997) tackles the relationship with fashion, drawing a sociological and aesthetic parallelism between the American car and fashion industry in the aftermath of World War II.

This work adopts a different approach, in so much as it seeks to shed some light on the rhetorical import of echoing fashion in automobile advertising. Regardless of the fact that a few polysemous items (e.g. pockets, belts, belt buckles, aprons, skirts, boot, bonnet, bags, (fuel filler / mirror) caps) are shared by fashion and automobiles, one may be tempted to conclude that these two worlds do not seem to have much in common. Within the picture of precision and security that emerges from considering the vital role performed by technology in the car industry, it is hard to envisage what position should be fulfilled by fashion, a field seemingly dominated by frivolity, superficiality and evanescence. However, it is a fact that the car industry, in its attempt to look for

a broader projection, has turned its eyes to fashion. Hence, certain car brands appear as title sponsors of renowned fashion weeks (e.g. New York, Paris, London, Milan). Additionally, in 2016 the Ford Motor Company teamed up with the fashion designers father and son Casely-Hayford in order to launch their Ford Vignale model range. The idea underlying this partnership was that “like the finest fashion, they [Ford Vignale cars] feature sophisticated design and high-end materials”.² Likewise, DS Automobiles have chosen Iris Apfel (“Fashion icon. She was probably the first woman to ever wear jeans! Iris Apfel never followed any trends”³) as their brand ambassador. Not to be disregarded either is the consideration that such approximations to fashion from the car industry also take place against the backdrop of an increasing association between fashion and fame (Cumming 2010: xi): internationally known clients, film stars and celebrities (regular attendants to fashion shows) are likely to grant credit and prestige to a designer’s collection. In this sense, the advertising of automobiles links its product to a specific aspect of social life that can be positively valued by the market sector.

Thus, this paper will show how advertisers skilfully intertwine these two areas in order to emphasise aspects of fashion that may be of interest to prospective automobile buyers, for instance, luxury, appreciation for design, craftsmanship, attention to detail, etc. In so doing, the next step is to delineate the theoretical framework that will help answer the following research questions: In what ways does the advertising text allude to fashion? How do fashion echoic elements work in the advertising of automobiles? What is the car advertisers’ attitude to fashion?

3. The theoretical framework

This part of the paper delineates the theoretical support for my approach to the use of fashion in automobile advertising. It consists of two subsections: beginning with the concept of metarepresentation, useful to explain the allusion

² <http://social.ford.co.uk/new-vips-unveiled-at-our-vignale-impressive-preview/>. Last access 18-12-2016.

³ <http://www.dsautomobiles.co.uk/ds-models/new-ds-3/design>. Last access 22-2-2017.

and attribution dimension of automobile advertising with respect to fashion, it is then followed by the notion of echo, essential to analyse the question of attitude.

3.1 Metarepresentation and Relevance Theory

As has already been indicated, RT does not draw a distinction between ordinary communication and persuasive communication, hence it adopts a unitary approach to the phenomena happening in each. It is my view that the notion of metarepresentation in RT, mainly applied to echo questions (Escandell-Vidal, 2002; Noh, 1998), metalinguistic negation (Noh, 2000; Yoshimura, 2013), indirect and free indirect reports, (Noh, 2000), indirect complaints (Padilla Cruz, 2010) and phatic utterances (Padilla Cruz, 2007) can also satisfactorily account for the use of fashion as a case of metarepresented discourse in automobile advertising.

The concept of metarepresentation plays a fundamental role in the relevance-theoretic approach to communication, where it is defined (Wilson, 2012: 230) as the use of one representation to represent another embedded within it. This can be illustrated in:

- (3) Mary says that in the long term Brexit will not be harmful to Britain's economy.

Example (3) is a case of overt metarepresentation, because by using "Mary says" the speaker indicates that she is reporting Mary's utterance. Furthermore, Wilson (2012: 243) states that "all varieties of metarepresentation [...] can be analysed in terms of a notion of representation by resemblance". Resemblances consist in the sharing of properties between representation and original. Two types can be distinguished (Wilson, 2012: 244): metalinguistic resemblance — which highlights the importance of formal or linguistic resemblances — and interpretive resemblance — which highlights the salience of semantic or logical resemblances between two representations. It is worth noting (Wilson, 2012: 244, 247) that resemblance is a question of degree, since linguistic metarepresentations "range from the fully explicit to the fully tacit". As will be shown in section 5, in the body of data that backs this paper, most texts are used to metarepresent other texts based on a combination of metalinguistic and interpretive resemblance. While the existence of superficial linguistic similarities

do not enhance interpretive resemblance, their absence leads the addressee to determine the level of resemblance following an inferential process. This process is guided by the Principle of Relevance.

Relevance is defined in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort. Cognitive or contextual effects refer to the cost of attention, memory and reasoning involved in comprehension. Such mental processes, similarly to all other biological processes, require a certain amount of energy. Sperber and Wilson (1995: 49) claim that “all human beings automatically aim at the most efficient information processing possible”, whether consciously or not; but efficiency can only be achieved through the smallest expenditure of resources. Based on the hypothesis that the human cognitive system is guided by minimising the amount of mental effort, RT postulates that relevance is the outcome of an asymmetrical relationship between cognitive effects and processing effort: the greater the cognitive effects, the greater the relevance of the input; yet the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance of the input (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 125-132; Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 609). This universal tendency of human cognition (i.e. to weigh effects against effort) is captured in the First, or Cognitive, Principle of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 260-266; Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 608-610). Because of the effort involved, information processing “will only be undertaken in the expectation of reward” (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 49). The reward comes in the form of cognitive effects, which result from altering the strength of already existing beliefs, cancelling them or adding new ones (Sperber and Wilson, 2012: 88). Therefore, when using an utterance, the communicator is indicating to the addressee that this stimulus is worth processing, or in RT’s terminology, it conveys the presumption of its own relevance. This is the idea enclosed in the Second, or Communicative, Principle of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 266-271; Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 610-14).

Being an inferential model of communication, RT draws a distinction between two kinds of implicatures: implicated premises and implicated conclusions (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 195; Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 615). The former are supplied by the addressee. They are either directly retrieved from memory or constructed during the interpretation process using assumption schemas

retrieved from memory. Implicated premises are the most easily accessible premises to be triggered by the recipient and are required to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation, that is, one consistent with the principle of relevance.

Implicated conclusions, in turn, are inferred from context and the explicit information provided by the utterance. Sperber and Wilson (1995: 195) explain that the addresser expects the addressee to derive (some of) them on the grounds that her utterance was meant to be manifestly relevant to him.

A crucial point about implicatures is that RT assumes that they come in varying degrees of strength; the strongest implicatures are those for which the communicator provides strong evidence, no matter whether the addressee is already aware of them. The weakest implicatures, however, invite a wider range of possible inferences, some of which may have been unintended. As Clark (2013: 237) specifies, it may well be that when the addresser does not provide much evidence is that she “may be intending to convey a certain drift or to steer the inference process in a certain direction rather than to convey a fairly precise set of assumptions”.

Admitting that advertising communication exemplifies covert communication, as argued in section 2.1, it is to be expected that the texts in our data differ from example (3), not only in the openness of their allusive function, but equally interestingly in the directness of their attributive use (i.e. who said or thought them). In effect, Crook (2004: 717-727) notes that, even though modern advertising is characterised by an increasing complicity between the advertiser and target audiences — which eventually leads to the use of more transparent or direct strategies —, copywriters tend to maximise the advert’s impact through insinuated claims, since less evocative ones “are more likely to receive a ‘so what?’ response” (Crook, 2004: 717). Hence, strategically relying on implicit communication, advertisers seek to give more responsibility to addressees and to ask from them a higher involvement in recovering the intended meaning. Consequently, instead of being overtly marked, more often than not, both the type and source of the original will be left to the reader to infer.

So far, I have introduced the notion of metarepresentation within the framework of RT, as well as the surrounding concept of resemblance in which it rests. At the same time, I have argued in favour of a heavily inferential process

in deriving the source and type of the metarepresented utterance in advertising communication. The next section will look at another aspect that has to be pragmatically resolved, namely, cases where the addresser's attitude to the attributed utterance must be treated as part of the communicated content.

3.2. Echoic rhetoric

As we have seen, utterances may achieve relevance when the addressee recognises their allusive nature and when he is able to attribute them to some source. But, in accordance with RT, relevance can also be attained "by conveying the speaker's attitude to an attributed utterance or thought" (Wilson, 2012: 249). Utterances that are relevant in these three ways are usually referred to as echoic (Sperber and Wilson, 2012: 93):

An echoic utterance indicates to the hearer that the speaker is paying attention to a representation [...]; it indicates that one of the speakers' reasons for paying attention to this representation is that it has been entertained (and perhaps expressed) by someone; it also indicates the speaker's attitude to the representation echoed.

Within the literature on RT, the concept of echoic utterance is essentially linked to the study of irony (Curcó, 2000; Piskorska, 2016; Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Wilson, 2006, 2013). This paper puts forward the hypothesis that, when using fashion in online automobile advertising, copywriters' claims are echoic in this threefold way; the difference lies in the type of attitude involved: since the effect of irony is to hold the utterance being echoed up to ridicule, the speaker's attitude will always be dissociative, that is, one of rejection or disapproval. But, as Sperber and Wilson (2012: 93) observe, "the speaker may express any one of an indefinite variety of attitudes to the representation echoed". Therefore, my argument is that, in echoing the discourse of fashion, the automobile copywriter will always take an endorsing attitude, which can range from approval to even reverence in an attempt "to command greater acquiescence than if she were merely to speak in her own voice" (Sperber and Wilson, 2012: 93).

Support for this claim can be found, on the one hand, in the purpose of the rhetorical strategies used in advertising, which "often incorporate a positive description of a particular product, service or idea being promoted" (Bhatia,

2004: 133). On the other hand, fashion designers usually gain recognition, admiration and esteem for their work since a high degree of perfection and expertise is required for a successful execution. Thus, fashion performs the role of an authoritative voice in automobile advertising. Attitude of this type is linked not so much to propositional content, but to feelings and emotions, that is, to tickle. Yus (2016) calls these non-propositional effects 'affective attitude' and claims them to be an essential part of what is overtly intended in the production of an utterance. Since one of the distinguishing features of advertising is the communication of (positive) feelings, this paper will show how RT provides a suitable framework to analyse and comprehend affective attitude or, to continue with the terminology introduced in section 2.1, tickle.

There remain a couple of issues not to be disregarded: firstly, the attitude expressed by the addresser may be to the form of the original or to its content. Secondly, in echoic utterances, stance may be overtly expressed, for example, using expressions like "I agree/disagree", "I adore/hate", "I am critical about", etc., or may be left to the hearer to infer. Once more, in line with the claim that advertising symbolises covert communication, it is to be expected that the process of determining the speaker's attitude to the representation echoed will be largely inferential.

4. The data

This study is based on the information gathered from the descriptions of vehicles, extracted from fourteen UK car manufacturers' websites — Aston Martin, Audi, BMW, Citroën, Ford, Jaguar, Lexus, Mercedes-Benz, Mini, Nissan, Renault, Vauxhall, Volkswagen and Volvo — throughout the year 2016. The selection process took as reference the 2015 list of Britain's best selling car brands⁴, which included a total of thirty manufacturers, with the only exception of Aston Martin. Consideration of this brand was motivated by its undisputable luxury nature, as well as by its British origin, in an attempt to balance the number of brand levels. However, the present work does not differentiate the rhetoric of vehicle type and brand.

⁴ <http://www.best-selling-cars.com/britain-uk/2015-full-year-britain-best-selling-car-brands-manufacturers/>.

Taking a broad outlook on fashion to include clothing, as well as accessories, jewellery and leather goods, the present study has also relied on a secondary corpus of data drawn from high fashion websites (Bulgari, Cartier, Chanel and Louis Vuitton) and large retail companies (Cosstores, Debenhams, Harrods and Lavishalice). This supplementary material was randomly selected and its collection did not obey any preconceived variables beyond the understandable need of providing a description of the items on sale. Still, this prerequisite is more easily met by high-fashion websites, where the products are often introduced in a careful, varied style, instead of the less sophisticated and more practical option of reducing words to a minimum or even dispense with them, more characteristic of fashion mass brands. Research has shown that consumers appreciate elaborate and painstaking presentations of the products, towards which they tend to develop positive attitudes and a willingness to pay premium prices (Hampel et al., 2012). This could explain the imbalance in the number of class- and mass-fashion websites that the present work has included. Yet it is not felt that this has biased the research in any way, nor that the purpose of the study has been distorted, since the fashion claims made in the empirical part of the work can be regarded as applying to fashion discourse in its broadest sense.

As for the function of this secondary material, it offers vital insight into the discourse of fashion: it provides examples against which to compare and illustrate the metalinguistic and interpretive resemblances of the texts used by automobile advertisers. The following section exemplifies how this task was carried out.

5. How automobile advertising echoes fashion discourses to its advantage

In the light of the relevance-theoretic concepts of metarepresentation and echo explained so far, this part of the paper examines the data gathered in order to demonstrate in what way car advertisers put into action the discourse of fashion and the usefulness of such a rhetorical strategy for their persuasive aims. At the level of content, the paper examines seven aspects that car advertisers appear to echo from fashion and that will provide the base for the

organisation of the subsections. In the interest of precision and given the already alluded research gap on the discourse of fashion on which to reference the analysis, the design-related claims extracted from car websites will be accompanied with same or similar claims obtained from fashion websites.

It should be borne in mind that the concept of echo has a vague nature, as “the thought being echoed need not have been overtly expressed in an utterance: it may be an unexpressed belief, hope, wish or norm-based expectation” (Wilson, 2013: 46). Exploring the possibility that parts of online automobile advertising texts are designed to encourage consumers to interpret them metarepresentationally suggests that copywriters have gained an insight into what the target audience may find relevant. However, as RT accepts, it does not equate with the idea that all consumers will necessarily access the echoic interpretation. In the course of the discussion that follows, it is to be expected that the various implications put forward will not be equally salient to potential readers, if activated at all. As a result of this disparity, varying degrees of appreciation of the aesthetic value of the automobile in question will be reached, with the consequent risk that the text’s meaning be diluted. Nonetheless, it is the covert nature of advertising communication that promotes asymmetries of this type. After all, if some potential addressees fail to trigger weak implications relative to the advertised vehicle as a fashionable asset, it may be an indication that such an interpretation is not relevant to them and, hence, little will have been lost in the process.

5.1 Timeliness

The label ‘timeliness’ refers here to one of society’s greatest concerns about fashion, namely, whether their items of clothing and accessories follow the current trends. Fashion discourses encourage consumers/wearers to base their purchasing decisions on whether or not these meet the prevalent dictates of fashion. This is illustrated in the sequences “will see you through the seasons in style” and “is the perfect casual layer for a wardrobe this season” contained in (4a,b), respectively. The underlying assumptions are that wearing a fashionable

item is a symbol of elegance and will make the wearer trendy, modern and stylish:

- (4) a. Folksworth is a luxurious take on Burberry's signature trench coats. [...] A timeless investment that will see you through the seasons in style.⁵
- b. This jumper from Maine is the perfect casual layer for a wardrobe this season.⁶

Consider now extract (2), used in the Introduction to this paper, repeated here as (5) for convenience:

- (5) Celebrated as being the UK's best-selling car of all time, the Ford Fiesta combines up to date technology with a range of fashionable colours and finishes, meaning it's perfectly on trend every season.⁷

Arguably, the expression "it's perfectly on trend every season" is formally similar to those in (4a,b), with which the potential reader is likely to be familiar. Resemblance with expressions such as those in (4a,b), together with phrases such as "fashionable colours and finishes", will permit the reader to situate (5) in the discourse of fashion and, following a path of least effort, to establish its allusive nature. Yet the question with (5) is that, unlike the chunks in (4a,b), it is not used to describe a piece of clothing but a car. Hence, to interpret (5) correctly and recover its intended meaning, the reader should be able to determine its adequacy to the new context. Even though there is no overt mark to signal that (5) is used to metarepresent another thought or utterance, in agreement with the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, the metalinguistic resemblance will help the addressee to start deriving implications that might be shared with examples such as those in (4a,b) and arrive at an interpretation where the Ford Fiesta, just as trendy clothing, fulfils the requirements of fashion. In this way, the car advertisement, rooted in the social

⁵ <http://www.harrods.com/product/folksworth-cashmere-trench-coat/burberry/00000000005382335?cat1=bc-burberry&cat2=bc-burberry-women>. Last access 20-10-2016.

⁶ http://www.debenhams.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/prod_10701_10001_020010722056_-1. Last access 27-11-2016.

⁷ <http://www.ford.co.uk/Cars/Fiesta>. Last access 2-8-2016.

nature of fashion vogue, echoes the discursive composition of fashion advertising, which routinely urges consumers to ascertain and adhere to shifting fashion trends. Possibly, though, this echoic interpretation is not only meant to invite the target audience to regard the car as a mere fashion accessory, it is much more than that. As vehicles are such expensive purchases, they are seldom changed seasonably, so they run the risk of falling out of fashion. When the car is described in fashion terms, however, car copywriters use this discourse as a kind of authoritative voice that has the virtue of reassuring the potential buyer, immersed in a fashion-aware society, that this vehicle is and will continue to be trendy and that, consequently, it can be considered a wise choice. These tend to be the features highlighted in good quality clothing (see in particular the reference to “a timeless investment” in (4a) above). Hence, thanks to the echoic strategy, further possible implications about the advertised car will have to do with its good quality, its durability and strength, its excellent and attractive design, its owner’s good and modern taste, etc.

5.2 ‘Dressed to kill’

The second element that car advertisers seem to have borrowed from fashion is the idea reflected in the English expression “dressed to kill”, which gives the title to this subsection. The online edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (<https://www.oed.com>, last access 12 June 2017) defines it as “wearing glamorous clothes intended to create a striking impression”. It is this last part of the definition, “a striking impression”, that I would like to develop here. Let’s have a look at the excerpts below, where group (6) belongs to fashion websites and group (7) to automobile websites. From now on, the pertinent sequences will be underlined for ease of reference:

- (6) a. This ankle boot in eye-catching metallic calf leather boasts a chunky heel for off-road wearability.⁸
- b. Enhance the sparkle and shine of this eye-catching look with gilded accessories.⁹

⁸ <http://uk.louisvuitton.com/eng-gb/products/star-trail-ankle-boot-014441>. Last access 25-11-2016.

- c. A stunning piece of Giuseppe Zanotti's work, the Cruel sandal showcases the Italian designer's bold, daring aesthetic. Standing tall on a sharp stiletto heel, the metal flames are sure to set your evening look alight.¹⁰
- d. This wallet comes exclusively from our Jeff Banks range and will make a lasting impression with each transaction.¹¹
- e. Wear with a leather biker jacket and black skinnies for a look that will turn heads.¹²
- (7) a. Make a lasting impression. Hello, goodbye. With its distinctive chrome front grille and eye-catching led rear lights, the stylish Nissan Micra city car is designed to impress – whether it's coming or going.¹³
- b. Insignia also uses low-mounted fog lights and 'eagle eye' headlamps, with LED daytime running lights as standard, to offer a strong and head-turning road presence.¹⁴
- c. Now, thanks to the Nissan Design Studio personalisation range, you can choose to stand out from the crowd.¹⁵
- d. The A-Class SE with 16" alloy wheels in a 5-twin spoke design, beltline strips in chrome optic and a single-louvre grille in body colour makes a strong impression with new styling features inside and out.¹⁶

⁹ <http://www.harrods.com/product/sequin-tulle-dress/oscar-de-la-renta/00000000005382302?cat1=new-women&cat2=new-womens-new-season>. Last access 9-10-2016.

¹⁰ <http://www.harrods.com/product/cruel-flame-sandal/giuseppe-zanotti/00000000005139918>. Last access 27-11-2016.

¹¹ http://www.debenhams.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/prod_10701_10001_076010760260_-1. Last access 10-11-2016.

¹² <http://www.harrods.com/product/studded-leather-combat-boots/valentino/00000000005338507>. Last access 6-12-2016.

¹³ <https://www.nissan.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/micra-2016>. Last access 3-12-2016.

¹⁴ <http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/cars/insignia-5-door/overview.html>. Last access 30-12-2016.

¹⁵ <https://www.nissan.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/note/design.html>. Last access 30-12-2016.

¹⁶ http://www.mercedes-benz.co.uk/content/unitedkingdom/mpc/mpc_unitedkingdom_website/en/home_mpc/passengercars/home/new_cars/models/a-class/a-class/overview/model-lines.html. Last access 30-12-2016.

As can be appreciated in (6a-e), the 'striking impression' that clothes may cause has been variously rephrased as "eye-catching", "to set your evening look alight", "to make a lasting impression" or "to turn heads". Automobile advertising includes very similar sequences to these, as evidenced in (7a-d). Doubtlessly, both fashion and cars share an aesthetic value that could be at the root of the similarity between those expressions. Nonetheless, extracts (7a-d) become additionally relevant inasmuch as they can be understood to echo the power and the socially contingent nature of fashion discourse. In the first place, the importance of dressing to impress is a social and cultural construct that relates to assumptions such as "you care about your appearance", "when you care about your appearance, you dress according to the occasion", "dressing appropriately makes you feel confident", "choosing the right outfit makes you look beautiful", etc. On the other hand, the discourse of fashion, as part of the development of a capitalist society, stimulates consumption (Lipovetsky, 1987). From this viewpoint, assumptions about dressing to impress have to do, for example, with the significance of spending money to project a well-groomed appearance of yourself, the idea that your outward aspect can symbolise your social status or that the use of your clothing and accessories is a way of differentiation. Owing to the pervasiveness of these fashion assumptions, automobile advertising exploits the positive perceptions that the intended audiences link with fashion, namely, the allure of an attractive presence, the admiration it gains, the discerning judgement about what is aesthetically pleasing, and so on and so forth. To this respect, and in agreement with the principle of relevance, sequences like (7a-d) above can be understood as echoing an existing representation in commercial discourses on fashion that will be strategically serviceable to car copywriters' communicative goals. The invocation of this existing discourse can smooth the meaning-making process by reducing processing effort, at the same time as it allows the addressee to arrive at a reading where driving the advertised car is as glamorous as wearing an elegant dress/suit, because the car itself is fashionable.

What is to be gained from an attributive and attitudinal interpretation along these lines? The cognitive effects are greater: the cars are no longer mere vehicles but are regarded as fashion objects, and as such they may display new

qualities, for example, beauty, perfection or luxury, thus earning admiration and prestige. In fact, research on social psychology and sociology has noticed that aesthetic value often correlates with an external motivation to acquire luxury products, among which rate fashion and cars. Since both are publicly visible, and accepting that “luxury is a question of seeing and being seen” (Mortelmans, 2005: 517), their acquisition can be a strategy to enhance consumers’ prestige and self-image (Hudders and Vyncke, 2008: 30; Pitta and Katsanis, 1995: 61). This being the case, it seems worth drawing attention to the fact that car copywriters use this rhetorical strategy (i.e. to echo the aesthetic power of fashion) not only to strengthen the luxurious appreciation of class brands (7d), but also, as illustrated in (7a-c), to invite this same luxury connection with class brands.

5.3 Design and comfort

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* attributes to the French designer Coco Chanel the maxim “luxury must be comfortable, otherwise it is not luxury”¹⁷. Although one may be unaware of the authorship of this motto, it is largely accepted by most consumers that comfort and design form a satisfactory and desirable combination in fashion. Such seems to be the spirit captured in those fashion examples in (8):

- (8) a. Combining elegance and comfort, this oversized cashmere turtleneck top has an asymmetrical shape with the back cut longer than the front.¹⁸
- b. A Parisian design house of Russian decent, luxury brand Yves Salomon present a winter collection of durable and stylish weather defenders. Experts in their craft, this parka jacket features a detachable quilted inner layer trimmed in the softest rabbit fur and a drawstring hood with a raccoon fur ruff. The long line jacket fastens by

¹⁷ <https://global.britannica.com/biography/Coco-Chanel#ref1005206>. Last access 20-1- 2017.

¹⁸ <http://uk.louisvuitton.com/eng-gb/stories/rtw-women-cruise-2017-looks#/look05>. Last access 8-11-2016.

zip and concealed chunky button placket to ensure ultimate comfort and warmth, even in the harshest of climates.¹⁹

- c. Crafted from a wool blend for exceptional comfort, it [this blazer] is finished in grey and features a sophisticated checked texture.²⁰

Underlying assumptions for (8a-c) would include, for instance, that elegance is sophisticated, that it symbolises good quality or that this good quality makes elegant garments comfortable. Following a relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, readers could trigger implications about the pleasurable feelings of wearing good quality garments or the certainty that expensive things in general, and expensive clothing in particular, can make your life easier. This is true because, partly due to the fine materials and neat finishes, this clothing lasts longer, does not fall apart so easily, fits in nicely and its careful tailoring looks good on you. All of this, in turn, sets your mind at rest about your appearance, makes you happy and reassures you that investing in quality garments is worth it.

Let's now turn to those examples drawn from car advertising, where, as will be seen, the design-comfort pair is replicated:

- (9) a. The inside of your DS 3 combines subtle sophistication with exceptionally pure design lines and excellent comfort.²¹
- b. From the optimised driving position with ergonomic anti-fatigue seats, the smart grouping of controls and savvy storage, the All New Nissan Micra has been designed to maximise your comfort.²²
- c. Blending sumptuous materials with elegant, ergonomic design, the E-Class cabin provides a supremely comfortable, relaxed and sophisticated driving environment.²³

¹⁹ <http://www.harrods.com/product/fur-lined-cord-waist-jacket/yves-salomon/00000000005298511?cat1=new-men&cat2=new-men-coats-and-jackets>. Last access 6-12-2016.

²⁰ http://www.debenhams.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/prod_10701_10001_114010700463+BT_-1. Last access 7-12-2016.

²¹ <http://www.dsautomobiles.co.uk/ds-models/ds-3/design/interior-comfort>. Last access 8-1-2016.

²² <https://www.nissan.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/micra/design.html>. Last access 30-12-2016.

All extracts (8a-c) arguably share with (9a-c) the propositions about elegance, sophistication, good quality and comfort. My point is that because of this background knowledge and thanks to the linguistic metarepresentation shown in (9a-c) — resembling fashion expressions close to, for example, those contained in (8a-c) with which the target audience may be familiar —, the car advertising claims in (9a-c) have an echoic nature. The interpretive hypothesis seems relevant in the automobile discourse: cars embody long-term acquisitions, which usually involve considerable investment, where people spend a part of their (daily) time; therefore, comfort is not a minor issue. In echoing fashion claims, car advertisers will make the intended interpretation accessible enough to be picked out by the potential customers. It can be argued that in linking “design” and “sophistication” (9a), intensifying comfort (9b) or joining “sumptuous materials”, elegance, design and sophistication (9c), car copywriters make an appeal to the senses, to what is beautiful and smart and, hence, examples (9a-c) can be conceptualised as tickle. From a relevance-theoretic approach, this appeal to emotions through fashion will make less salient other possible implications relative to the uncompromising comfort of domestic objects (e.g. slippers, loose clothes) but that do not look so captivating. Accordingly, these passages can be taken to add evidence to Martínez-Camino and Pérez-Saiz’s (2012: 456) observation that tickle advertising often channels the uniqueness of the brand through a more or less weak association with “a glamorous lifestyle”.

5.4. Versatility

Versatile pieces are those that can be adapted to many different occasions. In fact, versatility is a highly desired quality when buying fashion items and one that is usually emphasised in order to make the product more appealing, as illustrated in the following extracts:

²³ http://www.mercedes-benz.co.uk/content/unitedkingdom/mpc/mpc_unitedkingdom_website/en/home_mpc/passengercars/home_new_cars/models/e-class/e-class-saloon/facts/interior.html. Last access 30-12-2016.

- (10) a. An ideal piece [Burberry's Emelia lace dress] for dressing up and down, it would pair well with both heels and ballet pumps.²⁴
- b. Crafted in luxe patent leather, it [Saint Laurent's Tribute sandal] will see you from a cool morning brunch date to sophisticated drinks downtown with ease.²⁵
- c. Ideal for everyday use, this luxuriously soft Monogram Denim shawl is subtle and very feminine.²⁶

Underlying assumptions in (10a-c) are that these items can be worn in multiple ways, that different looks can be created with them. Following a path of least effort, implications that can be drawn from these examples have to do with regarding such versatile pieces as a good investment to make you look stylish, to dress well, to get your money's worth, etc.

In like manner, versatility is claimed for vehicles, as exemplified in (11a-b):

- (11) a. From the rear, the new bumper continues the dynamic shape, while the L-shaped LED lights (as standard) are set wide apart, ensuring a distinctive look even when the sun goes down.²⁷
- b. Colour Collections. Whether you're looking for an urban adventure in Manhattan, a trip to the beach in Miami or an expedition in Arizona, Renault Captur has a collection for every life you lead.²⁸

Bearing in mind the argumentation that has just been suggested for the case of versatility in fashion, it is my contention that examples in (11a-b) illustrate cases of interpretive metarepresentation. As already explained, this is a type of relationship that holds between an utterance and the source it aims to represent and which increases the salience of semantic resemblances. Since advertising

²⁴ <http://www.harrods.com/product/emelia-lace-dress/burberry/00000000005223260>. Last access 27-11-2016.

²⁵ <http://www.harrods.com/product/tribute-patent-sandal/saint-laurent/00000000004542075>. Last access 20-11-2016.

²⁶ <http://uk.louisvuitton.com/eng-gb/products/monogram-denim-shawl-001310#M71376>. Last access 4-12-2016.

²⁷ https://www.bmw.co.uk/en_GB/new-vehicles/3/saloon/2015/design.html. Last access 26-10-2016.

²⁸ <https://www.renault.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/captur/design.html>. Last access 3-7-2016.

instantiates covert communication, the source is not overtly marked. Even more so, strict identity between the source representation and its metarepresentation is not to be expected, “it may be a paraphrase or summary of the original” or “may pick out one of its implications”, remembering Wilson’s words (2013: 46). Following a relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, potential readers will probably identify how representations in (11a-b) share logical and contextual implications with examples such as those in (10a-c): versatile items are to be preferred over non-versatile ones, they are more reliable and make your life easier, that is to say, one can depend on versatile items, they are perfectly suited for almost any occasion, they combine easily with other elements, one can never go wrong with them, they are definitive items that have outlasted trends, they are certain to make one look smart, etc. In fact, using fashion as a source yields more contextual effects than if the same advertising claims were understood not metarepresentationally because a car’s versatility can indeed be taken for granted (i.e. cars are conceived to take owners nearly anywhere no matter the circumstances), but when fashion is echoed it bestows on the car a touch of style, it transforms the car into the perfect (fashion) complement. Moreover, bearing in mind that both fashion and automobiles project their wearer/owner’s self image, such advertising claims achieve a remarkable side effect, since additional implications could be triggered about the style-sensitive type of people who own the car in question, their good taste, the admiration they win, etc. Expressions like “a car that suits your style perfectly”, “so your car can be just as stylish as you” or “the car that truly reflects you”, found in the sample of car websites, can reinforce this analysis.

5.5 Organising space

As happened in section 5.4, the car advertising examples in the present section largely bear a semantic resemblance, rather than a formal one, namely, the customary presentation of how to organise space in bags, clutches, briefcases and the like. Let’s begin with some fashion extracts:

- (12) a. Featuring numerous compartments with internal colour contrasts, it [this purse from Mantaray] is ideal for organising cash, cards and other important essentials with style.²⁹
- b. Black calfskin briefcase [...]. Interior: burgundy fabric lining, one newspaper pocket, one iPad pocket, one telephone pocket, two pen loops, one zipped pocket.³⁰
- c. Perfectly sized for evening essentials, the plexiglass bag is beautifully painted with white tulips, while the structured box design lends a vintage finish.³¹

The point I would like to make is that these excerpts are important not only because they illustrate that the amount of space available is a prerequisite when we are looking for a bag, but because in order to give the buyer a clear idea of what this space should be, they offer examples of what exactly can be put inside them. This is the key element that will help potential clients decide if the bag or briefcase in question is suitable for their needs. But alongside these assumptions, details of what can be placed inside seem relevant to potential consumers in other respects, for instance, design. Thus, in agreement with the principle of relevance and following a path of least effort, addressees will be able to derive implications about the expected utility of placing things in a visible place, the usefulness and exploitation one can make of a well-organised bag, the advantages of a bag that has been designed with real users in mind, etc.

Consider now the examples taken from car advertising where the boot is described:

- (13) a. From buggies to camping equipment, with the new MINI Countryman you can fit more in.³²

²⁹ http://www.debenhams.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/prod_10701_10001_093010748602_-1. Last access 17-10-2016.

³⁰ <http://www.cartier.co.uk/en-gb/collections/accessories/leather-goods/bags>. Last access 7-3-2016.

³¹ <http://www.harrods.com/product/plexiglass-tulip-top-handle-bag/dolce-and-gabbana/00000000005365813>. Last access 5-12-2016.

³² https://www.mini.co.uk/en_GB/home/explore/new-mini-countryman.html. Last access 2-12-2016.

- b. The luxury of space. F-TYPE Coupé's generous storage capacity of up to 408 litres is large enough to accommodate a full set of luggage or up to two sets of golf clubs.³³
- c. Whether it's baggage or bikes you need to carry – the Note has you covered. The flexiboard allows you to create different luggage compartments and at the flick of a switch. The rear seats fold and move forward to create even more space, so you can pile in items up to 1.7m long.³⁴
- d. Luggage Net. Securely hold light items in place in your boot with this elastic luggage net, which offers an easy to use storage solution for your ADAM.³⁵

Holding that interpretive resemblance is resemblance in content between a representation and its source and that in advertising communication the source is rarely overtly marked, it is left to the reader to determine the origin of (13a-d). To claim that there exists semantic and logical resemblance between examples as those in (12a-c) and (13a-d) means that the implications specified for the former apply to some extent to the latter. An interpretation along these lines for (13a-d) yields a number of contextual effects, namely, the boot of a car is no longer an empty, impersonal space measured in litres but the result of a carefully designed process. It is space that can be organised according to its owner's specific needs. Even though these references to design can be simply understood as practical or reason appeals, I would like to suggest that they can coexist along with an emotional reading.

In virtue of the specifications contained in the car excerpts — “from buggies to camping equipment” (13a), “a full set of luggage or up to two sets of golf clubs” (13b), “baggage or bikes” (13c), “light items” (13d) —, the target audience can arrive at an interpretation where the boot of the car is described as echoing a bag interior, illustrated in samples (12a-c). This is interesting since

³³ <http://www.jaguar.co.uk/jaguar-range/f-type/features/interior.html>. Last access 4-12-16.

³⁴ <https://www.nissan.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/note/design.html>. Last access 30-12-2016.

³⁵ <http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/cars/adam-rocks/overview.html>. Last access 5-12-2016.

there is the underlying assumption that bags are an accessory closely associated with women's individual, intimate possessions. Hence, the interior of a bag represents something deeply private to its owner and is full of mystique. Accessing the reading of (13a-d) as a metarepresentation of the suggested kind can lead the intended readers to trigger implications about the boot of the car as a private space, as reflecting its owner's individuality, as a safe place to put their personal, cherished possessions. Simultaneously, another issue may be at stake here, namely, the assumption that a meticulously arranged bag interior is likely to be accompanied by a well-constructed and beautiful handbag exterior. Thus, the target audience may arrive at the interpretation that a carefully designed boot will certainly be convenient to use, but the vehicle's outwards appearance may also be pleasing to look at. Therefore, when car advertisers opt for choices like those in (13a-d), they can also invite a design-related echoic interpretation that appeals to emotions and that hopefully will increase in potential customers the ability to respond to aesthetic stimuli.

5.6 Colours

Colours acquire an enormous significance in fashion. They appear in startling shades, attract the attention of consumers every season, reflect the evolution of taste and, hence, are seen as undisputable signs of what is and is not on trend. To maintain this illusion of novelty and surprise inherent in fashion, designers appear to engage in a never-ending race to bring forth new names for tones, as illustrated below:

(14) Red is present in the motifs and tweeds of the Cruise collection, in shades of carmine, scarlet, vermilion, ruby, crimson and amaranth.³⁶

From a pragmatic viewpoint, such variety in colour naming is likely to make the reader trigger implications about up-to-datedness, innovation, creativity and stylishness, but also about the high level of dexterity required to produce those subtle hues, the precision needed to duplicate colours found in nature, the complexity of the dyeing processes involved, etc. Often, consumers' first-hand

³⁶ <http://chanel-news.chanel.com/en/home.html>. Last access 22-12-16.

experience suggests that the quality of clothing items is largely dependent on the quality of the dyeing processes, being responsible for how clothes withstand wear and tear. This is not a minor issue, since research has found that factors like the intensity of illumination, humidity, temperature and atmospheric pollution can affect the stability of colours (Nacowong and Saikrasun, 2016: 2).

Car manufacturers transfer this diversification of colours to the automobile's body paint. By way of exemplification, consider (15a-b) below, which can be regarded as echoic according to RT comprehension heuristics: firstly, the allusion to fashion is supported by the fact that the shades of blue may be considered similar to example (14) and, accordingly, invite implications about innovation, sophistication and elaboration. Interestingly, attribution to fashion as a source is particularly easy to recover in (15b), since the expression "powder blue" refers to pastel tones, so fashionable in clothes these days. Furthermore, if the interpretation of (15a-b) is regarded as conveying the addresser's endorsing attitude towards fashion, it gains in contextual effects, namely, the consideration of these cars as fashionable, stylish and modern. Special significance can be assigned to the use of the French expression *à la mode* in (15b) since French fashion stands for glamour, elegance and prestige (Chrisman-Campbell, 2011). Thus, activation of these implications would mean transferring these qualities to the car and its owners.

(15) a. (...) a fresh choice of colours (such as Mediterranean Blue, which particularly accentuates the 'Sport' model's key features) round off the powerful look of the world's most distinctive sports saloon.³⁷

b. With its Powder Blue exterior and light interior, Fashion Twingo is great for people looking for a cute and *à la mode* car.³⁸

But the presence of colours in cars is also noteworthy in their upholstery, as reflected in (16):

(16) Geneva concept car features Brandy-coloured fabric and Moroccan-trimmed seats. The same colour appears on the standard leather steering

³⁷ http://m.bmw.co.uk/en_gb/bmw-cars/3-series/saloon/design. Last access 6-4-2016.

³⁸ <https://www.renault.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/twingo/design.html>. Last access 20-5-2016.

wheel, and the leather trim can be carried over to the handbrake and gearshift as an optional extra. All new is the alternative Coffee Bean design. A rich brown, highlighted by contrasting blue stitching, sets the tone. The instrument panel is covered in Coffee Bean Brown, matching the Cocoa Brown velour floor_mats.³⁹

It is my argument that (16) echoes fashion not only because of the presence of fashion terms (elaborate shades of colour, materials, decoration) — which in themselves can be relevant enough to be considered metalinguistic elements resembling those of fashion descriptions — but also because it specifies how to match or contrast colours and textures in the car's interior. Knowing how to combine shades and fabrics lies at the foundation of fashion (Dariaux, 2004; Sommers, 1988). Thus, the intended reader, in agreement with the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, will be able to arrive at an interpretation where (16) is also understood as interpretive resemblance. Additionally, by choosing to present the car along these lines, the advertiser shows a positive attitude towards design and fashion in general. The endorsement of fashion descriptions reveals a car manufacturer aware of style, elegance and innovation, features that will be transposed to the automobile thus advertised.

5.7 Fashion terminology

Fashion comprises two overlapping spheres, on the one hand, it is an article of commerce waiting to be purchased by the consumer/wearer, but it also consists of an activity developed by professionals, the disciplinary community who elaborate their product (e.g. clothing, accessories, leather goods, jewellery) and engage in peer-to-peer communication. As does any other specialised field, fashion has its own terminology. There is a wide array of terms included in the online advertising of automobiles that refer to decorative features: detailing, embossed, embroidered, insert, inlay, highlight, pinstripe, piping, quilted, (contrast/top) stitching, woven, worsted, etc. Some of them appear in the excerpts below:

³⁹ <http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/cars/adam-rocks/overview.html>. Last access 28-10-2016.

- (17) a. A discreet chrome-finish DS logo in an embossed black DS setting appears on the side.⁴⁰
- b. On XJ Portfolio and XJ Autobiography models the leather upholstery has a sophisticated new Diamond Quilted Stitch pattern for the last word in luxury.⁴¹
- c. For the Sport model, the intricate, detailed woven cloth Corner with contrast stitching in red or grey adds a crafted sophistication to the interior.⁴²

The specialised nature of items such as those in (17a-c) may help the copywriter convey the intended echoic interpretation. The presence of these terms may be relevant to the potential readers in such a way that, following a path of least effort, it will be possible to identify their origin as fashion items and interpret them as metalinguistic elements in the discourse of car advertising. Accordingly, (17a-c) can be understood as bearing an interpretive resemblance with fashion claims about decoration and ornament of fashion pieces. Such an interpretation is rich in contextual effects since it will permit potential readers to start deriving implications about the accomplishment, level of dexterity and accuracy required to handle and decorate the raw and man-made materials found in these automobiles. Through this rhetorical strategy addressees are likely to access an interpretation where the design of these automobiles has been planned and executed delicately, patiently and with precision. Note that the ideas of rigour or precision are central to the automobile industry, but by echoing them through the discourse of fashion, copywriters manage to convey feelings of pleasant subtleness, softness and gentleness, which would be unattainable through technology alone.

A second aspect to be dealt with in this part of the paper is the echoic use of jewellery to describe the car wheels. In the broad approach to fashion defended here, jewellery typifies another specialised manifestation of the fashion industry.

⁴⁰ www.citroen.uk.com/ds3. Last access 5-4-2016.

⁴¹ <http://www.jaguar.co.uk/jaguar-range/xj/features/interior.html>. Last access 27-4-2016.

⁴² https://www.bmw.co.uk/en_GB/new-vehicles/1/5-door/2015/design.html. Last access 30-12-2016.

Jewels perform a decorative function and, due to the properties of their materials, patterns and sizes, they often symbolise status. The discussion will be illustrated considering examples taken from some fashion websites (18a-b) and from automobile websites (19a-d):

- (18) a. Torcello platinum round brilliant cut diamond ring.⁴³
- b. Must de Cartier cufflinks with C de Cartier decor in palladium-finish sterling silver. Dimensions: 20.5 mm long x 15.7 mm wide.⁴⁴
- (19) a. Create a look that matches your personal style by choosing from a range of specially designed wheels, including alloys. 16" 10x2-spoke Luster Nickel-finish alloy wheel.⁴⁵
- b. 18" x 7.5J '5-V-spoke' design titanium finish, diamond cut alloy wheels with 225/35 R18 tyres.⁴⁶
- c. APOLLO - 19" diamond cut alloy wheels.⁴⁷
- d. 8-spoke silver, twin-spoke silver, titan gloss diamond cut.⁴⁸

When the car advertiser decides to describe the vehicle's wheels as in (19a-d), including materials like nickel, titanium or silver, finishes like diamond-cut or sizes, she probably wants to show to the addressee that she has in mind utterances like those in (18a-b); furthermore, by echoing these or similar sentences, she also wants to indicate her attitude towards them. As previously shown, in advertising communication all of this is not linguistically encoded, but rather left to the reader to infer.

⁴³ http://www.bulgari.com/en-gb/bridalconfigurator/bridal?model=Torcello_CO01&price=3090_174600&carat=0.3_2.65&colors=D&clarities=IF. Last access 29-12-2016.

⁴⁴ <http://www.cartier.co.uk/en-gb/collections/engagement/selections/wedding-day-gifts-for-him/t1220227%20c%20de%20cartier%20decor%20cufflinks.html>. Last access 29-12-2016.

⁴⁵ <http://www.ford.co.uk/Cars/Focus/Gallery>. Last access 20-12-2016.

⁴⁶ <https://www.audi.co.uk/content/dam/audi/production.html>. Last access 20-12-2016.

⁴⁷ <https://www.renault.co.uk/vehicles/new-vehicles/kadjar/models/dynamique-s-nav.html>. Last access 18-11-2016.

⁴⁸ <http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/cars/corsa-3-door/overview.html>. Last access 16-3-2016.

Therefore, faced with examples (19a-d), potential readers of these online car advertisements will operate in accordance with the principle of relevance and start deriving implications that lead them to recover the interpretation meant by car manufacturers. Specialised items (i.e. materials, finishes and sizes) such as those underlined in (19a-d) may help readers to trigger implications about their attributes in jewellery, for example, their strength, beauty, thickness, value, sparkling nature, etc. Interpreting these terms metalinguistically and the sentences in (19a-d) as metarepresentations indicates that the addresser believes that these wheels were described or conceived by an expert in jewellery. Moreover, in echoing the jeweller's utterances or beliefs, the communicator expresses her attitude towards them, which, again, will be the addressee's responsibility to recover. Given the symbolic power of jewels and their beauty, the most relevant interpretation will be to consider that the car advertiser endorses the opinion echoed. This will permit the addressee to arrive at an interpretation where the characteristics of the car wheels are seen as strong, beautiful, resistant, shiny, and so on and so forth. At the same time, it will be possible to yield contextual effects about the attention to detail, precision and craftsmanship involved in the jewellers' work and to see how these features are equally pertinent for the wheel-making process, transforming the car into a safe, reliable and precious object.

6. Conclusion

With the help of the theoretical model of RT — in particular, the concepts of metarepresentation and echo —, this paper has examined the use of fashion discourse as a rhetorical strategy in the online advertising of automobiles. Even though these RT notions have been mainly applied to the study of phenomena like irony, free indirect reporting and the like, the work shows how they can also be very effective in accounting for situations where addressers encourage addressees to interpret a text as if it had been issued or entertained by a third party — in the cases under study by a fashion-wise person/designer. Given the covert nature of advertising communication, as well as its intrinsic persuasive quality, the texts analysed are not infused with overt references to the sources they allude; in contrast, copywriters appear to rely on a combination of formal

features and propositional content in order to hint at the discourse of fashion, inviting readers to reckon on their background knowledge and enhancing their responsibility in arriving at the advertisement's intended meaning. Furthermore, the notion of echo has proved especially advantageous in allowing an explanation of how copywriters can be taken to endorse an authoritative opinion (i.e. an expert's fashion claim) on their product, which will ultimately redound in a new, positive appreciation of the automobile. Additionally, the decision to particularise on online automobile advertising and fashion has offered the opportunity to discover how car advertisers take advantage of the current social relevance of fashion and thus to foster a modern, trendy and elegant interpretation of their brands, but it has also revealed itself as an intelligent and delicate strategy to strengthen assumptions about the high level of skill, expertise and precision that exists behind an object on which passengers' lives depend.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the rhetorical import of echoing fashion in online automobile advertising within the framework of Relevance Theory. The study embraces the concepts of metarepresentation and echo and expands them beyond traditional relevance-theoretic limits (e.g. the analysis of irony, free indirect reporting or metalinguistic negation) in order to show how they can successfully explain that design-related passages of car advertising will achieve relevance via the addressee recognising their allusive nature, attributing them to some source and identifying the addresser's attitude towards them. Endorsing the view that advertising exemplifies covert communication, it is to be expected that linguistic metarepresentations will not be fully explicit, but rather be left to the reader to infer.

Keywords: Relevance Theory; Metarepresentation; Echo; Fashion discourse; Automobile advertising.

Highlights

- Fashion discourse is used rhetorically in automobile advertising.
- Rhetorical choices are analysed as echoic.
- Rhetorical choices consist of metalinguistic resemblances.
- Rhetorical choices consist of interpretive resemblances.
- Using fashion enhances the positive appreciation of the car appealing to emotions.

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