Contextual advertising in online communication:

An investigation of relationships between multiple content types on a webpage

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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Ethical Approval

This research has obtained ethical approval 09/154 from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 6 August 2009.

Abstract

As part of the promotional mix, advertising plays a significant role in a company's or organisation's communication with its consumers and stakeholders. In order to inform consumers about their products or services, marketers apply a variety of advertising strategies. One particular strategy is "contextual advertising", which refers to the strategic placement of advertisements in an editorial environment whose theme is relevant for the promoted product or service (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 492). Also in advertising research, contextual advertising received a considerable amount of attention. Scholars have investigated the effectiveness of contextual advertising in online and offline media. Researchers as well as practitioners have particularly focused on content-based relationships between advertisements and the theme of the editorial environment in which the advertisement is placed. With a focus on online media, the present study aimed to investigate this content-based relationship but also to examine what other types of relationships between the different contents on a webpage the user constructs.

Advertising has also been investigated in the area of semiotics. Several scholars analysed advertisements in order to reveal their meaning-affordances. A second interest in the present study derives from semiotic studies and theories, which emphasise the individual's significance in the meaning-making process but also exclude the individual from their analysis. A potential contradiction could be seen here and by investigating how users interpret a particular webpage, this study aimed to examine what insights an analysis can provide that is solely focused on the webpage user.

In order to capture users' interpretations of a webpage's contents and to investigate what types of relationships between these contents users construct semi-structured interviews with six participants were conducted. The

participants were invited to look at a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. Following the interviews, the participants' responses were transcribed, categorised and analysed.

Findings from the study revealed that several participants constructed relationships between advertisements and the editorial content based on content-similarity but also on design-similarity as well as their personal knowledge about sponsorship relationships and income-investment relationships. Personal knowledge also appeared to be important for the interpretation of the webpage. The participants' interpretation of the webpage were also guided by their personal interest in the contents, their individual contexts like socio-cultural background, experiences and beliefs as well as environmental factors such as time and the layout of the interview location.

The results of the study support the significant role of the individual in the process of meaning making and further contribute to an extended understanding of contextual advertising. Practical suggestions for the advertising area and future research were also identified.

1. Introduction

This present research follows two main interests. The first interest refers to contextual advertising; an advertising strategy that has enjoyed considerable interest in advertising practice as well as advertising research. Contextual advertising refers to the strategic placement of an advertisement in online and offline media vehicles, whose theme is relevant to the promoted product or service (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 492). For example, an advertiser may place a shampoo advertisement on a beauty website or an advertisement that promotes clothing in a fashion magazine. With this strategy, advertisers aim at narrow-targeting their audience (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 492).

In advertising research, several scholars have analysed the effects of contextual advertising on the audience. Research has been done in online environments to investigate how the audience perceives an advertisement that promotes the same product category as the website in which it is embedded (Cho, 1999; Shamdasani, Stanaland, & Tan, 2001). In offline media like television or print, contextual advertising has been investigated for instance when advertisement and editorial content deploy the same emotional appeals (Anckaert, Geuens, & De Pelsmaker, 2002).

When investigating or applying contextual advertising, it appears that many researchers and practitioners focus on content-based relationships between advertisements and the theme of the media vehicle in which the advertisement is embedded (e.g. Belch & Belch, 2009; Cho, 1999; Shamdasani, et al., 2001). With focus on the online environment, it is my concern in the present research to examine this content-based relationship but also to investigate what other types of relationships users of a webpage construct between the individual contents on a webpage, which I label in this research as *information modules.* In this research, I understand that the user constructs a "relationship", which is a

connection between the content-types (e.g. advertising and editorial content) placed on a webpage.

My second interest in this research derives from studies and theories in the area of semiotics, which stress the importance of the individual in the meaning-making process but also exclude the individual from the analysis of meaning-affordances in specific documents. This has been done for example with the investigation of the "hidden" meaning in advertisements under consideration of a semiotic approach (e.g. Beasley & Danesi, 2002; Jhally, Kline, & Leiss, 1990, 2004).

I can see in the proposition of the individual's significance but the simultaneous exclusion of the individual from the analysis of meaning-affordances in documents a potential contradiction. It is my intention in the present research to investigate what insights an analysis can provide that is solely focused on the user's interpretation of a webpage. For this, I also refer to the approach of multimodality, which proposes that humans experience meaning by utilising different communicative modes (Bateman, 2008; Finnegan, 2002; Guo, 2004; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Mavers, 2003; Norris, 2004; Yuen, 2004) such as gaze, spoken language or body posture.

In this research, I distinct between analyses that follow a system-centred approach and those that are based on a user-centred approach. With respect to the focus on the online environment, the system-centred approach refers to studies and theories that analyse a webpage in terms of how information is presented and what meaning-affordances a webpage provides. The user-centred approach, which I follow in this study, focuses on the webpage from the user's perspective and how the user interprets it.

Given the purpose of this research to explore contextual advertising in an online environment as well as to investigate the insights a user-centred analysis can provide I address the following two research questions:

- What types of relationships do the participants construct between the information modules that are placed on a webpage of the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

- How do the participants interpret the information modules placed on a selected webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

In order to investigate the user's interpretations of a webpage, I conducted semi-structured interviews with six participants, who were invited to look at a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. The webpage contained several advertisements, an editorial article and several functional components, like a menu bar or an email button. I applied a qualitative research approach as this allows me to capture the participant's subjective experiences with the webpage and enables me to investigate how the participant constructs meaning.

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following this introduction, I review in Chapter *Two* literature in the areas of marketing with focus on advertising, online advertising and contextual advertising; semiotics, under further consideration of social semiotics, geosemiotics as well as semiotics in the area of advertising research; and finally multimodality.

In Chapter *Three*, I outline the conceptual basis for this study. The aim of this chapter is to introduce basic definitions and explanations that derive from the literature presented in Chapter *Two*.

Chapter *Four* introduces the methodological approach adopted in this research. It is my intention to outline the qualitative research approach taken in

this study and to introduce the research design of this study as well as ethical concerns. I further describe the strategy for data analysis.

The actual data analysis is presented and discussed in Chapter *Five*. I conclude this chapter by answering the two research questions.

Finally, in Chapter *Six*, I provide a conclusion of the study. This includes a summary of the study findings and under consideration of limitations in this study, implications for advertising practice as well as for future research.

2. Literature review

The following chapter reviews the literature in relevant areas of scholarship. These areas are 1) marketing with focus on advertising and online advertising, in particular contextual advertising; 2) semiotics, in particular social semiotics, geosemiotics and semiotics in the context of advertising; and finally 3) multimodality.

This research is concerned with the analysis of a webpage, which includes advertisements as well as editorial content, from the user's perspective. I begin this review with literature that describes and explains marketing as a basic process in a company or organisation because marketing is the wider process in which advertising is usually placed. This further focuses on theories and studies that investigate websites in general as well as advertising in the online environment. Here, an emphasis is placed on contextual advertising.

I further identify the field of semiotics, especially social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988) as well as an approach called geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), the semiotics of place. The significance of these semiotic approaches for my study derives from their emphasis of the individual in the meaning-making process. I further introduce literature that is concerned with semiotic analysis of advertisements for this area is germane to the interest of this study.

In the final section of the literature review, I introduce multimodality, an approach that Jewitt and Kress (2003, p. 9) closely relate to social semiotics. Multimodality informs this research in terms of providing an approach that according to Norris (2004, p. 10) emphasises the significance of a variety of semiotic systems, such as colour or body posture, in human communication.

Multimodality further situates the individual and its meaning-making process in its cultural environment.

2.1 Marketing

According to Frain (1994, p. 1), the word "marketing" before the 1950s was generally a synonym for "selling". Since the 1950s however, marketing is regarded as a broader concept that not only includes selling, but also other management activities such as marketing research, product design and development, forecasting and planning and related financial functions (Frain, 1994, p. 1). Marketing in this 'new' sense is an organisation-wide approach that includes processes and activities from all different departments within an organisation. Frain (1994, p. 1) argues that the change of focus toward the customer by all different departments and activities of an organisation derives from the early 1950s when science and technology developed faster and more cost-effective production processes. Markets became more dynamic - people earned more, lived longer and travelled further and therefore tastes, preferences and fashions began to change more rapidly (Frain, 1994, p. 7). Information about customer preferences and needs began to be considered in the beginning of the production cycle rather than, as it was done before, at the end, when it was all about selling the product to the customer (Frain, 1994, p. 7).

According to Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 6), the American Marketing Association defines marketing as

> "[A]n organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stake holders."

A commonly known marketing concept is the *marketing mix.* Kotler (2003) describes the marketing mix as "a set of marketing tools the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market." (Kotler, 2003, p. 15) The

marketing mix includes four components, also known as the *4 P's*: product, price, place, and promotion (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 10). An organisation develops products according to identified customer needs. These products are offered to the customer at a certain price and are also made available through particular distribution channels (place). Finally the product is promoted in order to create awareness and interest. The fundamental function of marketing is to combine these four elements into a marketing strategy in order to generate exchange with customers in the marketplace (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 10).

Kotler (2003, p. 17) criticises that the 4 P's represent the sellers view and disregards the significance of the customer in the marketing process. He proposes the *4 C's*: customer solution, customer cost, convenience, and communication. He argues that "winning companies will be those that can meet customer needs economically and conveniently and with effective communication." (Kotler, 2003, p. 17)

The following table illustrates the 4 P's, product, price, place, and promotion, and Kotler's (2003, p. 17) 4 C's as well as several marketing variables:

Product Customer Solution	Price Customer Cost	Place Convenience	Promotion Communication
Product variety	List price	Channels	Sales promotion
Quality	Discounts	Coverage	Advertising
Design	Allowances	Assortments	Sales force
Features	Payment period	Locations	Public relations
Brand name	Credit terms	Inventory	Direct marketing
Packaging		Transport	
Sizes			
Services			
Warranties			
Returns			

Table 1: The 4 P's and 4 C's of the Marketing Mix; Adapted from Kotler (2003, p. 16)

According to Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 16), a marketers task is to strategically integrate and coordinate all marketing activities for an organisation. A concept that has become increasingly important since the 1980s within this context is the approach of *integrated marketing communications* (IMC). This concept refers to the practice in many companies to coordinate "the various promotional elements and other marketing activities that communicate with a firm's customers" (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 11). All marketing activities and processes have to be synchronised in order to present the promoted product or service as effective as possible for both the consumer (for example for gathering needed information) as well as the company (for instance to sell the product). Chaffey et al. (2006) describe integrated marketing communications as "the concept under which a company carefully integrates and co-ordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent message about the organisation and its

products." (p. 357) All different communications have to be logically and effectively connected in the short-term as well as in the long-term and all messages have to be mutually supportive and reinforcing (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 357). The overall aim is according to Belch and Belch (2009) the creation of a "consistent and unified image to the marketplace" (p. 11).

IMC further plays a significant role in the process of establishing brand identity (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 16). A brand is according to Keller (1998, p. 2)

"[...] a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition."

A major component in establishing and sustaining a brand is to create awareness of the brand (Keller, 1998, p. 87). Keller (1998, p. 88) differentiates between two aspects of brand awareness: brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition refers to the "consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue" (Keller, 1998, p. 88). Brand recall in contrast occurs when a consumer is able to retrieve the brand from memory when the consumer is exposed to a related issue like the product category or a purchase situation (Keller, 1998, p. 88)

Critics of marketing are concerned that marketing encroaches on customers' right to privacy (Christ, 2009c). This argument is based on the fact that in order to make important strategic marketing decisions, marketers need information about their target audiences. Often the most valuable information is about the customers' buying behaviour and what factors have an influence on their purchase decisions (Christ, 2009c). In order to get this information some marketers invade into the private sphere of customers (Christ, 2009c). Advanced technologies and sophisticated strategies allow marketers to track consumers' activities both in the Internet as well as in the offline world. Christ (2009c) notes

here that "[s]ome marketers do so using questionable practices, such as loading tracking software onto a user's computer, without the knowledge or permission of the user." Offline tracking occurs for example when retail stores match sales transactions to individual shoppers for instance when customers use purchase cards, also known as loyalty cards or discount cards (Christ, 2009c).

2.1.1 Internet marketing

Fisher, Jaworski, Mohammed and Paddison (2004, p. 4) define Internet marketing as

"the process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, and services that satisfy the goals of both parties."

Hansen and Kalyanam (2007) provide an introduction to the history of marketing in the Internet. They explain that in the early days of the Internet, commercial information or transactions were explicitly forbidden (Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007, p. 6). The first implementation of the Internet took place in 1969 and till the early 1990s it was used as a robust emergency military communication network and as an experimental communications system within the academic community (Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007, p. 6). Compared to technology standards today, the early Net was very slow, difficult to use and expensive. Computers and modems were expensive those days and access to the network was only possible through the submission of arcane commands. In the early 1990s the prohibition of commercial information was abolished and the Internet was made available to a much wider audience. One more fundamental breakthrough occurred with the development of the World Wide Web. Now it was possible to mix pictures, sounds and video with text combined with a much better usability. The navigation between webpages and sites became more intuitive for users (Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007, p. 7). With the spread of the Internet and the rise of the total number of users, the commercial use of the

Internet increased (Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007, pp. 10-11). Nowadays, the Internet is a constant part in the marketing strategy of many organisations (Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007, pp. 10-11).

The use of the web equips marketing communications with specific characteristics that distinct it from traditional marketing. Traditional media such as print, TV or radio are defined by Chaffey et al. (2006, p. 21) as *push media* because information is mainly conveyed unidirectional, from one company to many customers. The web on the other hand is an example of *pull media* since consumers usually visit a website when they have a defined need to do so independently from time and geographical location (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 21).

Chaffey et al. (2006, p. 350) state that an often named and investigated characteristic of the web is its interactivity. Without changing the medium, as it is necessary in traditional media, it is possible to create a dialog between the company or the website owner and its visitors (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 350). With respect to online marketing, this feature is essential for building long-term relationships between the marketer and the customer, for example by providing feedback or comment opportunities (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 350).

With focus on marketing in online environments, Coyle and Gould (2007) introduce the concept of *Internet integrated marketing communications* (I-IMC) (p. 69). This concept places the traditional IMC "within the Internet platform" as well as "within the overall promotional and marketing mix." (Coyle & Gould, 2007, p. 69) The authors argue that marketers need to pay considerable attention to online promotional tools, such as websites and banner advertisements because these tools have their own specifications, advantages and disadvantages and further become increasingly important to deliver marketing messages to the customer (Coyle & Gould, 2007, p. 86).

Of particular interest for the present study are researches that are concerned with how users perceive websites. These researches put the web user in the centre of their analysis and provide an insight into the factors that have an effect on users' perceptions and interpretations of websites.

Hwang, Lee and McMillan (2003) examined the effect of the quantity of structural features of a website, like online reservation tools, as well as perceptual factors, such as perceived interactivity, on the user's attitude toward the website. The aim was to investigate whether structural features or perceptual factors are better predictors for the users' attitude towards the website. The researchers only found little support for coherence between the quantity of structural features and the user's attitude toward the website (2003, p. 406). Perceptual factors in contrast appeared to be more effective for the prediction of how the user evaluates the website (2003, p. 406). Based on these findings, Hwang et al. (2003, p. 406) emphasise the significance of the user for the effectiveness of a website. Further, they conclude that there appears to be a difference between the user's perception of a website and the websites structural appearance (2003, p. 406).

Hwang, Lee and McMillan's (2003) proposition that the websites structural appearance might be different from the user's perception of the website, is supported by the findings of Lee, Lee, Kim and Stout's (2004) study. In order to investigate how users perceive identified key characteristics of websites, Lee et al. (2004) based their research on a "system-centred" analysis (p. 62), namely a web-based content analysis, with a "user-centred" analysis (p. 63) in the form of personal interviews. The findings of their research revealed a difference between the found key characteristics of a website, including the presence or absence of specific interactive elements, content and design elements, and the perceptions of these characteristics by the website user.

Also Dalal, Mishra, Patil, and Singh (2005) focused on the user in their analysis. They investigated the user's emotional perception of a single webpage rather than a complete website. The authors propose a model to investigate web user's reactions to a webpage. This model places two propositions: first, positive and negative feelings that are evoked by the webpage directly influence the user's evaluation of the webpage and his or her behavioural intentions (p. 32). Second, the user's attitude toward the webpage, mediates the effects of feelings and evaluations based on behavioural intentions (p. 32).

With focus on how users navigate on websites, Bellman and Rossiter (2004, p. 39) introduced the idea of a *website schema*. A website schema is defined by Bellman and Rossiter (2004, p. 39) as "the consumer's set of beliefs about information locations, and routes to those locations, for a specific website." The authors argue that through repeated visits of websites, consumers develop a generalized website schema, which they refer to when exposed to a new website in order to find the information they need (Bellman & Rossiter, 2004, p. 39). Bellman and Rossiter's (2004) notion of a website schema is relevant to my research because it is an approach that discusses how website user's use their own experiences in order to process the information given on the website they are visiting.

2.2 Advertising and Online advertising

As part of the promotion activities in the marketing mix, advertising plays a significant role in an organisation's communication with the target market (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 18). Belch and Belch (2009) define advertising as "any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor" (p. 18). Belch and Belch's (2009) definition clarifies that advertising time (e.g. the time to broadcast a TV-spot) or space (e.g. the space for a print advertisement in a magazine) has to be bought by the

advertiser. Advertising is, according to the authors, nonpersonal because it involves mass media, such as radio, TV or newspapers, in order to "transmit a message to a large group of individuals" (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 18). In general, advertising does not allow an immediate feedback from the message recipient (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 18; Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 555).

Advertising in general has been criticised in many ways. One critique is concerned about misleading claims about products. Advertisements often include claims that emphasise a certain level of value that actually does not exist (Belch & Belch, 2004, pp. 740-741; Christ, 2009a). Many critics further believe that consumers do not obtain sufficient information about the products or often receive only information that are favourable to the advertiser's position (Belch & Belch, 2009, pp. 740-741).

In some countries several organisations and associations, such as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in Great Britain, the European Food Safety Authority or other users' associations and consultative councils, provide a certain level of protection from misleading claims or other harmful actions by the marketer (Christ, 2009a; Frain, 1994).

One of the most common arguments against advertising is according to Christ (2009a) that advertising creates rather than satisfies needs and encourages people to purchase goods and services they do not need. Defenders of advertising emphasise the informational nature of advertising and the difficulty to distinguish between desirable informational advertising and undesired persuasive advertising (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 251).

Ethical concerns raise when companies take advantage of vulnerable customers such as children, the elderly, and the indigent for instance by using doubtful marketing tactics such as price gouging or by pushing harmful products

(Sheth & Sisodia, 2006). Particularly children, are generally vulnerable to advertising because they do not have sufficient knowledge and experience to identify, understand and critically assess the purpose of such activities (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 745)

It has been the concern of numerous researchers to investigate how people perceive advertising. This is also important for the present research since the selected webpage in this study includes several advertisements. The research questions aim to investigate how user's interpret this webpage's contents and what types of relationships they construct between the advertisements and the editorial content.

Zaichkowksy (1994) provides an approach that states three categories of factors that influence a person's attitude towards an advertisement: First, particular specifications and features of the advertising stimulus, second, individual characterisations of the receiver, and third, situational factors, such as the environment at the time of exposure, the nature of the medium (for example newspaper or TV) as well as characteristics of the message source (p. 59).

Ducoffe's (1995) study can be assigned into Zaichkowsky's (1994) second category. He introduced the idea of *advertising value*, which he defined as "a representation of the perceived value of advertising to consumers" (1995, p. 1). In his study he examined the effect of the perceived level of informativeness and entertainment on the perceived advertising value.

Among other variables, researchers have further investigated the effectiveness of comparative advertising (Busacca, Girolamo, & Soscia, 2010; Prasad, 1976), how the audience processes newspaper advertising (Bogart & Tolley, 1994), the aspect of trust towards advertising (King, Reid, & Soh, 2009),

the effect of celebrity endorsements in advertisements (Lord & Putrevu, 2009) or the influence of culture on advertising effectiveness (Neelankavil & Zhang, 1997).

2.2.1 Online advertising

With respect to the online focus in this research, another important area is online advertising. Online advertising is according to Chaffey et al. (2006) generally acknowledged to take place "when an advertiser pays to place advertising content on another web site." (p. 249)

The most well known form of online advertising is *banner advertising* (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 249). Chaffey et al. (2006, p. 251) define a banner advertisement as:

"A rectangular graphic displayed on a web page for the purposes of advertising. It is normally possible to perform a clickthrough to access further information. Banners may be static or animated."

A clickthrough occurs when a user clicks on a banner advertisement to direct him or her to another website that contains further information (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 252). Banner advertisements might be intended to build traffic to a specific website or to raise awareness for a certain company, product or service (Chaffey, et al., 2006, p. 252).

Advertising on the Internet has been researched from many different perspectives and with a variety of foci. Since the selected webpage for my research contains several banner advertisements, the following introduction of studies focuses on this form of online advertisements.

Rodgers and Thorson (2000) provide a widely accepted categorisation of studies on online advertising. They categorise between studies and theories that approach from a *functional perspective*, from a *structural perspective,* and those that are concerned about *information processing* (p. 42) on the Internet. While

the structural approach intends to identify and classify Internet advertisements, the functional perspective aims to identify reasons for Internet use. Studies with focus on information processing investigate how recipients perceive and process messages communicated by online advertisements (Rodgers & Thorson, p. 42).

With reference to functional perspectives, Rodgers and Thorson (2000) investigated motives for Internet usage. They define a motive as an "inner desire to actively fulfil a need or want" (p. 45) and identified four primary categories of motives, including researching, communicating, surfing (e.g. entertaining), and shopping.

In terms of structural analysis, Rodgers and Thorson (2000) further categorise Internet advertisements into banner advertisements, interstitials and pop-ups, sponsorships, hyperlinks, and websites.

Miranda and Ju-Pak (1998) conducted a content analysis of 200 banner advertisements on 50 websites. They examined the presence or absence of structural features such as advertising appeals, the existence of a headline, as well as banner and font size.

With respect to Rodger and Thorson's (2000) information processing category, several online advertising features and strategies of banner advertisements have been investigated, for example in terms of size, location on the webpage and the effect of animation on the user.

Studies on the effect of banner advertisement size have found contradicting results. While Cho (1999) as well as Li and Bukovac (1999) found that larger banner advertisements are more effective than smaller banner advertisements, Dréze and Hussherr (2003) did not find support that banner advertisement size has an effect on advertising effectiveness.

Josephson (2005) investigated the significance of animation and location of a banner advertisement with the help of eye tracking technology. The findings of her study revealed that animation was not important to attract viewer's attention. In contrast, location appeared to play a significant role. Banner advertisements at the top of the webpage were more often viewed than those at the bottom of the webpage (Josephson, 2005, pp. 75-79).

Similar to Josephson's (2005) findings concerning animated banner advertisements, also Diao and Sundar (2004) did not find support for their hypothesis that "individuals who view animated banner ads will exhibit orienting responses" (2004, p. 543). An orienting response is defined as a "short-term attention reaction evoked by certain categories of stimuli" (2004, p. 539).

Josephson's (2005) and Diao and Sundar's (2004) findings however contradict the results of a study conducted by Kim, Stout and Yoo (2004) who found that an animated banner advertisement generates higher recall, a more favourable attitude towards the advertisement and a higher click-through intention then static advertisements (Kim, et al., 2004, p. 56).

Donthu, Lohtia, Osmonbekov and Xie (2004) investigated the effect of incentives in banner advertisement on banner advertisement click-through rates moderated by advertisement-induced emotional appeals. The results revealed that positive emotions in banner advertisements enhance the effectiveness of incentives, whereas banner advertisements with negative or no emotions seemed to be more effective when the advertisement included no incentives (Donthu, et al., 2004, p. 35).

In addition to Donthu et al. (2004) also Hand, Robinson and Wysocka (2007) conducted a study to investigate the effect of incentives in banner advertisement but together with six other creative characteristics, namely, banner size,

message length, animation, action phrases, the existence of the company brand or logo, and the presence of information about casino games (Hand, et al., 2007, p. 531). The results revealed that a banner advertisement generates more click-through rates when it contains a long message, appears in a larger size and when it does not include promotional incentives but information about casino games. In contrast, action phrases and the presence of the company brand/logo were ineffective (Hand, et al., 2007, p. 537). The researchers further found that in their study the presence of animation had an insignificant effect on the click-through rate, which supports the study findings of Josephson (2005) and Diao and Sundar (2004).

Hand, Robinson and Wysocka (2007, p. 536) raise one concern, which limits their finding of the effectiveness of the banner size. They tested banner advertisement by placing them on different locations on a webpage. Through this, the researchers argue, the effect of the banner size became inseparable from the effect of the banner sizes location on the webpage (Hand, et al., 2007, p. 536). As Josephson (2005) pointed out, the location of a banner advertisement on a webpage plays a significant role in attracting awareness.

The introduced researches on online advertising, especially banner advertising, investigated specific characteristics of banner advertisements, such as size, animation, or location. However, these studies did not take into account potential effects of a banner advertisement's context in which it is placed, on the web user. Donthu et al. (2004) for example analysed banner advertisements completely detached from the environment in which a banner advertisement occurs. Whether and what effects the context of a banner advertisement can have on the user, has been investigated by the "contextual advertising" approach, which is also a strategy in advertising practice and an approach I investigate in the present research.

2.2.2 Contextual advertising

"Contextual advertising" is a strategy to place advertisements on media vehicles, such as specific websites or print magazines, whose themes are relevant to the promoted products (Jeong & King, 2005, p. 2). Advertisers apply this strategy in order to narrow-target their audiences (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 2; Jeong & King, 2005).

Research on contextual advertising has investigated many contextual factors that may influence advertisement evaluation. With respect to television and print media, Anckaert, de Pelsmacker and Geuens (2002) focused on emotional appeals and investigated the impact of congruency between "ad style" and "context style" (2002, p. 50) The term "style" referred to a specific emotional appeal, namely humorous, warm or rational. Further, the researchers examined "context appreciation", which they defined as "the extent to which persons find a particular context interesting or boring and would like to read a similar article or watch a similar program again." (p. 51)

In terms of context appreciation, the results of their experiment (n=314) showed that advertisements embedded in a highly appreciated television or print context were more favourably evaluated (Anckaert, et al., 2002, pp. 58-60). In a television environment advertisement content recall and brand recall were improved when the context was positively appreciated (p. 59). This effect did not occur in a print environment (p. 59).

Concerning the congruence of ad style and context style the moderating factor was the level of product involvement. In low-involvement product situations "persons experience the importance and risk of a decision as less relevant, require less product information, and devote less attention to advertising stimuli" (Anckaert, et al., 2002, p. 50). In contrast, persons with high

product category involvement require more information and are more motivated to process the information presented in an advertisement (p. 51).

The findings revealed that persons in low-involvement product category situations perceived advertisements placed in a congruent media context as more likeable (Anckaert, et al., 2002, p. 58). In high-involvement product category situations, people perceived the advertisement as more likable when there is no ad style/context style congruency (p. 55).

Anckaert et al.'s (2002) findings in high-involvement product category situations supports what has been called the "contrast effect" (Anckaert, et al., 2002, p. 50; Meyers & Tybout, 1997, p. 1). Some researchers found positive effects on advertising effectiveness when there is incongruence between the advertisement and its context (Celuch & Slama, 1993; Goodstein, 1993; Jablonsky, King, & Copeland, 1996; Perry, et al., 1997). Anckaert et al. (2002, p. 50) explain this phenomenon with the perception of the advertisement as innovative and interesting due to its novelty and unexpectedness.

The level of involvement as it is applied by Anckaert et al. (2002) is an often discussed and researched phenomenon. In theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) describes the "differences in the ways consumers process and respond to persuasive messages" (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 167).

The ELM presents two basic routes to persuasion, the *central* and the *peripheral route* (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 169). When following the central route, recipients are actively engaged and highly involved in processing the communicative message (high involvement). They have high motivation and the ability to process the message, its arguments and contents. In contrast, when following the peripheral route, the motivation and ability is rather low and the receivers are not engaged in detailed cognitive processing of the message (low

involvement). Instead of evaluating arguments of the message, the recipients refer to peripheral cues like for example the credibility of a celebrity endorser or the imagery or music in an advertisement (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 169).

In research, the moderating effect of involvement has been investigated in terms of advertising (Zaichkowsky, 1994), purchase situations (Zaichkowsky, 1994), product categories (Anckaert, et al., 2002; Cho, 1999; Dahlén, Rasch, & Rosengren, 2003; Shamdasani, et al., 2001) and magazine articles (Colman & Norris, 1992). The level of involvement has also been used in researches about contextual advertising in the Internet (Cho, 1999; Shamdasani, et al., 2001) as introduced in the following.

With respect to the online environment Jeong and King (2005, p. 3) suggest that the Internet provides certain advantages for contextual advertising. They argue that "website contexts are often targeted much more narrowly than other mediums" (Jeong & King, 2005, p. 3). Further, the authors assume that because the Internet is a more active medium than for example TV or print media, website users often intentionally visit a specific website and thus are already focused on the theme of that site and may pay more attention to theme-relevant advertisements (Jeong & King, 2005, p. 3).

Cho (1999, p. 33) conducted an experiment with 203 undergraduate students in order to examine several variables that influence banner advertisement clickthrough rates. His intention was to understand how people process advertising on the Internet. The examined variables were a) level of personal and product involvement, b) the size of a banner advertisement, c) relevancy between the content of a vehicle and the product category of a banner advertisement, d) attitude toward the vehicle, and e) overall attitude toward Web advertising.

The study results show that in high-involvement situations, the participants were more likely to click on banner ads (Cho, 1999, p. 43), whereby both the size and dynamic animation of banner advertisements make no difference in clicking of banner advertisements (Cho, 1999, p. 44). In low-involvement situations, the participants were more likely to click on a banner advertisement when it has dynamic animation as well as a larger size than average banner advertisements (Cho, 1999, p. 43).

Cho (1999, p. 39) also analysed the participant's clicking behaviour when the contents of the advertising vehicle was relevant to the product categories of the banner advertisement placed on the vehicle. Cho's (1999, p. 44) experiment revealed that the banner advertisement with higher relevance between product category and the content of the advertising vehicle generated more clicking on the banner. Further, the study results showed that the participants who had a more favourable attitude towards the vehicle on which the advertisement was placed, were more likely to click the banner advertisement only when the product category of the banner advertisement was relevant to the contents of the website (Cho, 1999, p. 45). Finally, those participants who had a generally more favourable attitude toward Web advertising had a more favourable attitude toward a banner advertisement (Cho, 1999, p. 47).

Although the findings of Cho's (1999) experiment were not representative to the general public, the study remains significant because of the widespread analysis of several variables that influence banner advertising effectiveness. In terms of contextual advertising, the findings support the proposition that the relevance between the product category of a banner advertisement and the content of the website on which the advertisement is placed, is an important factor for banner advertising effectiveness.

Similar to Cho (1999) Shamdasani, Stanaland and Tan (2001), examined the effect of relevance between website content and the product category in banner advertisements. However, in their research, Shamdasani et al. (2001) investigated the interplay between "content relevance" (p. 17) and "website credibility" (p. 17). Shamdasani et al. (2001, p. 9) also differentiate between high-involvement and low-involvement products (p. 9). The audience's response to the banner advertisements used in their study, were measured by four variables: a) attitude toward the banner advertisement, b) attitude toward the brand, c) intention to click on the banner advertisement, and d) intention to purchase the advertised product (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 13).

The results of their online survey (n=400) showed that for high-involvement products relevance between advertising content and website content is the significant factor for a positive audiences' response to the banner advertisements used in this study (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 16). The reputation of the advertisement vehicle (the website on which the advertisement is placed) enhanced the audiences' response only, when content relevance was already given (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 16).

In low-involvement product situations, the critical factor appeared to be the reputation of the advertisement vehicle: "The highest consumer evaluations of that banner ad were found when the host website reputation was well established." (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 16) Content relevance had almost no effect on evaluations when the reputation of the advertisement vehicle was favourable (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 16).

The results of this study partially support Cho's (1999) findings in terms of content relevance. Shamdasani et al. (2001) found a coherence between website content and the product category in the banner advertisement only in high-involvement product situations. In low-involvement product situations, the

reputation of the advertisement vehicle was more significant for a favourable evaluation of banner advertisements.

Jeong and King (2005, p. 5) explain the positive effect of context congruence on advertising perception due to the coherence of consumer interest in advertisements and in context. They argue, "consumer involvement in ads tends to be consistent with interest in context because greater interest of context carries over to produce higher involvement in ads." (Jeong & King, 2005, p. 5).

Jeong and King (2005, p. 21) found in their study that advertisements were more favourably evaluated when they were placed in an contextually relevant website environment. The researchers explained the results of their study with a *contextual priming effect*. The word *priming* originates from the psychology discipline and refers to the phenomenon that an exposure to an earlier stimulus influences the response to a later stimulus (Bao, Shao, & Rivers, 2008, p. 150). Through prior exposure, specific schemas or concepts are made accessible within the receiver. These concepts are based on previous experience of the individual (Bao, et al., 2008, p. 150). Once activated, it is likely then, that these concepts are used to evaluate future stimuli. Srull and Wyer (1979, p. 1669) argue that

> "[…] once a trait concept or schema is made more accessible by previous cognitive activity, the likelihood that the same schema will be used to encode new information is increased."

With respect to their study, Jeong and King (2005, p. 21) argue that "contextually relevant cues should have been activated and become highly accessible during interpreting ad information placed within that context."

2.3 Semiotics

Semiotics is a field of study that "is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" (Chandler, 2002, p. 2). Semiotics is an approach that is principally

concerned with meaning-making and investigates "everything that represents something else" (Chandler, 2002, p. 2). A variety of semiotic branches, theories and researches draw on the work by the scholars Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, who are widely accepted as the co-founding scholars of semiotics (Chandler, 2002, p. 5; Noeth, 1990, p. 63).

Saussure's model of signs is based on the basic distinction between language (langue) and speech (parole) (Chandler, 2002, p. 12; Noeth, 1990, p. 63). Whereas langue refers to the system of rules and conventions that exist independently from the user, parole refers to its utilization by the user (Chandler, 2002, p. 12). By focusing on linguistic signs, such as words, Saussure defines language as a system of signs. Each sign consists of a *signifier*, a word and a *signified*, a concept (Saussure, 1983, p. 66). The meaning derives from the relationship between both parts. The same signifier can for example stand for different concepts, like in the case of synonyms (Chandler, 2002, p. 19). This refers to Saussure's general idea that the relation between signifier and signified is *arbitrary* (Saussure, 1983, p. 67) or as Chandler (2002, pp. 25-32) describes Saussure's proposition:

> "In the context of natural language Saussure stressed that there is no inherent, essential, 'transparent', self-evident or 'natural' connection between the signifier and the signified – between the sound or the shape of a word and the concept to which it refers."

Structuralist semiotics, to which Saussure's approach counts, is concerned with the study of the structures of sign systems (Chandler, 2002, p. 9). This approach of semiotics has been criticised for the strict focus on formal systems and the lack of consideration of the sign's usage in social practices (Chandler, 2002, p. 209). Chandler (2002, p. 210) argues that it does not "address processes of production, audience interpretation or authorial intentions" and disregards the sign within the cultural, social, economic and political context (Chandler, 2002, p. 210).

In contrast to Saussure's "dyadic model" (Chandler, 2002, p. 18) of signifier and signified, Peirce provides a "triadic model" (Chandler, 2002, p. 32; Noeth, 1990, p. 42) of the sign, which includes firstly, the "representamen" that is the form of the sign, secondly, the "interpretant" that is understood as the mental effect or thought, which is generated by the relation between the representamen and the third element, the "object" to which the sign refers (Chandler, 2002, p. 32; Noeth, 1990, pp. 42-43; Silverman, 1983, p. 15). The interaction between these three elements is what Peirce calls "semiosis" (Chandler, 2002, p. 33). The meaning of a sign is not comprised in the sign itself but rather derives from its interpretation by the user (Chandler, 2002, p. 35), an idea that according to Chandler (2002) is captured by many theorists who emphasise the difference between content and meaning.

Peirce furthermore provides a typology of signs. He differentiates between three types of signs: the "symbol", the "icon" and the "index" (Chandler, 2002, p. 36; Noeth, 1990, pp. 44-45). A symbol occurs, when the sign form does not resemble the referent. Their relationship is completely arbitrary and conventional, which means that it has to be learned by the user (Chandler, 2002, p. 36; Silverman, 1983, p. 20). Symbols are for example alphabetical letters, numbers or Morse code (Chandler, 2002, p. 36).

In terms of an icon, meaning is based on the resemblance between the form of the sign and to what it refers to (Cook, 2001, pp. 74-75). The resemblance can be based on some mutual qualities or properties, like for example in a portrait or in a cartoon (Silverman, 1983, p. 19).

A sign is an index when the "sign vehicle" (Chandler, 2002, p. 36), the form in which the sign appears, is directly either physically or causally connected with the referent (Cook, 2001, p. 74). The relation can be observed or inferred. Indexical signs are for example smoke that is caused by fire; footprints of a

human or thermometers react on temperature change (Cook, 2001, p. 74). Silverman (1983, pp. 19-20) argues moreover, that in terms of an indexical relation, the sign is understood as being connected to the real object and therefore it makes that particular object conceptually present.

Another approach that has been developed within the field of semiotics is the distinction between "denotation" and "connotation". Barker and Galasinsky (2001, p. 5) note that denotation is the definitional and commonsense meaning of a sign, shared by virtually all members of a culture. Connotations in contrast, generate meaning from the connection of the signifier with a wider "cultural code of meaning" (Barker & Galasinsky, 2001, p. 5). Silverman (1983, p. 36) describes a cultural code as

> "[…] a conceptual system which is organized around key oppositions and equations, in which a term like "woman" is defined in opposition to a term like "man," and in which each term is aligned with a cluster of symbolic attributes. In case of "woman" those symbolic attributes might be "emotional," "pliant," and "weak," whereas those associated with "man" would be more likely to be "rational," "firm," and "strong."

Barthes (1994, pp. 288-289) emphasises in his definition of cultural code the societal influence:

> "*cultural code:* this is the code of knowledge, or rather of human knowledges, of public opinion, of culture as it is transmitted by the book, by teaching and, more generally, by the whole of sociality; this code has for its reference knowledge as the body of rules elaborated by society."

Like Barker and Galasinsky (2001, p. 5) and Silverman (1983, p. 36) consider cultural codes as the basis for connotation. Silverman (1983, p. 36) suggests, that connotation can only be explained under consideration of a "social field that is structured in terms of class interests and values" (Silverman, 1983, p. 29). For Barthes, culture is filled with contradicting ideologies. The culture in Barthes understanding is shaped by the ideologies of the dominant class (Silverman, 1983, p. 30). He calls these ideologies "myths" (Chandler, 2002, p. 144) and they

function to naturalise specific values, attitudes and beliefs, which means that an ideology becomes commonsense and is appreciated as normal (Chandler, 2002, p. 145):

> "Their function is to [...] make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely 'natural', 'normal', self-evident [...]"

Barthes (1973, p. 156) himself explains that a

> "[m]yth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity whichis not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact."

The notion about the importance of culture for connotations however, entails a considerable problem, as Chandler (2002, p. 141) and Silverman (1983, p. 30) demonstrate. Both argue that in this context, connotation requires an individual who is involved and influenced by a culture, whereas denotation assumes a neutral reader or viewer, one who is not influenced by culture or any kind of ideology. However, as Silverman (1983, p. 30) and Chandler (2002, p. 141) argue, every child that learns the denotations is already positioned in an ideology. Therefore, as Chandler (2002, p. 141) concludes, a clear distinction between denotation and connotation might be theoretically useful, for example for analytical purposes, but in practice these two elements are inseparable because meaning is always pervaded with value judgement. In this sense, Chandler (2002, p. 143) argues that

> "[t]here can be no neutral, 'literal' description which is free of an evaluative element."

2.3.1 Social semiotics

Jewitt and Kress (2003) argue for of a social approach to semiotics. "Social semiotics" emphasises the role of the individual in the meaning-making process (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 9). They criticise those semiotic approaches that regard people as "confronted with ready-made *systems* for making meaning – the

linguistic system might be the example par excellence" (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, pp. 9-10). In these semiotic approaches, as Jewitt and Kress (2003, p. 10) criticise, people are viewed as passive users of semiotic systems like language. People use the signs provided by those semiotic systems but they do not change them. In contrast, as Jewitt and Kress (2003, pp. 10-11) argue, social semiotics views the people in their socio-cultural environment. The social semiotic approach as it is argued by Jewitt and Kress (2003, p. 10), proposes that the people continuously create new signs:

"[…] signs are viewed as constantly newly made, in a process in which the signified (what is to be meant) is realised through the most apt signifier (that which is available to give realisation to that which is to be meant) in a specific social context."

Chandler (2002, pp. 217-218) follows a similar notion and argues that meaning is constructed within the individual and "arises only in the active process of interpretation" (Chandler, 2002, p. 217). This point of view includes the argument that the relation between signified and signifier is not arbitrary (Hodge & Kress, 1988, pp. 21-22; Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 10) as it is claimed by Saussure.

According to Hodge and Kress (1988, p. 261) social semiotics focuses on all semiotic systems humans apply when they are engaged in communication. The authors argue that social semiotics is concerned with human "semiosis", which are "the processes and effects of the production and reproduction, reception and circulation of meaning in all forms" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261). Further, semiotics has to include the study of culture, the society and the politics in all meaning-making processes (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 18).

2.3.2 Geosemiotics

Another listing that is placed in the wider field of social semiotics is Scollon and Scollon's (2003) approach of *geosemiotics*. Here, the authors argue that in

order to interpret the meanings of signs and texts in the material world, it is necessary to consider the social and physical world in which the signs and texts are located. The main focus of geosemiotics is *indexicality* that refers to "the property of context-dependency of signs" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 3). According to Scollon and Scollon (2003, p. 29) there are two basic types of signs, icons and symbols but all signs whether icons or symbols achieve their meanings through properties of indexicality (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 29). A sign's meaning depends on how it is used in a context or with the words of Scollon and Scollon (2003, p. 29): "the sign only has meaning because of where it is placed in the world".

The innovative notion of geosemiotics derives from the integration of three main systems that outline any form of social action: "interaction order", "visual semiotics"*,* and "place semiotics" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 8). Whereas interaction order refers to "the forms of social interactions we produce when we come together" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 212), it is the concern of visual semiotics to investigate how social relationships in the world are represented in visual images (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 108). Place semiotics takes into account "the built environment in which social interaction takes place" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 167) and includes "even the weather or regulate climate patterns which contribute to the meaning of the place" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 214).

2.3.3 Semiotics in advertising

As Jhally, Kline and Leiss (2004) point out, semiotics can be applied to investigate "anything in which meaning is thought to inhere" (p. 341). As Beasley and Danesi (2002, pp. 19-21) and also Noeth (1990, p. 477) outline, the area of advertising has been widely researched in order to examine meaning-affordances in advertisements. Because of its prominence, its diversity and its

influence on culture and society, advertising is seen as a popular subject of study and a significant genre for semiotic analysis (Beasley & Danesi, 2002, pp. 19-20; Cook, 2001, pp. 1-3; Tanaka, 2002, pp. xi-xii).

Jhally, et al. (2004) theoretically discuss the application of semiotic analysis of advertisements. According to the authors, the increasing use of visuals in advertising, starting in the mid-1920, has led to a higher ambiguity of advertisements in terms of their meaning potential. Meaning is according to Jhally et al. (2004, p. 342) determined by how the different signs in an advertisement's internal structure are organised and related to each other. Meaning would also be influenced by its reference to the wider belief system in the external world (Jhally, et al., 2004, p. 342). The authors argue that advertising reconstitutes meaning for its own purposes based on the audience's predispositions, hopes, and concerns (Jhally, et al., 1990, p. 200). Advertising applies elements of the audience's life and exaggerates, magnifies and embellishes them (Jhally, et al., 1990, p. 200).

Jhally et al. (2004) describe how advertisements communicate meanings for a promoted product, which the audience has no knowledge of or experience with. With respect to the semiotic differentiation between denotation and connotation, the authors argue that every message consists of two levels of meaning: the meaning that is placed directly on the surface of the advertisement (denotation) and the one that occurs implicitly below the surface (connotation) (Jhally, et al., 1990, p. 205), an argument that has also been made by Noeth (1990, pp. 477-478). Jhally et al. (2004, p. 343) argue that for advertising to create meaning for the product it promotes, the recipient has to engage in a process of meaning-transfer from the signs in the advertisement to the product because the meaning does not directly occur in the advertisement but rather in the recipient. This process involves three basic requirements. Firstly, meaning of one sign has to be transferred to another sign (Jhally, et al., 2004, p. 343). This

can, according to the authors, occur between persons and objects, social situations and objects, between objects and objects, and between feelings and objects. Second, the audience completes the transfer of meaning. This requires an active participation of the audience. Third, the first sign must already be significant to the audience. Only then meaning can be transferred (Jhally, et al., 2004, p. 343). In order to process the meaning transfer, a system of meaning must already exist (1990, p. 203). Jhally et al. (1990, p. 203) label such a system as "reference system".

The idea of a reference system to which the audience refers to in order to process the meaning transfer has been criticised by Tanaka (2002, pp. 4-6). He argues that Jhelly et al.'s (1990) argumentation is incomplete because it does not explain how the audience knows and decides what information, which exists in their reference system, is relevant for the meaning transfer. Tanaka (2002, pp. 4-6) further argues that the concept fails to identify the criterions for the audience to choose the right information from this reference system.

Similar to Jhally et al.'s (1990) description of meaning-transfer, Noeth (1990, p. 480) argues that in advertising an *indexical feature transfer* takes place. This means, that in advertisements the promoted product "is represented in contiguity to valuable objects, film stars, or similar entities whose desirable attributes are well known" (Noeth, 1990, p. 480). Advertisers apply this strategy in order to get their product associated with these favourable attitudes.

The application of semiotics for the analysis of advertising has also been criticised. Scholars like Beasley and Danesi (2002, p. vii), Botterill, Jhally, Klein and Leiss (2005, pp. 165-166) and also Anderson, Dewhirst and Ling (2006, p. 257), raise the concern that the analysis of meaning in advertisements is highly based on the analyst's interpretation. This results in a lower reliability of the findings of the semiotic analysis. Reliability in this sense refers to "a sufficient

level of agreement among analysts on what is found in a message" (Botterill, et al., 2005, pp. 165-166).

Contrary, Beasley and Danesi (2002, p. vii) argue that semiotics is a valuable method to become aware of both the variety of interpretations that can be drawn from advertisements and the existence of implicit meanings underneath the surface level of an advertisement (Beasley & Danesi, 2002, p. 159). Especially concerning common criticism of advertising, like its promotion of consumerism and the 'hidden' persuasion and its influences on attitudes and desires (Beasley & Danesi, 2002, pp. 149-151), Beasley and Danesi (2002, p. 159) argue that a semiotic analysis can be supportive to de-mystify advertising creativity in order to make "the process of meaning creation more accessible". When the consumer is aware of the hidden meanings in advertisements, he or she will be more able to repel undesirable effects that these texts may cause (Beasley & Danesi, 2002, p. 159).

Semiotic analysis has for example be used by McIlwain (2007) to analyse meaning in a political advertisement. He analysed a televised political advertisement run by a politician in the US in terms of the four sign systems that occur in the advertisement: photographs, written language, spoken language (narration) and moving images (McIlwain, 2007, p. 169). The study revealed that this advertisement argues against the politician's opponent by using certain racial appeals against 'Afro-Americans' (McIlwain, 2007, p. 189).

Another research has been done by Carty and Peppin (2001) who conducted a semiotic analysis of six drug advertisements that promote a medicament for women in the menopausal years, in order to investigate how pharmaceutical companies design advertisements to persuade physicians to prescribe their product. The analysis showed that the advertisements used stereotypical views

of women, which provides an image of woman that "undermines women's position as autonomous decision-makers (Carty & Peppin, 2001, p. 326).

Anderson et al. (2006) conducted a semiotic analysis of a tobacco advertisement. The authors argue that a semiotic analysis should include two basic steps (p. 256): first, the researcher has to select the advertisement that has to be analysed according to specific criteria, like for example the medium in which the advertisement appears (for example magazines or on websites). In the second step, the researcher analyses both the advertisement copy (linguistics, font style, typography) and images. This includes the analysis of denotative meanings, which Anderson et al. (2006, p. 256) define as "the initial meaning that a sign is designed to capture" as well as the advertisement's implied meanings, which they describe as connotative meanings (p. 256).

The introduced literature that discusses and describes the application of semiotic analysis for the investigation of the meaning in advertisements, have in common that they place the document or more precisely particular advertisement(s) into the centre of their investigation. However, as the differentiation between denotation and connotation as well as approaches like social semiotics and geosemiotics propose, the meaning-process includes the user of a sign and is not completely contained in the document itself. It is my concern in the present research to investigate what information an analysis, which focuses on the user's meaning making rather than the document can reveal.

2.4 Multimodality

Directly focused on meaning making is also "multimodality". Jewitt and Kress (2003, pp. 9-10) define multimodality as the field of application for social semiotics. The basic idea of multimodality is that humans experience meaning by

utilising different communicative modes (Finnegan, 2002) and different modes play specific parts in the process of constructing meaning (Bateman, 2008; Kress & Mavers, 2005; Norris, 2004; Van Leeuwen, 2005).

However, researchers differ in definitions as well as in the application of modes. Jewitt & Kress (2003, p. 1) imply that modes are "a regularised organised set of resources for meaning-making". Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 21) define modes as "semiotic resources".

When pursuing a multimodal approach, researchers have followed the proposition that in many contemporary documents, such as newspapers or websites, meaning is expressed through a variety of modes. Caple (2008, p. 131) argues that a multimodal text is a text in which "two or more different meaning-making systems combine to produce a text that is one complete semantic unit […]". In order to identify the meaning-affordance of a document, researchers focus on the document and the employed modes, such as written language or illustrations. In this sense, each mode is a partial carrier of meaning (Kress & Mavers, 2005, p. 172). Partial in this sense means that each mode contributes a part to the whole of the meaning (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 3). Here, the focus lies on the document without necessarily including the user.

The analysis of a document's meaning-affordance has been of interest for a number of researchers, and so for various reasons and areas of application. Scholars examined for example the meaning-affordance of print advertisements (Yuen, 2004), magazines (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001), news stories (Caple, 2008), mind maps (Mavers, 2003) as well as biology textbooks (Guo, 2004). Here, researchers examine the presence of modes in a document (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Caple, 2008; Guo, 2004; Mavers, 2003; Yuen, 2004) and by this independently from the meaning maker.

In a different definition, "modes" are understood as employed by social actors in order to interact with their environment. Norris (2004, pp. 11-12) uses the

term "communicative modes" to "emphasize their interactional communicative function." In this sense, a social actor uses communicative modes like proximity, gaze, gesture or spoken language in order to communicate with other social actors or with a text. Norris (2004) provides a methodological framework for the analysis of human interaction under consideration of the variety of communicative modes humans employ.

Kress and Mavers (2005, p. 174) point out that each mode has a specific affordance which is based on its materiality. The mode of gesture for example has visible materiality whereas spoken language has an audible materiality (Norris, 2004, p. 3). Modes are also categorised in terms of their structure. Mavers and Kress (2005, p. 174) differ between "time-based modes", like speech or music and "space-based modes", such as image layout or architectural arrangements. Other modes, like gesture are both time- and space-based simultaneously (Kress & Mavers, 2005, p. 174).

Norris (2004, p. 45) distinguishes between "embodied" and "disembodied" modes whereby she emphasises that the boundaries can be vague. Through embodied modes a person expresses his or her "perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" to another person (Norris, 2004, p. 42). Print for example is embodied when someone utilises a writing instrument in order to communicate his perceptions, for instance, when writing a shopping list. Print is disembodied in contrast for those who use the shopping list. A mode is disembodied when something already created is utilised by someone for a specific action (Norris, 2004, p. 45).

The modes, as experienced by the observer, interact with one another and influence the recipients' processing of messages. The interpretation then also depends on the interpreter's place in the social and cultural world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

In their approach of mediated discourse analysis, Norris and Jones (2005b) introduce the term "mediational means" (p. 49) that refers to the proposition that all human actions are mediated through specific "cultural tools" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 17). Mediational means are "physical and psychological 'objects' that mediate between agents and their social worlds" (Norris & Jones, 2005b, p. 50). The described means are physical and psychological at the same time because they carry a specific meaning for the user for which he or she utilises them in their social practices but they also exist as material objects in the physical world (Norris & Jones, 2005a, p. 50). Mediational means contain specific "affordances" and "constrains" that form their usage (Norris & Jones, 2005a, p. 50; Wertsch, 1998, p. 39). The usage of mediational means is culturally, socially, and historically shaped. However, what a user can do with them is not entirely determined but rather multifunctional and open for combinations with other mediated means (Norris & Jones, 2005a, p. 50).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided a review of the literature concerned with three basic areas of significance in the present research. Firstly, the literature that addresses marketing with particular focus on advertising in general, online advertising and contextual advertising. Secondly, literature concerned with the wider field of semiotics, especially social semiotics, geosemiotics and semiotics applied in advertising research. Finally, I provided a review of literature that focuses on multimodality.

The present study is informed by the presented literature but also aims to contribute to these fields of studies.

The basic aim for this research is the analysis of a specific webpage from the webpage user's perspective. The presented literature on online advertising, situated in the wider field of marketing, provides useful insights into existing

research and literature about how web users interpret websites that include advertisements as well as editorial contents. Contextual advertising has enjoyed considerable interest in advertising practice as well as advertising research. For this research, the literature on contextual advertising provides the foundation for the analysis of types of relationships between advertising and editorial content on a webpage as the webpage user constructs them.

However, in terms of contextual advertising, the reviewed studies focused on congruence between advertisements and their context based on similarity in emotional appeals (Anckaert, et al., 2002) as well as product category (Cho, 1999; Shamdasani, et al., 2001). With the present research I intend to investigate what other types of relationships are constructed by the webpage user.

As already Dalal et al. (2005, p. 51) pointed out, most research focuses on complete websites rather than single webpages. Little research has been done in this area. With this research, I also aim to contribute in filling this gap by investigating the user's perceptions of a specific webpage.

Most of the researches on online advertising presented in this literature review are based on a quantitative research approach (e.g. Anckaert, et al., 2002; Bukovac & Li, 1999; Cho, 1999; Diao & Sundar, 2004; Dréze & Hussherr, 2003; Hwang, et al., 2003; Ju-Pak & Miranda, 1998; Shamdasani, et al., 2001). I apply in the present research a qualitative research approach in order to get an insight into a user's interpretations of a webpage by not only asking what the user interprets but also by focusing on how.

The focal point in this research is on the users and their interpretations of advertisements and the editorial content placed on the webpage. For this the introduced literature on semiotics and multimodality is useful because it provides a basic understanding of how individuals experience their world and

how these experiences shape their social behaviour. The understandings in social semiotics, geosemiotics and multimodality inform my research because they emphasise both the individual as well as the individual's environment, such as the cultural background and place, for the process of meaning making.

With this research, I attempt to provide more insights into the meaning-making processes of individuals. Meaning making in the present study is not only based on a single online advertisement as it has been done in several of the presented studies and discussions (e.g. Beasley & Danesi, 2002; Bukovac & Li, 1999; Donthu, et al., 2004; Dréze & Hussherr, 2003) but also under consideration of the webpage context in which online advertisements are embedded.

I see a potential critical point concerning the discussion about semiotics in advertising that I presented above. The introduced authors Jhally et al. (1990, 2004) and Beasley and Danesi (2002) emphasise in their discussion that meaning is constructed within the audience. Factually though, they focus their semiotic analysis on the advertisement rather than the audience. Also the presented studies of McIlwain (2007), Carty and Peppin (2001) and Anderson et al. (2006) described analyses of meaning-affordances in advertisements without including the audience. I can see here a potential contradiction. A focal point on the audience could reveal interesting insights, which could not be brought to the surface by an analysis of an advertisement alone. It is my intention in the present research to investigate this aspect.

In the following chapter, I will discuss in more detail how the presented literature informs my research and my understandings, including the research questions that guide this study.

3. Approach

With reference to the multimodal approach, I follow in this study the proposition that modes cannot be fully investigated without the social actor, who constructs meaning. I understand that a mode does not occur on a document but only with the social actor who is the user of the document. Hereby, I conceive a mode as having a particular affordance for the social actor. As I will explain in the following, this affordance of a mode for a social actor is shaped by the culture in which an individual is involved as well as individual factors such as personal experiences, knowledge and preferences. I apply this understanding to a particular webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. I do not attempt to investigate the webpage and its use of different modes in order to examine its meaning-affordance. It is my concern to investigate the webpage from the user's perspective and how the user interprets the webpage. My aim is to find out what insights an analysis of the user's interpretations of a webpage can provide.

By focusing on the user's meaning-making process of a specific webpage, I also intend to investigate what types of relationships the user constructs between the advertisements and the editorial article that are placed on the webpage example. Here, I understand "relationship" as a connection between the content-types, and that the user constructs these relationships. Relationships in this sense do not occur in the document. It is rather a dynamic process actively shaped by the user.

My interest in investigating types of relationships is based on an emerging practice in online-advertising to place advertisements on websites that share a similar content-theme, called 'contextual advertising'. In such cases, the relationship between multiple content-types, such as advertising and editorial article, is based on content similarity. An advertiser may place an advertisement

for an airline on a travel website or an advertisement for golf gear on the website of a golf club. Advertisers use content-related advertising in order to narrow-target their customer group (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 492). Also in advertising research, the investigative focus often lies on content similarity between advertisement and the editorial content of the website while addressing the effectiveness of an advertisement (Shamdasani, et al., 2001, p. 8). I am interested in investigating what types of relationships – especially other than those content-based relationships deployed by the advertiser - the participants construct during the processes of viewing/reading the webpage.

My intention for this study is to investigate how users themselves interpret a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. This investigation includes an analysis of what relationships, i.e. momentary interactions, between the advertisements and the editorial article the participants construct. I am interested in this investigation in order to examine the several meanings constructed by the reader in "real-time" that may not be discovered by analysing the document alone.

Specifically, I address the following research questions:

- What types of relationships do the participants construct between the information modules that are placed on a webpage of the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

- How do the participants interpret the information modules placed on a selected webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

In the following chapter, I will define specific terms that I use in this thesis as well as particular understandings that inform my research. I draw these

definitions of terms and the understandings from several approaches and theories in the fields of multimodality, social semiotics and geosemiotics. I will further outline the process of the analysis of a user's interpretation of a webpage.

3.1 User-centred and system-centred approaches

In this research, I differentiate between user-centred approaches and system-centred approaches. The difference between these two approaches is that the systems-centred approach focuses on the webpage as a multimodal document (or text) in terms of how it represents information and thus how it affords particular meanings while constraining others. The user-centred approach, in contrast, focuses on the webpage from the user's perspective and how s/he interprets the webpage. In this approach, it is the user who, together with the document, affords and constraints its meanings, while in the system-centred approach, it is the document alone that is recognized as a source of meaning. These two approaches would analyse the same webpage yet from different perspectives. For the differentiation between user-centred and system-centred approaches I refer to the work of Lee, Lee, Kim and Stout (2004, pp. 62-63), who investigated the effectiveness of online advertising. For their study, Lee et al. (2004), combined the system-centred and the user-centred approaches in order to investigate a potential incongruence between "objective website characteristics" (Lee, et al., 2004, p. 61), such as interactive functions (e.g. presence of a search engine or the option to contact the website owner) as well as design elements (e.g. the deployment of colours or specific font types), and their subjective perception by the participants in their study. The findings of their research indeed revealed a difference between the characteristics found in system-centred analyses, and the subjective, user-centred, perceptions of these characteristics.

System-centred approach

In the following, I will briefly introduce Bateman's (2008) *Genre-and-Multimodality*-model (GeM-model) as an example tool for a system-centred analysis of multimodal documents. I identify Bateman's (2008) model as a system-centred approach because it focuses on the analysis of inherent meaning-making in a, as Bateman calls it, "multimodal document" (Bateman, 2008, p. 1). By applying his model, the researcher concentrates on the inherent meaning affordance of the document, for example what the user *could* interpret. The meaning affordance derives from what the document "objectively" contains without a consideration of the user.

Bateman (2008) introduces the GeM-model for the analysis of documents that employ several visually-based modes, such as images and texts, in order to express meaning. While concentrating on written documents, Bateman (2008, p. 1) defines a 'multimodal document' as "an artefact that simultaneously deploys a variety of visually based modes" (Bateman, 2008, p. 1). A mode, in Bateman's (2008) understanding, is a channel to present information. With reference to written text in a multimodal document, Bateman (2008, p. 1) describes modes as follows:

> "[T]ext is just one strand in a complex presentational form that seamlessly incorporates visual aspects 'around', and sometimes even instead of, the text itself. We refer to all these diverse visual aspects as modes of information presentation."

The GeM-model facilitates the analysis of the document on separate 'layers of description' (Bateman, 2008, p. 15). A layer is defined by a specific focus of analysis. Each layer examines a document with a particular focus, for example its layout or its rhetorical structure and describes how the document is constructed in reference to this focus (p. 108). Bateman concentrates on the systematic analysis of a document in order to "reveal what the breadth of possible variations and meanings might be" (Bateman, 2008, p. 107).

The GeM-model contains five layers (Bateman, 2008, p. 108): base layer, layout layer, rhetorical layer, and navigation layer. The following graphic illustrates the different layers of the GeM-model:
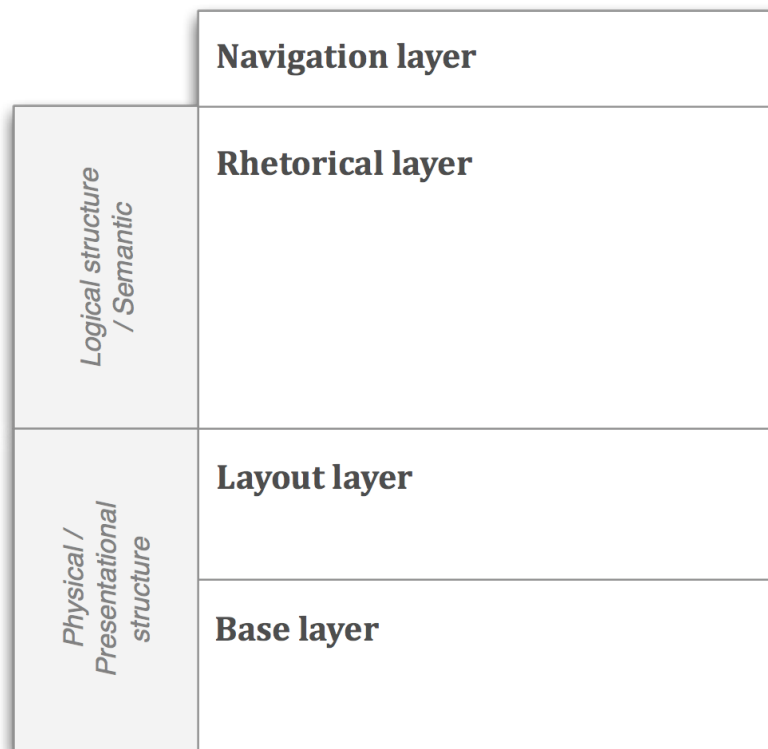
	Navigation layer
Logical structure / Semantic	**Rhetorical layer**
Physical / Presentational structure	**Layout layer**
	Base layer

Figure 1: Simplified illustration of the GeM-model; own compilation

The base layer of the GeM model "de-composes" (Bateman, 2008, p. 24) the multimodal document into its "basic elements physically present on a page", such as texts and images. It is the basis for the subsequent layers.

The layout layer focuses on the perceptually salient layout properties of the page (Bateman, 2008, p. 116). The purpose of the layout layer is to describe how the layout units are visually presented (for example in terms of font colours or font size) as well as their arrangement on the page concerning spatial proximity and positioning on the page (Bateman, 2008, pp. 115-116).

The third layer of the GeM-model, the rhetorical layer, focuses on the identification of semantic content of the units on the page, such as an image and a text. Another purpose of this layer is the identification of "meaning-relations" (Bateman, 2008, p. 143) between these units, for example when the text functions as a caption of the image (Bateman, 2008, p. 145). Bateman's (2008) proposition of the analysis of meaning-relations elucidates the critical point which I intend to investigate in this research. Bateman (2008) aims to analyse meaning-relations by focusing on the objects that occur within a document. Relationships between elements in a document, as I propose in this research, are however constructed within the document user and do not appear on the document.

The base and the layout layer of the GeM-model focus on the physical and recognisable units on a multimodal document, whereas the rhetorical layer concentrates on the meaning-relations of the units on a page.

The navigation base focuses on elements that support the reader in navigating through the document (Bateman, 2008, p. 269). Navigation units can be text elements, graphics or other elements that indicate to the viewer where particular information can be found on the page or where current text continues.

User-centred approach

A user-centred approach, as it is applied in the present study, focuses on the meaning-making processes of the user of a document and not the document itself, as it is done when following a system-centred approach.

In the following I will describe the basic understandings that inform my research. I will define my understandings of "context" and "sign" and explain the significance of the user's context when interpreting a sign (see below) on a webpage.

I am investigating the user's interpretation of a selected webpage. For the definition of "interpretation", I refer to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, pp. 40-41) who take interpretation as "semiotic action". I accept that interpretation leads to meaning in webpage users; it is a form of user-generated semiotic construction. This semiotic construction is not necessarily apparent to anyone else other than to the users themselves. However, the user can make his or her interpretations perceivable to others through articulation. Both interpretation and articulation are, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p. 40), semiotic actions. Interpretation is thus a process of meaning making that occurs in and is driven by the user.

When talking about signs, I draw on Chandler's (2002, p. 141) definition that a sign is only a sign when it has a particular meaning for the sign user. I adapt from semiotics the proposition that the meaning of a sign consists of "denotation" and "connotation". Denotation refers to the definitional meaning of a sign (Chandler, 2002, p. 227). Chandler (2002, p. 140) names the denotative meaning of a sign as the 'commonsense' meaning. Connotation refers to the socio-cultural and personal meaning of a sign for a sign user (Chandler, 2002, p. 140). A sign always consists of both a denotative and a connotative meaning (Chandler, 2002, p. 140). It is the connotative meaning that makes the meaning dependent from the sign user.

In this research, I propose that the webpage may contain the denotative meaning of a sign whereas the connotative meaning of that sign may be made by the user. This connotative meaning is based on the user's experiences, knowledge, ideas, interests and motivations as well as dispositions. Each user has a set of meanings for signs that s/he applies when interpreting a webpage. I here refer to Scollon and Scollon (2003, pp. 14-16) who emphasise the importance of the personal history of knowledge and experience as well as specific habits and intentions for a human's actions.

The denotative and connotative meanings are two inseparable parts of the same sign. That is why a system-centred analysis may not fully investigate the meaning of a document because it seems to focus on the denotative meaning only.

I borrow from Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p. 8), as well as from Burke and Stets (2003, p. 128), the idea that an interpretation of signs depends on the user's place in his/her social and cultural world. With reference to Burke and Stets (2003, p. 128), each individual is in a reciprocal relationship within the society s/he lives in. The individual influences the society by his or her actions such as creating groups, organisations, networks, and institutions. In turn, the society influences the individual through shared meanings that allow the individual to engage in social interactions. It is culture, a specific set of cultural values and social roles, known by the member of the society as social norms, that has an impact on an individual's behaviour and attitudes (Marsh, 1996, p. 20). These set of values are learned and internalised by the members of the culture. I obtain from Marsh (1996, p. 20) the definition of culture as "the non-biological aspects of human societies – to the values, customs and […] behaviour that are learned and internalized by people rather than being genetically transmitted from one generation to the next".

I propose that the interpretation of a webpage depends on the interpreter's *context*. For the definition of context I draw on Scollon and Scollon's (2003) discussion of geosemiotics. Geosemiotics is "the study of the social meaning of material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 2). I further refer to Zaichkowsky's (1994, p. 59) categorisation of factors that influence advertising attitudes and adapt it to the purpose of this research.

I take context as consisting of three categories of factors: 1) the webpage user's individual background, such as specific experiences, knowledge, as well as

his or her position in the socio-cultural environment, 2) the user's physical and spatial environment at the time of the webpage exposure, such as the interior of the room s/he is in, the lighting and sound conditions as well as other people that are present, and 3) the denotative meanings of the signs that occur on the webpage, or as Zaichkowsky (1994, p. 59) defines it, the specifications of the stimulus.

As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I accept modes to be with the social actor who uses them. The social actor employs modes like gaze, posture or head movement under consideration of the affordances these modes provide to him or her. "Modal affordances" as Jewitt and Kress (2003, p. 14) call them, are the specific inherent quality of a mode. Each mode has a formal side as well as a social, cultural and historical side (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 15). On the one hand, each mode has specific formal characteristics. Gaze or body posture for example has visual materiality whereas listening has an audible materiality. On the other hand, modal affordances are based on the cultural and social history of that mode and how the mode has been used by a culture and society in the past (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, pp. 14-15). The affordances of modes are not static but rather evolve with time through their use by the members of a society (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 40).

Social actors use these modes to interpret signs, for example those that are placed on a webpage. Each sign is presented in a specific form, which suggests to the social actor the employment of a specific "embodied" mode to interpret the sign. I refer here to Norris' (2004, p. 41) definition of "embodied" modes, which proposes that a social actor uses a mode in order to interact with a text or a social actor. Within the context of this research, a social actor employs modes in order to interpret the sign. A visual sign for instance, which is presented in a specific shape with particular colours etc. suggest to the interpreter to employ

the mode of gaze. Verbal signs in contrast, suggest to the interpreter to employ the mode of hearing.

3.2 Structural description of the selected webpage

In the following I will introduce and define specific terms that structurally describe the elements that occur on the webpage. I will also use these terms to describe the participant's responses towards their interpretation of the webpage.

In the present research, I focus on user interpretations of a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. The following picture shows the selected webpage:

Figure 2: The selected webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz

I propose to call the individual content unit on the webpage an *information module.* For example, a particular advertisement on a webpage is one information module. Each information module is unique. The selected webpage contains several information modules. The following graphic illustrates information modules on the webpage that could be identified by the participants:
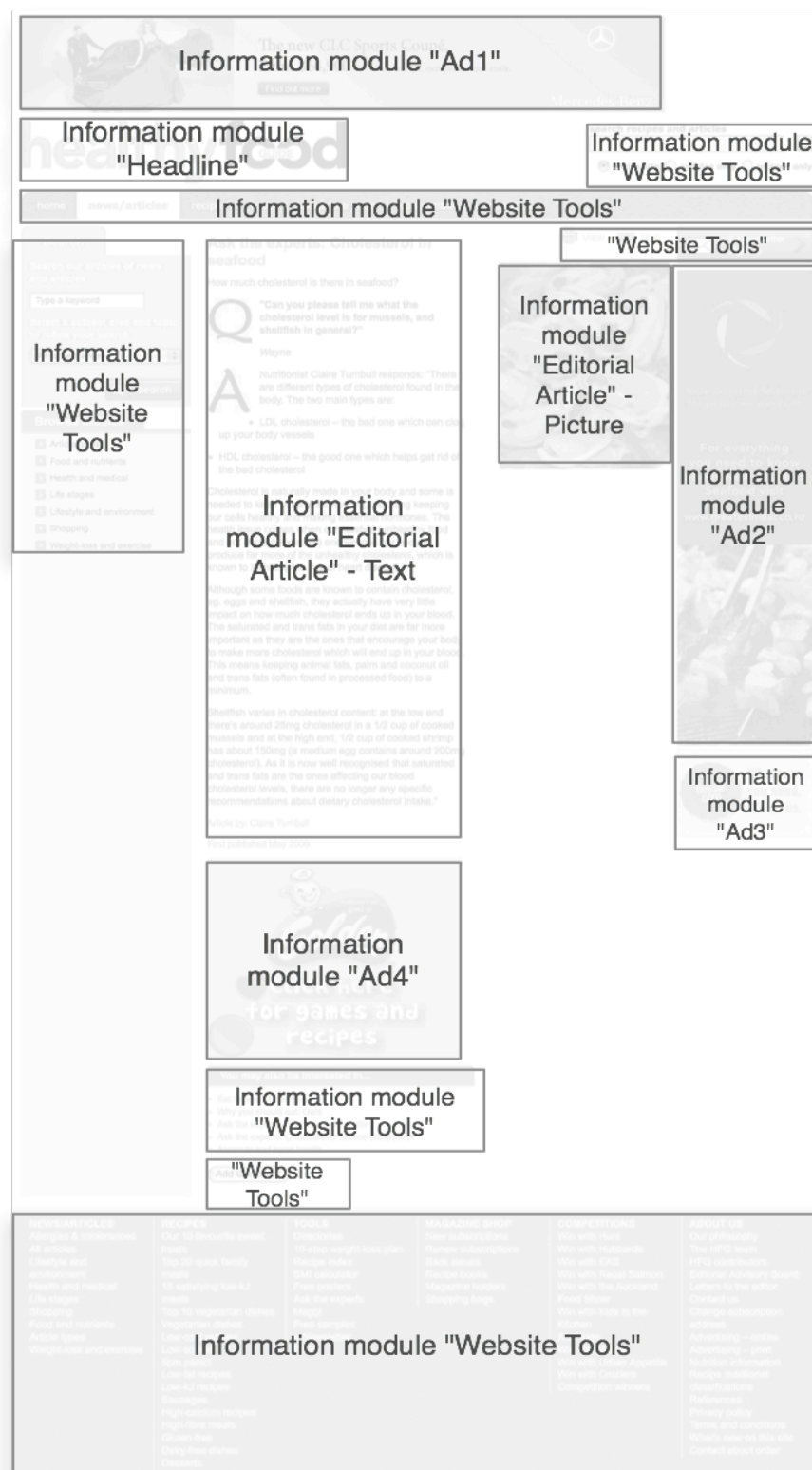
Figure 3: Information modules on the selected webpage

There are four advertisements on the webpage. I label them as Ad1, Ad2, Ad3, Ad4, and each advertisement is one individual information module. Another information module is the editorial article, consisting of a written text and a picture. A further information module on the webpage is the headline "healthy food guide".

The webpage also contains several search bars, a navigation bar and a number of hyperlinks to other pages of the website. I summarise these tools under the label "website tools" referring to Djonov (2008, p. 219) who differentiates between two "core strands of website sections" (p. 219), namely content and function. The content section provides information that refers to the website's theme, whereas functional sections present information about the website. The website tools on the webpage for this research can be assigned to what Djonov (2008) calls the "function section" (p. 219). They provide information about the website and contribute to the website's functionality rather than present information to the website's theme that is why I consider the website tools as one information module.

A single element of an information module, like a text or a picture, is a *module-component.* Each module-component forms a part of the whole information module and can have sub-components. The following graphic illustrates some module-components of Ad1 that could be identified by participants:
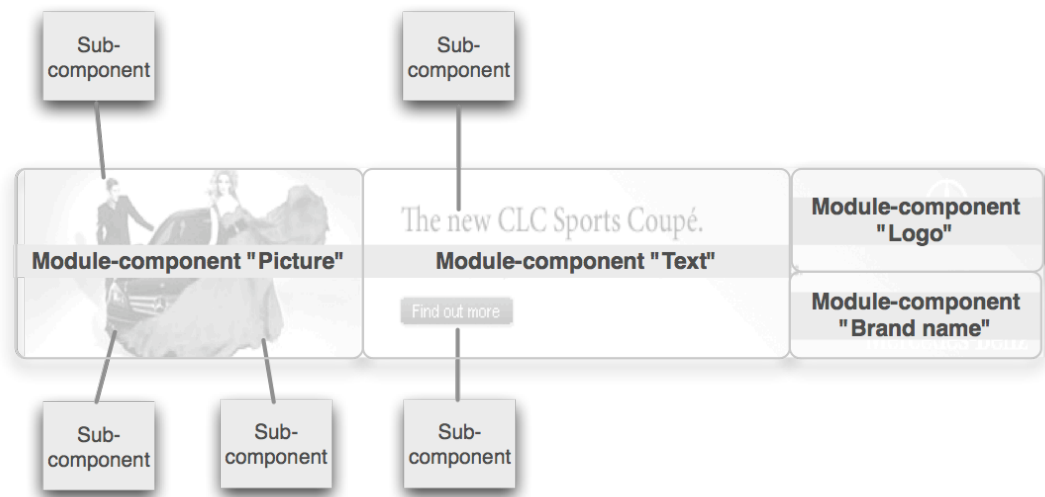
Figure 4: Module-components of Ad1

Each information module contains specific *information content*. The information content is the communicative message of an information module.

Each information module further belongs to a particular *information type*. An information type is a specific genre of documents, such as the genre of advertising or the genre of editorial content or website tools. I am not using the term "genre" here because this term is used inconsistently within the literature. Bhatia (1993, p. 13) for example defines "genre" with focus on the communicative purpose of a document, whereas Bateman (2008, p. 9) concentrates on the forms of expression, such as language, that are employed by a document. In order to avoid confusions, I use the term information type. In the present research there are only three types an information module can belong to: advertising, editorial content or website tools.

Another term I use in this research is *layout.* The layout is "the arrangement […] of elements" on a page (West, 1990, p. 138). In this research, layout is understood as the arrangement of the information modules and their sub-components on the selected webpage.

The following illustration summarises the explained terms:
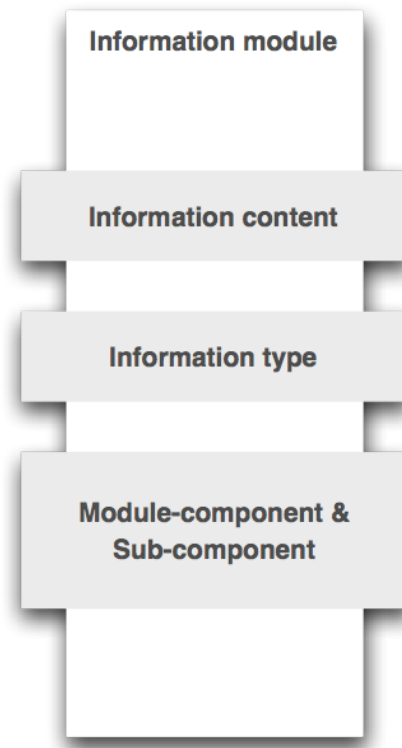
Figure 5: Illustration of terms

In summary, the *information module* is the individual unit in the webpage selected for this research. An information module consists of specific *module-components* and *sub-components*. Each information module is assigned as belonging to a specific *information type*, such as advertising. Further, each information module contains a communicative message, its *information content*.

3.3 Summary

This chapter aimed to outline the goals of this study as well as key terminology and concepts that inform this research. The described understandings and definitions constitute the basis for this research. The foundational aspect in this research is the differentiation between user-centred

and system-centred approaches. A user-centred approach is characterised by its focus on the user's interpretations of a document, which differentiates it from a system-centred approach that analyses the document itself.

A system-centred approach analyses a document with respect to the denotative meaning of a sign that occurs on the document.

The form of each sign suggests to the social actor the deployment of a specific mode for its interpretation. The social actor, who is both, the person who employs the mode and further adds the connotative meaning to the sign, is in a systems-centred approach not of concern. That is why a system-centred analysis that intends to analyse a document's meaning-affordance, might not be able to fully investigate meaning.

The general aim of this research is to examine what meanings an analysis of a webpage from the user's perspective reveals that probably cannot be discovered by analysing the document alone. This includes also an analysis of what types of relationship the user constructs between the different information modules that are placed on the selected webpage. A relationship can for example be based on content similarity in two or more information modules.

4. Methodology

In the following section, I will outline the methodology and methods applied in this research. I will begin with a general description of research, of qualitative research, and then discuss ethical concerns that arise during the research process. Furthermore, I will introduce and justify the methods chosen for this study. I will continue with a description of the data analysis process and finish this chapter with a summary.

4.1 Research

According to Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill (2003, p. 3), research can be defined as a project that is undertaken in order to examine specific phenomena in a systematic way. The purpose of research is to increase knowledge (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 3). Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill (2003, p. 3) stress the significance of a systematic procedure, and that research ought to be based on logical relationships rather than beliefs. As Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005, p. 11) argue, research should "be understood as the exploration of experience within its social context". Kayrooz and Trevitt's (2005, p. 11) definition of social context includes:

- The researcher him or herself, the researcher's values, identity, professional experience etc.;
- The site of research including the cultural environment, the history, specific values, etc.;
- The research motivation, like the nature of the research, availability of funding, the influence of sponsors, etc.

Lewis et al. (2003, pp. 5-7) state that a research process usually includes the following stages: 1) the formulation and clarification of the topic, 2) reviewing existing literature, 3) selecting the research strategy, 4) collecting the data

5) analysing the gathered data and finally 6) concluding the findings within a project report.

4.1.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research focuses on the social world rather than the world of nature (Liamputtong, 2009, p. X). In this social world, qualitative researchers study the subjective experience of human beings as well as social relations (Flick, 2006, p. 11). According to Flick, Kardorff and Steinke (2004, p. 3), qualitative research claims to "describe life-worlds 'from the inside out', from the point of view of the people who participate". Liamputtong (2009, p. X) argues that in order to understand how people behave in their social worlds, one has to understand the meanings and interpretations that those people assign to their behaviour. The qualitative research approach is characterised by a high flexibility of strategies and a variety of opportunities to capture subjective experiences of individuals. This allows the researcher to investigate meanings and interpretations that people assign to specific phenomena in their social world (Liamputtong, 2009, p. X).

In order to capture the complexity of interpretations and meanings of the participants in qualitative research, data cannot be collected in a highly standardised way, as it is possible in quantitative research. Quantitative research approaches are characterised by a high degree of standardisation in order to ensure a high level of comparison (Flick, 2006, p. 10). For example, questions and their order in a questionnaire are strictly prescribed. In qualitative research, however, data collection is more flexible in order to capture the complexity of interpretations and meanings the participants bring to certain phenomena (Flick, 2006, p. 10). Data in qualitative research is principally interpretive and concentrates on the "who, what, when, why and how of certain phenomena" (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005, p. 110).

In the present research, I am applying a qualitative research approach. This approach is appropriate for this study because I am investigating how users themselves interpret a specific webpage. My concern is to examine the user's subjective experience with the webpage and how the user constructs meaning. A quantitative research approach, which requires the same procedure for each participant, would constrain my research in terms of flexibility to react to the participants' responses.

Research can be conducted *inductively* or *deductively*. The inductive approach assumes that hypotheses are developed after the data is collected and analysed (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 393). Here, the researcher intends to make sense of the data without "imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomenon or setting under study" (Patton, 1990, p. 44). Hypotheses and theories emerge from the data and therefore require a sufficient level of knowledge of the researcher about the research area (Lewis, et al., 2003, pp. 393-394).

The deductive approach assumes that a "clear theoretical position is developed prior to the collection of data" (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 28). The purpose of data collection is then to test previously developed hypotheses (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 28). There is a debate about whether the deductive approach can be applied in qualitative research. Lewis et al. (2003) quote Bryman who summarises the arguments against a deductive approach in qualitative research as follows (pp. 388-389):

> "The prior specification of a theory tends to be disfavoured because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated, as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the views of participants in a social setting."

However, Lewis et al. (2003, p. 389) argue that although a qualitative research may follow an inductive approach, it can be advantageous to commence the research from a theoretical perspective because on the one hand it links the own

research "into the existing body of knowledge" (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 389) in the subject area of the research. On the other hand, referring to existing theories provides the researcher with an initial analytical framework (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 389).

My research contains inductive as well as deductive elements. It is inductive because I interpret the collected data without specific pre-existing expectations about how the participants in this research will respond. However, as outlined in the previous chapter, my understandings are at the same time deductively informed by several approaches such as multimodality or social semiotics. Further, I structured and labelled the components on the selected webpage as *information modules, module-components, sub-components, information content,* and *information type.* By applying these terms, I deductively use them for the analysis of the collected data as well as for the discussion of this research.

Further, I propose a difference between user-centred approaches and system-centred approaches. In this research, I intend to view the collected data from a user-centred perspective. In order to justify this proposition I refer to existing literature. However, I neither have pre-defined expectations about how the participants in this research will respond nor do I intend to verify or falsify specific pre-existing hypotheses.

4.2 Design of the study

I am interested in the webpage user's subjective perspective towards the webpage. For data collection I conduct semi-structured interviews. This means that the interview is guided by a core set of questions but also allows expanding with further questions as needed in order to clarify aspects and to explore responses. I chose semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate data collection strategy because they allow me, the interviewer, not only to get responses from the participants but also to ask for the reasons for their responses. Semi-structured interviews enable me to guide the interview in

accordance with specific core questions but also allow me to remain open for all themes that might come up. This data collection strategy is ideal to investigate why the participants respond in a certain way.

All interviews take place one at a time in the same setting at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The participant determines the time and day of the interview within a given time window of two weeks.

The interview consists of three parts. A list of the principal interview questions is attached in Appendix I, and examples of two complete interviews can be found in Appendix II.

Part one focuses on questions that aim at recalling information content on the webpage that the participant was invited to view at the beginning of the interview. The interview questions target the participants' attitudes toward the webpage, what information content they find prominent and if any of the information content provided by the information modules on the webpage are relevant to them.

In part two of the interview, I ask questions with the help of cards. Appendix I presents all cards I used in this part of the interview. The participant is asked to assign the provided cards that depict module-components from different information modules on the webpage (for example words from the editorial article, a salient colour of an advertisement, image elements etc.) to one of the classes *advertising*, *non-advertising*, or *both*. The cards are provided to the participant in random sequence. After each card, I ask the participants to explain their decision. With the card activity I aim to examine how the participants justify their decision to assign the specific card to one of the categories. Especially when they previously indicated that they could not remember seeing the depicted component.

In part three of the interview, I discuss with the participants what relationships they can identify between the different information modules on the webpage. For this part, the participants are invited to look at the webpage again.

All interviews are audio and video recorded. At an earlier stage of this research project, it was my intention to capture and analyse the participants' verbal as well as non-verbal utterances. As described in the "Approach" chapter, social actors deploy different modes in order to interpret signs and I aimed to capture and analyse a variety of modes the participants deployed during the interviews. For example, the participants in my research apply several modes, including gaze to interpret the signs on the given webpage but also use, among others, the mode of spoken language to response to the interview questions. To capture the variety of applied modes, I installed three video cameras. One video camera was concentrated on the participant's face in order to capture modes like gaze, head movement, and the general facial expression. A second video camera was focused on the participant's upper body from the profile view. With this I aimed to capture for example the participant's upper body posture or his or her arm movements. The third video camera focused on the participant and me as the interviewer and captured the modes we employed in our interaction with each other.

After reviewing the interviews it became apparent that the verbal data of each participant provided a variety of in-depth information. In order to capture and analyse the themes that came up in the interviews, I decided to focus on verbal data only. I still consider non-verbal data as a significant source of information but in order to capture the complexity of information provided by collected verbal data, a change of focus appeared to be necessary.

The verbal data of the interviews were transcribed in order to analyse 'utterances' in the collected data. The following pictures show the different angles of the video cameras that captured the participant:

Figure 6: Shots from Camera 1, Camera 2 and Camera 3

4.2.1 The participants

For this research, I conducted interviews with six participants. According to Patton (1990, p. 184), the sample size in a qualitative research depends on the purpose of the study as well as available time and resources. Since this research is seeking depth information a smaller number of participants is sufficient. This research does not attempt to be representative nor intends to make any generalisations of the findings to the wider public.

For the interviews in this research, I directly approached potential participants, either by email or through personally contacting them. Seven potential participants were approached from my personal network. Six persons agreed to participate and one person declined for personal reasons. The six participants are members of the general public (20 years and above) in New Zealand without consideration of ethnicity, gender, profession, economic and social status or race. These characteristics were not investigated in this research and therefore no criteria for the recruitment. One criterion was however, that the participants must have a basic Internet literacy in order to ensure that they have the ability to identify the information modules and their module-components placed on the webpage.

Each potential participant received an information sheet, which explained the purposes, the procedures of the interview and the participant's rights, for example the right to refuse answering a question and the right for confidentiality. Prior to the interview, each participant voluntarily signed a consent form, with which they confirmed to be informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the research, and that because of the video-taping of the interview, their identity cannot be kept confidential.

4.2.2 Research Ethics

Part of the research process is the consideration of ethical issues. Ethics refers to the appropriate ethical design of the research. According to Lewis et al. (2003, pp. 129-145) ethical issues can occur at all stages of the research process. The appropriateness of the intentions and design of the research including the researcher's behaviour is measured against the broader social norms that indicate how a person ought to behave in a particular situation (Lewis, et al., 2003, pp. 129-145). Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005, p. 120) argue that a researcher must consider the responsibilities of and the risks for all people involved.

Common ethical issues revolve around the right to privacy, non-participation, anonymity and confidentiality (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005, p. 120).

During the design stage of the research, ethical problems might occur while approaching potential participants (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 132). For my study I approached seven potential participants. I put emphasis on a private approach, which means I contacted the potential participants in private so that no outsider was aware of an involvement of this participant. I further considered the participant's right to refuse participation. One person I approached rejected to participate for personal reasons.

Generally, the researcher has to seek informed consent from participants about their willingness to participate and must declare the purpose and nature of the research, the requirements of taking part, about the implications of taking part and participant's rights, as well as about the use of the data collected and the way in which the data will be reported. The potential participant has to submit the consent voluntarily (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 132). As previously mentioned, in my study each participant had to sign a consent form prior to the interview.

Lewis et al. (2003, p. 132) claim that during the data collection stage several ethical concerns may arise. During this stage, the researcher has to be aware of the participant's right for privacy and has to proceed in accordance to the process the participant has given his or her consent to.

As a location for my data collection, I chose a particular room at a university in order to keep the participant's right to privacy, which I guaranteed in the information sheet the participants received prior to the interview.

Further, a truthful handling of the collected data has to be maintained by the researcher. This means the data has to be collected accurately and removal as well as making up of data that might influence the research outcome, is considered as unacceptable and unethical (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 132).

Confidentiality and anonymity are other aspects that I had to consider during my research process. Confidentiality refers to the protection of the participant's identity "in addition to any information they may provide throughout the course of their participation." (AUTEC, 2010) Within the scope of confidentiality, I further have the responsibility to use the collected data only for the purpose of this research (AUTEC, 2010).

Anonymity refers to the aspect that the source of the data, the participant, remains completely unknown or undeclared (AUTEC, 2010). Because of the video

and audio taping of the interviews in the present research, it was not possible for me as the researcher to keep the participant anonymous. This aspect was clearly pointed out in the consent form the participants had to sign.

In order to keep the participants' personal data confidential, I coded the name of each participant in all written documentations in this research, including interview transcriptions and the thesis. In all reports that emerge from this research, participants are labelled as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 and without revealing their gender or other personal data.

The researcher has to allow the participants to refuse answering questions and/or to withdraw from the project at any point in time of the research (AUTEC, 2010). Prior to each interview, I made the participant aware of his or her right to refuse to answer the questions but none of the participants made use of this right.

The researcher has to analyse and represent the collected data honestly without eliminating relevant data. An absence of honesty might distort the conclusions that emerge from the collected and analysed data and do not truthfully represent the information delivered by the participants (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 139). The aspects of anonymity and/or confidentiality applied during the data collection stage are also valid at this stage (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 139).

4.3 Procedure of data analysis

The analysis of the collected data in this research consists of five stages: 1) transcribing the interviews, 2) repeated reading and note-taking of the transcript and simultaneously 3) developing first draft categories about arising themes, 4) identifying of final categories, and 5) analysing the data. These stages of the data analysis process are not static. While reading and categorising the transcripts for example, I am already in the process of analysing them because when reading

the transcripts and developing categories, I analyse the data with respect to my research questions and based on this I decide how to categorise the data.

According to Schmidt (2004, p. 254), the first stage into data analysis is to transcribe the collected data. The transcriptions have to be read several times in order to immerse into the data and to get a sense of the interview as a whole (Creswell, 2007, p. 150).

In stages two and three, I read the transcripts several times. In order to organise the interview data I write down notes and highlight themes and thoughts the participants mentioned. The goal of categorisation is to capture the themes that occur in the interviews (Schmidt, 2004, p. 254) and to make the complexity of the interviews manageable by organising the data (Patton, 1990, p. 283). My developed categories are always informed by the interview data. Although I use these categories to guide my analysis, I am still concentrating on the interview responses of the participants. Their responses are my data.

There are several ways to develop and label categories. Creswell (2007, p. 152) as well as Lewis et al. (2003, p. 381) differentiate between *prefigured* categories that emerge from other studies or theories in the same field of research, and *emergent* categories that derive from the collected data. The identification of categories is guided by the purpose and objectives of the research project (Lewis, et al., 2003, p. 381). In my research, I develop the categories based on the collected interview data. This procedure is appropriate because an application of prefigured categories from other theories and literature would narrow or even distort the analysis. In order to find out how the participants construct meaning of the signs given on the webpage, it is necessary to be open to every argument and every theme the participant touches upon. Every theme then constitutes one category. In cases where two or more participants mention a similar theme, I consider assigning them to one category.

I adopt three sources for category labels from Lewis et al. (2003, p. 381):

- Labels that emerge from the data;
- Labels that are based on the terms used by the participants;
- Labels that come from terms used in existing theories and literature.

For labelling the categories I use labels that emerge from the data. The following table provides an example of the procedure of note taking and the identification of themes:

Participant's response	Notes

"I read the article, that was interesting [...] it was about cholesterol in seafood and there's good and bad one, I heard about it and I never really knew the difference."	Notes:
	  - Editorial article is interesting
	  - Information content of editorial article
	  - Cholesterol and seafood, good and bad one
	  - Participant refers to personal knowledge about good and bad cholesterol
	Themes:
	  • Information content
	  • Personal knowledge
	  • Evaluation of information module

Table 2: Example of theme identification

I furthermore considered to use the themes of the interview questions as an alternative for the development of categories. In doing so, it became apparent that a categorisation based on the interview questions is not sufficient because

the participants occasionally divagated from the initial question and, for example, talked about personal memories. These divagations did not refer directly to the asked question but nevertheless provide useful information and a good insight into the participant's thoughts and how the participant processes the signs provided on the webpage.

Schmidt (2004, p. 255) mentions, that in semi-structured interviews, important text passages do not always occur in the direct context of the questions. By repeatedly reading and analysing the interviews, the researcher can find important text passages that might not be initially obvious (Schmidt, 2004, p. 255).

The development and application of categories is an ongoing and non-linear process (Schmidt, 2004, p. 254). During the repeated reading of each interview transcript, I constantly review, change or expand my categories. Some categories are deleted and merged under more general titles and others come out of previous categories that become too diverse. At the end of stage four, I end up with several main categories.

The following table illustrates the developed categories. These categories consist of the participants' responses and the themes that came up during the interview.

Categories	Examples
• Statements about personal memories, knowledge and beliefs	*"I had a blood test once and they were really surprised with the level of cholesterol."*
• Statements about comfort during interview	*"I'm uncomfortable to say that in front of cameras"*
• Statements about information content	*"the main body contained an article about seafood, mussels, in particular shellfish and cholesterol"*
• Statements about evaluation of information modules or module-components	*"that particular ad didn't really scream out"*
• Statements about layout	*"the content in the middle and then the ads sort of surrounded but they are not part of the article, they are sort of above, below and on the side"*
• Statements about information type advertising	*"Most advertising is telling you what you need"*
• Statements about information type editorial content	*"it's like one of those pages where you can share information"*
• Statements about information type website tools	*"the search bar is at the usual place"*
• Statements about sponsorship-relationship	*"they may be just a sponsor"*

• Statements about relationships based on similarity in information content: seafood	*"by having talking about seafood and having an ad about seafood that makes sense"*
• Statements about relationships based on similarity in information content: food	*"Well the Golden [advertisement] is not that related with fish but I mean it's still food so I guess the relation comes from there."*
• Statements about relationships based on similarity in design: colour	*"the Mercedes one belongs to the article because the colours are similar as in the page"*
• Statements about relationships based on similarity in design: shape	*"those two logos kind of look the same [...] it's round and it's got strong angles on that so [...] I think that fits pretty as well"*
• Statements about relationships based on belief about income and investment	*"Generally people who earn more money [...] invest more money into healthy food, then maybe more seafood"*
• Statements about non-relationships based on difference in information content: processed food	*"the crumpets I thought was out of place because its [...] processed food."*
• Statements about non-relationships based on difference in information content: product category food	*"People aren't usually thinking about cars when they look at a food website"*
• Statements about non-relationships based on difference in information content: product category seafood	*"the crumpets is I wouldn't say it's out of place because it's food was well but it seems like it's not remotely seafood"*

Table 3: Developed categories for data analysis

There is disagreement between researchers whether to count in qualitative research the number of times a specific category occurs in the interviews. Schmidt (2004, p. 257) supports the counting of categories. He argues that counting provides information about potential patterns in the data and possible relationships between categories that can be pursued in the research. In contrary, Creswell (2007, p. 152) argues that counting suggests that all categories are given equal importance and that it ignores the individuality of each text passage. For example, counting might reveal that a category occurs several times but it does not point out that the text passages may represent opposing views (Creswell, 2007, p. 152).

In my research, I tested the usability of counting in terms of the participants' responses in the card activity. Here, based on what they can remember, the participants had to decide whether to assign a card depicting a single module-component of the information modules, like a word or an image, to the class of *advertising*, *non-advertising* or *both*. I considered counting as a possible option because it would allow me to discover tendencies in the participants' answers. However, it became apparent that such an analysis does not give me any information about how the participants justified their decision to assign a specific card to *non-advertising*, *advertising* or *both*. The counting of categories showed me for example that several participants made the same decision but only an in-depth analysis of their responses revealed that they had very different reasons for their decisions. The counting revealed for instance that participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 assigned the card with the logo of the *New Zealand Seafood* advertisement (Ad2) to the class of advertising. The counting shows a very clear result. However, the analysis of the relevant text passages revealed that participants 1, 2, and 6 could indeed remember the logo from the advertisement but participants 3, 4, and 5 did not remember and based their decision on their interpretation of the sign as a logo for a specific brand.

In general, in this research it is important to remain open for every theme the participants address and how they include these themes into their argumentation. It is not important to know how often a specific theme occurred.

At the final stage, I analyse the data. As already mentioned earlier, the different stages of the data analysis process are not clearly distinctive. By developing categories and applying them to the data, I am already analysing i.e. "making sense" of the data. However, at this stage, I investigate specifically what the participants discuss, how they argue and how the different categories are related to each other. Here, I am analyzing the data in order to find answers for my research questions. I use the developed categories as a guideline. For example, when I intend to analyse specific relationships the participants constructed, I draw on the categories that contain responses about relationships. I then analyse the specific interview responses that I assigned to this category.

4.4 Summary

This chapter introduced research methods and design employed in this study. It outlined the processes of data collection and data analysis, which build the foundation for the following chapters, namely the analysis of the collected data and the discussion of results.

This research follows a qualitative approach because it allows to investigate participant's interpretations of a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz they are invited to look at. The data is collected through semi-structured interviews and each of the six interviews consists of a recall section, a card activity and a section where questions in terms of relationships between the different information modules are asked. All interviews are audio and video recorded in order to capture verbal as well as non-verbal utterances.

I further described the process of data analysis in this research. The data analysis consists of five basic steps: 1) transcribing the interviews, 2) repeated

reading of the transcript and simultaneously 3) developing draft categories about arising themes, 4) developing of final categories, and 5) analysing the data.

5. Analysis and discussion of interview data

The intention for this research is to examine how the participants in this research interpreted a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. By analysing the collected interview data, this chapter seeks to explore these user-centred interpretations in participants' responses. Data analysis in this chapter includes the examination of how the participants interpreted the webpage, and what types of relationships between different information modules the participants constructed. My interest in examining relationships between the information modules on the webpage is generated by the use and analysis of contextual advertising in advertising practice as well as advertising research. Further, I will outline the participants' responses concerning 1) environmental factors, 2) their interpretation of editorial content, 3) their interpretation of advertisements, 4) their interpretation of the overall webpage including website tools, as well as 5) relationships the participants constructed between the information modules on the webpage.

5.1 Participants' responses about environmental factors

Hall and Knapp (2002) argue that the communication environment, which includes the physical and the spatial environment (Hall & Knapp, 2002, p. 7) as well as time (Hall & Knapp, 2002, p. 114), has a significant effect on the communicators' perceptions and actions. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003, pp. 166-196), discourses are significantly shaped by the place and time they are occurring. A particular place allows certain actions and limits others. A library is for example an ideal place for reading books but is usually not ideal for having a noisy conversation because of specific rules that apply. In a sports stadium in contrast, everyone is welcome to shout and cheer but it might be not the ideal place for reading a book although it is usually not forbidden. Scollon and Scollon (2003, p. 169) understand these spaces along a dimension, ranging from "very close specification to the needs of particular types of social interactions to very

loose, multi-purpose spaces" (2003, p. 169). Specific places have specific meaning to the people (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 175).

In the specific interview situations in my research, the interviews took place in the premises of a university. Already the space shapes the participants' expectations, behaviours and perceptions. Conducting an interview in a university is different than having the interview in a café for example because a university is an institution and stands for an "official" place while a café is rather casual. The interviews took place in a small room and no one but the participant and me, the interviewer, were present. This makes the interview situation more private. In a more public environment other people might have been present who may have had (consciously or unconsciously) an effect on the participant. I intentionally chose this premise in order to cater for specific needs, for example the need for privacy.

P6 mentioned how the presence of the video cameras affected his/her response. P6 said, "it is wrong to say that but generally people who earn more money also invest more money into healthy food and maybe more seafood, I'm really uncomfortable to say that in front of the cameras." In this particular situation, P6 described her understanding of the relation between people's financial situation and their attitude towards healthy food and seafood. P6 mentioned to feel uncomfortable to talk about her attitude towards this topic, which appears to be very delicate to her. Although this statement does not reveal how the cameras influenced P6's perception of the webpage, it nevertheless indicates that they had an effect on P6.

Responding to the card containing the *Q* sign in the card activity, P5 answered, "I have to put it on both because I just don't know." Similarly, in the case of the card with the colour blue on it, P5 said, "I have to put it to both because I don't remember seeing it […]" and justified her behaviour with "it's

probably a bad time of the day." With reference to the time and day of the interview, P5's statement indicates that s/he did not feel very efficient and that P5's physical condition affected P5's ability to process the information given on the webpage.

P5's statement indicates that the time of the interview and with this the time of the webpage exposure is a factor that had an effect on P5's perception of the webpage. The interview took place at 6pm on a working day. During the picture card activity, P5 admitted several times that s/he could not remember the items depicted on the cards.

To sum up, environmental or layout factors like the interior of the room in which the interview took place or the lighting conditions at the time of the interview influenced the participant's interpretation of the webpage to some degree as well as the perception of their surroundings. The statements of two participants indicate that the time of the interview as well as the presence of the three cameras had an effect on them.

5.2 Participants' responses concerning editorial content

All of the six participants interpreted the information content of the editorial article text as talking about cholesterol in seafood. P1 said, "the main body contained an article about seafood, mussels, in particular shellfish and cholesterol. So it was how much cholesterol is in a cup of shellfish for example." P2 also mentioned that the information in the editorial article was new to him/her. P2 said, "I read an article about cholesterol and seafood. I found out about two types of cholesterol, so that's good. Things I didn't know". P2 went on to explain in more detail the information content of the editorial article that s/he identified: "in the article a person is asking about levels of cholesterol in seafood. I think he was concerned about that. And then the person who replied gave a very in-depth description about the two types of good and bad cholesterol and just general information about seafood in relation to cholesterol. There was a lot of cholesterol. The word is everywhere."

P3 also mentioned besides the description of the information content s/he interpreted, the question and answer style of the editorial article: "the main article was like a question and answer session. Probably some subscriber or a person who uses this website asks the question about cholesterol in mussels and generally shellfish and then the nutritionist on the website gave an answer, which included like a general description of the different types of cholesterol."

It became apparent that several participants interpreted the information content of the editorial article as the overall information content of the webpage. When asked to recall the webpage, P1 said, "the main body contained an article about seafood", P3 referred to it as "the main article was like a question and answer session", while P5 responded "it is a page headed up healthy food and the content was about good cholesterol and bad cholesterol". The word "main" in P1's and P3's responses indicate that both interpret the editorial article as the most significant information module on the webpage.

It appears that P1, P3 and also P5 have a high involvement with the editorial article. In this case, P1, P3 and P5 seem to have processed the information content of the editorial article in more depth because they identified it as the most significant information module.

The level of involvement has been theorised by the "Elaboration Likelihood Model" (ELM), which proposes two routes to persuasion: the central and the peripheral route (Belch & Belch, 2009, p. 167). With reference to the ELM, P1, P3 and P5 appear to have followed the central route, which means that they were highly motivated to process the message in the editorial article.

Several participants referred to personal memories and knowledge when interpreting and evaluating the information content of the editorial article. P1 and P2 for example talked about prior knowledge about seafood and cholesterol and how this knowledge effected his or her evaluation of the information content. P1 said, "the conclusion of the article was that cholesterol intake doesn't matter that much anymore. It's the kind of fat that you take to yourself and I knew that before because my mom is a nurse. So, I thought, who cares how much cholesterol is in the food because that's not the main factor. You can regulate it in other ways."

P2 answered the question whether the information in the article has affected her attitude towards food with, "I learned something I didn't know, for example egg has 200mg of cholesterol, that's huge […] I eat egg quite often compared to other food, so it is like wow that's a lot of cholesterol […] That's something good to know."

P6 referred to a prior experience s/he made with cholesterol in order to explain why the article was interesting. P6 described, "it [the article] was about cholesterol in seafood and there is good and bad one. I heard about it and I never really knew the difference. […] I had a blood test once and they were really

surprised with the level of cholesterol. It was really, really high but they said it's the good one. And I was like okay, as long as it's not bad I'm happy but that was strange. That's why I was interested in what it [the article] is talking about."

P5 interpreted the editorial article as well as some website tools but could not remember any advertisements placed on the webpage. P5 said when asked why s/he did not read anything but the editorial article: "I was [...] sort of concentrating on the content of the article." P5 gave a relatively detailed summary of the information content of the editorial article s/he interpreted: "there is an article about cholesterol in mussels basically and there are bad and good cholesterols and that seafood has cholesterol". P5 went on: "the content was about cholesterol. Good cholesterol and bad cholesterol, HDL and LDL, one is good and one is bad. I guess the HDL is the good one and then it says something about mussels and shrimp and the amount of cholesterol that was in the mussels is 25mg and the shrimp is up to 150mg, in comparison it was an egg, which has 200mg."

Coleman and Norris (1992, p. 37) found in their study of magazine advertisements that, "involvement in a magazine article is inversely related to subsequent recall and recognition of accompanying advertisements." The more the participants in their study were concentrated on the presented article, the less they remembered the advertisements that were placed in near distance to the article (Colman & Norris, 1992, p. 44). In the present research, P5 also justified her not remembering of any advertisement with his or her concentration on the editorial article. It might be that Coleman and Norris' (1992) findings are also valid in the online environment.

All six participants interpreted the editorial article picture as depicting mussels but differed in their reaction to it. P1 for example referred again to her personal experience with mussels. P1 said, "They [the mussels] were really eye-catching because we are selling mussels in the restaurant as well and my first

impression was, are they 'green lipped' mussels? No they are not." P2 referred to her attitude towards mussels and how that effected her reaction when s/he saw the picture. S/he also mentioned the relative prominence of the picture: "The second thing I saw was the picture of the mussels. I'm not a very big fan of mussels I must say, which is why I had like a ugh mussels kind of reaction."

One participant further referred to the layout of the editorial article. P1 compared the arrangement of the editorial article's text and the picture with a table. P1 said, "[...] the article does not continue underneath the picture, there is simply nothing underneath the picture, which makes it a little bit like a table."

To sum up, all six participants interpreted the editorial article. Several participants referred to their own experiences they have with the information content they identified but also how interesting or not interesting the editorial article was to them. Further, some participants referred to their reaction towards the editorial article picture and how they perceived the arrangement of the editorial article text and the editorial article picture.

5.3 Participants' responses concerning advertisements

Participants 1 and 2 mentioned the prominence of the red colour of the woman's dress in Ad1. P2 said "The lady in the Mercedes ad had a really nice dress, I remember thinking nice and red" and P1 said "I took a closer look to this one [the Mercedes advertisement] because of the dress from the woman, a very bright red colour".

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 remembered Ad1. These participants appeared to have different attitudes toward the brand *Mercedes Benz*. P1 said, "I don't like Mercedes" but admitted that "the dress [in the advertisement] looked very good". This indicates that the red dress may be more relevant to P1 than the car.

In contrast, P2 has a favourable attitude towards the brand *Mercedes Benz* but refers to its lack of practicality. P2 differentiates between his/her attitudes towards the advertisement, towards the brand, cars in general and the car's practicality. P2 said, "I'd love to have a Mercedes Benz but it's not really practical for me. So, it's like, I love cars but that particular ad didn't really scream out".

P4 referred to personal knowledge and answered the question whether an advertisement on the webpage is relevant to him/her with "I can't afford a Mercedes".

P1, P2 and P4 have different attitudes toward the brand *Mercedes Benz*. P2's response revealed that there is apparently a difference between the impression of the advertisement and the brand as such. P2 does not appear to like Ad1 but nevertheless has a favourable attitude toward the brand. In contrast, P1 does like a specific module-component, namely the red dress, in the advertisement but does not like the brand. P4 apparently interprets the brand in Ad1 as too expensive. The interpretation as very expensive is clearly made by P4 because although Ad1 names a price for the car, the interpretation as expensive is incumbent upon P4.

In the card activity, it became apparent that all of the six participants assigned the card that depicted the Mercedes Benz logo to the class *advertising*. P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 were also able to identify the logo as belonging to Mercedes Benz. P2, P4 and P6 directly assigned the card to Ad1. P2 said, "It's advertising because it was at the top. Yes, the girl in the red dress." P4 similarly stated, "It's a logo obviously, it's from the Mercedes ad" and also P6 answered, "It was on the banner at the top."

P5 stated that s/he cannot remember it as being placed on the webpage but assigns it to the class of *advertising.* P5 said, "That must be advertising because it's a Mercedes symbol I think" and responded to the question whether s/he remembers seeing it with "No, I cannot." It appears that P5 based the decision

on other criterions than her memory of the webpage. P5 clearly identified the logo as belonging to the *Mercedes Benz* brand.

The fact that P5 cannot remember Ad1 as occurring on the webpage but is able to identify the *Mercedes Benz* brand when exposed to the *Mercedes Benz* logo indicates that P5 possesses awareness about the brand including its logo. According to Keller (1998, p. 88), brand awareness consists of "brand recognition" and "brand recall". Brand recognition "relates to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue" (Keller, 1998, p. 88). In P5's case this means that P5 recognised the brand *Mercedes Benz* when s/he was exposed to the logo because P5 had already experienced the brand and the logo before. Brand recall "relates to consumers' ability to retrieve the brand from memory" without being exposed to the brand itself but rather with a specific product category [...] or a usage situation as a cue" (1998, p. 88). Keller's (1998) definition of brand recall does not seem to be applicable in this case. P5 could not remember Ad1 and this indicates that P5 did not identify what Keller (1998) calls a "cue", which would have evoked P5's memory of *Mercedes Benz*.

Ad2 was recognised by P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 but the participants differed in their interpretations. P1 for example identified the brand name *New Zealand Seafood*, the picture in the advertisement as well as some colours: "the New Zealand Seafood advertisement, there was blue and grey worked in and it looked very nice because it looked like BBQ, nice BBQ". By referring to personal experience P1 further explained why this advertisement is interesting: "it was interesting for me to see the New Zealand Seafood advertisement because a friend of mine is working on her thesis. She is doing tourism and she's working on a project which contains seafood and seafood education related to tourism and so this was interesting because this was an advertisement where you had the possibility to get information about how New Zealand grows seafood and

about seafood farms because there was a website mentioned as well." In P1's case, the specific interest for this advertisement emerges from personal context. Here, the connotative meaning derives from P2's individual background.

P2 identified Ad2 as being about the Auckland Seafood Show, an event P2 attended a while ago. P2 said, "There was a banner on the right hand side and I think it was the Auckland Seafood Show or something. [...] I volunteered [at the Auckland Seafood Show] and I remember just thinking back to it. I did it together with another girl, I forgot her name, but we did it together and I remember thinking that we didn't actually get any free food and I would have loved to have some seafood because the whole day you are surrounded by seafood but you don't get any. Yes, I remember thinking about it when I was looking at the seafood ad." It appears that Ad2 evoked P2's memory of the Auckland Seafood Show and that induced P2 to believe that this advertisement is about that event. Here, the interpretation is apparently based on P2's personal context.

This finding supports Lee et al.'s (2004) results that the user's subjective perception of a website can be different from what is structurally placed on the website. While Lee et al. (2004) focused in their in-depth interviews on how informative, interactive and attractive the participants evaluated the website based on the features that occur on the website, the findings of my research adds the insight that apparently also the interpretation of information content can be different from what structurally occurs on the webpage.

With respect to Ad2, P3 said, "there is like a seafood one on the side" and P4 stated, "there was one on the side, which was some sort of seafood". P6 also adds her impression of the advertisement "the one about seafood was interesting, if I want to know about seafood, you can find it there, so that's cool, if I'm in the mood of finding out more about seafood [...]"

P6 seems to have Ad2 evaluated as a more relevant source for information about seafood than the editorial article. There are no aspects in P6's statements

that indicate why s/he came to this conclusion. It might be that P6 has previous experience with this advertisement or the website it refers to. Another explanation might be that one or more module-components in Ad2 brought P6 to this conclusion. For example, in contrast to the editorial article, Ad2 contains an action phrase, which invites the user to conduct a specific action. The specific action phrase in Ad2 says, "For everything you need to know about New Zealand Seafood visit". Although Hand, Robinson and Wysocka (2007, p. 537) found in their study that the inclusion of action phrases in banner advertisements do not enhance advertising effectiveness, it might have been successful in P6's case.

P5 did not identify the brand of Ad2, *New Zealand Seafood,* neither in the card activity nor in the recall section of the interview. In the card activity, P5 assigned the card with the *New Zealand Seafood* name to the editorial article instead of Ad2. According to du Plessis (2005, p. 136), advertising receivers have to "spend time giving attention to the advertisement in order for them to remember it." It appears that P5 did not pay attention to Ad2. Non-awareness of information modules on the webpage is clearly user specific because it is the user who consciously or unconsciously pays attention to something.

The presence of Ad3 was only remembered by P2 and partially by P6. P2 directly identified the advertiser *flossie.com*. P2 also mentioned for what target audience *flossie.com* provides information: "flossie is for women." P6 remembered the pink colour of the advertisement: "there was also a pink thing […] a very small ad."

P1, P3, P4, and P5 did not remember Ad3. While P5 did not refer to Ad3 at all, P4 said: "I didn't really notice the flossie one before" and P1, P3, and P6 stated (when looking at the webpage again) that they do not know what this advertisement is about. P3 said: "I didn't remember that flossie.com […] but I don't know what it's about". P1 said, "the small advertisement from flossie.com,

I don't know what it is […] that is so small besides the New Zealand Seafood advertisement, that it actually got lost in my mind." Here, P1 explained that the small size of Ad3 affected P1's ability to remember this advertisement.

That the size of a banner advertisement has an effect on a user's ability to recall it supports the results Cho (1999, p. 43) found in his study. Cho (1999, p. 43) found that in low-involvement situations, a banner advertisement with a larger size was more likely to be clicked by the participants of his study. The level of involvement is defined by Cho (1999, p. 38) as the "motivation to process ad content". In the present research, it seems that P1, P3, P4, and P5 were in a low-involvement situation, which means they had only a low motivation to process the information content of Ad3. Ad3 occurs in a relatively small size. The combination of low-involvement level and small banner size apparently led to the effect that these four participants did not remember Ad3 at all.

Another explanation might be that the overall layout of the webpage influences P1's perceptions of single information modules. P1 referred in his/her statement to his/her perception that Ad3 is small compared to Ad2, which is placed "besides" (P1) Ad3. It might occur what White (2002) calls the principles of "dominance" and "scale". Dominance is according to White (2002) a principle in graphic design where the size of one element is manipulated so that it overwhelms another element. Scale is also named the "relative size" (White, 2002, p. 63) of an element and means that "readers perceive an element as being 'small' or 'big' in comparison to nearby elements".

In the case of Ad2 and Ad3, it appears that P1 interpreted Ad2 as dominant in terms of overwhelming Ad3 and, likewise, that Ad3 appeared to be particularly small because of Ad2's large size.

With respect to Ad3, P6 stated, "I have no idea what this is about, that pink flossie.com" and adds "no idea what it [Ad3] is about, so you don't remember".

Under consideration of Keller's (1998) definition of brand awareness (see above), it appears that P6 did not possess any knowledge about the brand or the product the advertisement promotes. In P6's statement s/he related the lack of knowledge directly with his/her ability to remember Ad3. In contrast, P2 was able to remember Ad3 (see above). P2's statement ("flossie is for women") further revealed that P2 has some knowledge about this brand. This supports the proposition that knowledge is important for remembering the advertisement (Lee, et al., 2004, p. 69).

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 recalled Ad4 but differed in terms of elaborateness. P1 referred to this advertisement by naming the words that occur in the advertisement as well as how s/he interpreted a graphic that it contains. P1 said, "there was an advertisement for recipes and games and it looked like a pancake". P3 repeatedly named the advertisement as "the pancake one".

P2 said, "I remember crumpets", and similarly P4 and P6 said, "they had […] the crumpet one in the bottom" (P4) and "I think it's a crumpet ad" (P6). P6 further admitted that s/he has some experience with that product but also states why s/he probably wouldn't click on the advertisement: "I like crumpets, I buy it but I don't need to know more about it."

P2 provided a reason why s/he can remember that advertisement: "I remember crumpets because I love crumpets". This statement of P2 demonstrates that his/her ability to remember Ad4 is influenced by personal experiences P2 has with the promoted product. P2 states that s/he can remember the advertised product because s/he has a personal interest in it. It appears that also P4 and P6 have some knowledge about the advertised product because they call it by a name, "crumpets", that does not occur in the advertisement itself.

In summary, there appears to be a difference between the participants' responses in terms of whether they could remember the advertisements, how

they interpreted the information contents and how they evaluated each advertisement. What advertisements and how the participants interpret Ad1, Ad2, Ad3 and Ad4 appear to be dependent on their personal experience with and/or knowledge of the promoted product but also their individual background. This supports the propositions of Lee et al. (2004, p. 69) who argue that in a recall situation of a study, web users tend to mention those aspects of a website that are most relevant to them.

5.4 Participants' responses concerning the webpage and website tools

By referring to particular website tools, P1 said, "you had on the left hand side a search bar for articles and you had the option to search by keyword or by a broader theme. […] There were also things like recipes, tools, competition and different subjects related to some news and articles and magazines. The website itself was organised in register cards, they had home, about us, competition, and articles."

P2 also recognised some website tools: "There was general stuff like website policy, privacy, contact us and details and like about us and information about the website, about healthy food guide." The word "general" in P2's description may indicate that P2 is familiar with these types of information.

According to Bellman and Rossiter (2004), users of a website have a specific *website schema*, which they apply when they are viewing a website. The authors describe schemas as cognitive structures that guide the recipients' information processing because they "organize perception by organizing expectations"(Bellman & Rossiter, 2004, p. 38). A website schema is defined as the user's "set of beliefs about information locations, and routes to those locations, for a specific website" (Bellman & Rossiter, 2004, p. 39). The authors argue that based on users' individual experiences with websites in the past, they develop a standardised website schema, which includes general expectations

about where and how to find information on a website. They apply this schema when they are visiting a particular website (Bellman & Rossiter, 2004, p. 39).

P2's choice of the term "general" seem to support Bellman and Rossiter's (2004) suggestions of a website schema. However, some participants not only focused on the location of specific website tools but also on their function. P2 for example, appears to apply previous knowledge about these types of website tools. Several statements of other participants point in a similar direction. P6 identified and remembered: "[there is] the sign up for the newsletter on the bottom and there is also like a site map that tells you what is on each page [...] and the usual copyrights at the bottom." Similar to P2, the word "usual" in P6's explanation indicates that P6 has already some knowledge about the term "copyrights" most probably from viewing other websites.

P5 compared the arrangement on the webpage with websites s/he has visited before: "a lot of pages of the web have that search thing either there [P5 points to the right side of the webpage] or there [points to the left side of the webpage] and also the bar across the top, that has sometimes drop down menus and other links that are connected to them."

Several participants further referred to the layout or the arrangement of the information modules on the webpage. P1 said, when describing the webpage "[...] on the left hand side there was a search bar" and went on, "at the top, over the title of the website, there was an advertisement for Mercedes and on the right hand side there was a seafood advertisement". P4 describes the arrangement of the information modules on the webpage as "[...] the content in the middle and then the ads surrounded but they are not part of the article, they are sort of above, below and on the side", whereas P3 related the position of Ad1 to its prominence: "I saw the car one [Ad1] at the top first because it's right at the top, I think it's the first thing you see".

P3 touches upon certain layout and reading conventions. According to Bennett (2005) "people have learned to look for certain layout standards to organize and prioritize information." (p. 186) In western cultures for example, people scan a page from left to right and from top to bottom (Bennett, 2005, p. 186; Castelhano & Rayner, 2008, p. 10). Document designers often consider these conventions in order to "have some control over the order in which a viewer encounters a screen's content" (Bennett, 2005, p. 186). It appears that P3's interpretation of Ad1's prominence caused by its positioning at the top is based on such conventions.

Further, P3's argumentation that s/he saw Ad1 first because it is located at the top of the webpage, supports the findings of Josephson (2005, p. 78) who found that banner advertisements that are placed at the top are more often viewed than those that are located at the bottom.

When talking about the webpage, P2 referred to the question and answer style of the editorial article. P2 further compared the webpage with other websites s/he has experience with: "I think it's like one of those websites where people post like a frequently asked question or something they want to find out and then an expert or someone with knowledge answers and says what is happening."

Several participants gave a statement concerning their general impression of the webpage. P1 referred to the information content as well as the structure of the webpage: "It's pretty clear structured […] That would be a website where I would browse a little bit, looking for some interesting articles or when I have a hieper [coll. for a strong desire] for some special food, then looking for some recipes."

P1's statement does not only give an insight into his/her evaluation of the webpage. It further provides an interesting example for the influence of P1's

socio-economic environment on him/her. P1 uses in this statement the word "hieper", which is a colloquial word in the German language. It can be translated with "having a strong desire for something". The interview was conducted in English but P1 uses this German word in order to express meaning. According to Norris and Jones (2005a, p. 5), language is a cultural tool and part of the socio-economic environment that is available to those who have access to that culture. P1's statement indicates that s/he has in some way a connection to the German culture, especially the German language and that this context affects P1 in her responses.

P3 answered in terms of the webpage's evaluation: "it has a quite nice interface […] The search part is definitely good, and how they split up that you can choose between articles only and recipes only, that's good, so you can make a choice" and also applied previous knowledge about the brand "healthy food guide": "I know that healthy food guide is a magazine, so that's why they have the magazine shop."

P6 described his/her impression of the webpage as follows: "It looks really standard, although I'm not sure about the Mercedes ad above the actual title because generally you do expect the first thing you see at the top is what you are looking at. The search bar is at the usual place and sometimes are the 'browse articles' on the other side but it's okay." Words like "standard", "generally" and "usual" in P6's statement indicate again that s/he compares this webpage with other websites s/he has experience of. Based on these experiences, P6 concludes that this webpage is not much different from her expectation of a "standard" webpage with respect to the arrangement of its website tools, like the search bar or a browse articles section.

Further, P6 referred to the position of Ad1 at the top, an aspect that has also been identified by P3 (see above). However, in contrast to P3, P6 appeared to be confused about the placement of Ad1 at the top because it does not seem to

meet P6's expectation. It seems P6 expected the general title of the webpage at the top instead of Ad1.

The participants' comparison of the given webpage with other websites indicates that some participants have pre-existing attitudes towards and ideas about the functions and the structure of several website tools. Similar to the descriptions of particular website tools, several participants made some statements concerning the information type *advertising* as well as *editorial content.* Especially in the card activity pre-existing attitudes and knowledge became apparent. Concerning the card depicting the word "Recipes", P2 explained why s/he believes the card belongs to both *advertising* and *non-advertising*: "I think it's both because there were advertisements for a particular brand and they tried to get the people interested for their recipes and to get their recipes to them. At the same time it's also non-advertising because it's like one of those pages where you can share information like free recipes. […] I can remember that there is an option where you can decide to get recipes. Something like top ten recipes." Here, P2 remembered that the webpage provides information to get free recipes. P2 mentioned that there is advertising that promotes a specific brand and that the advertisers attempt to get the audience interested. It seems that in P2's understanding, advertising in general promotes a specific brand as well as intends to attract the audience's attention.

P3 and P4 have a similar understanding. In terms of the card that depicts the editorial article picture with the mussels, P3 said, "It is non-advertising because it's not promoting a particular brand of seafood." P3 seemed to interpret the picture as non-advertising because it does not match with P3's general understanding that advertising promotes a specific brand. P4 answered when looking at the card with the phrase *New Zealand Seafood*: "I would say advertising because of the New Zealand before the seafood. It's advertising for a

specific type of seafood." It appears that P4 has an understanding of advertising as promoting specific types of a product.

Concerning the card that depicted the phrase "You need", some statements revealed further attitudes toward advertising. P3 for instance, could not remember these words but used his/her general knowledge to deduce why it can be assigned to the specific article on the page or to advertising in general: "I don't remember specifically where it was but I'm saying it comes within both because it could just be within the article, saying that you need different types of cholesterol or it could be in advertising, like you need to get this thing." P4 assigned the card directly to the class *advertising* and explained, "because of the terminology 'You need'." P5 had a similar idea and said, "most advertising is telling you what you need."

Some participants interpreted a graphical sign as a logo and related it directly to the class *advertising*. P2 and P4 for example assigned the card with the *Q* sign to advertising although it is, in fact, part of the editorial article. P2 argued, "I don't remember seeing that anywhere but I go with advertising because it looks like a logo" and P4 said, "I don't remember but I think it's advertising because it's a logo". Similarly P5 when s/he had a look at the card: "I'd say that was advertising because it's like a logo."

It appears that several participants have a specific idea about what an advertisement should or should not include. As previously outlined, several participants mentioned aspects like a brand name, a logo or a specific terminology. These ideas appear to be based on the participant's experiences with advertising. P5's statement "most advertising is telling you what you need" is a strong indicator for P5's general understanding of advertising.

A theoretical approach that is related to these findings is the concept of "advertising schema" (Stoltman, 1991, pp. 317-318). Individuals develop an

advertising schema when they are repeatedly and consistently exposed to advertisements, which contain similar semantic, physical or structural features. Similarly to the already introduced proposition of a website schema, an advertising schema contains specific expectations and information, here for example about particular execution structures or appeals (Stoltman, 1991, pp. 317-318) in an advertisement. The findings of the present research indicate that some participants apply such an advertising schema.

The finding that the participants seem to have a previous understanding and specific expectations about advertising in general, can further be assigned into the area of research that focus on what advertising as a specific type of information means to the audience. Ducoffe (1995, p. 1) for example introduced the term "advertising value", which he defined as a "subjective evaluation of the relative worth or utility of advertising to consumers" (p. 1).

To sum up, several participants referred to the webpage in general as well as specific website tools. Website tools, like for example a print button or a search bar, fulfil a certain function for the webpage. It appears that some participants applied previous knowledge with other websites and advertisements in order to compare the given webpage and its information modules with their experiences. Further, several participants referred to the layout of the webpage, which means they described the arrangement of the information modules on the webpage.

5.5 Participants' responses concerning relationships between information modules

Based on the user-centric focus in this study, the relationships between the information modules are understood as constructed by the participants and not as occurring on the webpage itself. In this research the focus lies on the participant's construction of relationships between the information modules placed on the selected webpage. In the following I will outline what types of

relationships between certain information modules the participants in this research constructed.

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 identified relationships between several information modules based on the information modules' information content, more specifically the same product category. Several participants differentiated between different levels of product category, namely "food" and "seafood". Some participants identified a relationship between Ad2 and the editorial article based on the same product category "seafood".

P1 argued, "The advertisement from the New Zealand Seafood is obviously related with the article because the article is about seafood as well." Similarly P3 said, "The New Zealand seafood advertisement is related to this [points to the editorial article] because it's all about seafood." Also P4 constructed a relationship between Ad2 and the editorial article, "the seafood one obviously matches the cholesterol in seafood in the article" as well as P6 said, "having an article talking about seafood and an ad about seafood that makes sense."

P2 applied the seafood-based relationship to separate Ad4 from those information modules that contain information about seafood: "I wouldn't say it [Ad4] is out of place because [...] it's not remotely seafood, so it doesn't really have much to do with it but in the same time it's food so you can't really take it out." Here, P2 referred to a further category that relates several information modules to each other: the product category "food". P2 constructs a relation between Ad4 and those information modules that contain food-related information (including seafood).

Also P3 stated, "Golden [Ad4] is not that related with seafood but it's still food so I guess the relation comes from there" and similarly P6 identified the relation based on the same product category "food" and simultaneously questioned Ad4's relation with seafood: "[...] reading about seafood and then

the crumpets? Crumpets with seafood? I know it's food, it's related but […] a more baking or breakfast part would be good."

The constructions of relationships based on the same product category, support the findings of Cho (1999) as well as Shamdasani et al. (2001) who found that congruence in terms of product category in advertisements and the editorial environment enhances advertising effectiveness. Although I am not investigating advertising effectiveness as such, a congruence concerning the same product category appears to be obvious to several participants in this research.

The content-based categories "food" and "seafood" that were identified as relating specific information modules to each other were also used to separate or not relate other information modules. P3 referred to the category food when separating Ad1 from other information modules. P3 stated, "People aren't usually thinking about cars when they look at a food website." P3 apparently referred to his/her own understanding about what users might expect when visiting a particular website and applied this understanding onto the given webpage.

Further, Ad3 was interpreted as not related to other information modules on the webpage. P1 said, "the small advertisement from flossie.com […] I guess it's not related to the website" and P2 stated, "they all have a kind of good flow with each other, except for flossie because flossie is one of the things one would maybe find on the website for the fashion week or the women's weekly website. I mean something very women oriented." P2 referred to own knowledge about *flossie.com* and that it is something 'woman oriented'. P2 further assumes on what type of website a visitor would rather expect Ad3.

In addition to the interpretation of information modules as not related because they do not contain information about seafood and food, P4 referred to

differences concerning the production process. P4 used the aspect of processed food to separate Ad4 from other information modules: "the crumpets I thought was out of place because it's processed food."

P2 recognised a visual similarity between the logo of Ad1 and the logo of Ad2. P2 said, "those two logos [P2 points to the Ad1 logo and then to the Ad2 logo] kind of look the same. They're round but also have strong angles." It seems that relationships between the different information modules were also identified on the basis of the information modules' design. Equally to the identified relations based on the information content, visual similarity was apparently an important aspect.

P4 related Ad1 to certain website tools on the webpage. P4 said, "the Mercedes ad relates to the webpage because the colours are similar as in the page […] you got the grey bar in the top of the page and you got the same colours in the ad." Similarly, P1 identified colour as a relating aspect but referred to Ad2. P1 further mentioned the effect this similarity has to his/her impression of the webpage: "The colour of the New Zealand Seafood advertisement is similar to the colours used for the website itself, the blue is repeating, the grey is repeating and that actually binds it more into the website, makes it a bit more fitting in." In this case it becomes apparent that P4 and P1 constructed a relationship based on colour-similarity.

The theme of colour similarity also came up in the interviews with P3 and P6. P3 said:" This colour doesn't stand out enough for me to remember that's the thing. I mean okay, I might connect them when I'm looking at this but I wouldn't remember it after." Within the discussion of colours in the interviews, P6 answered the question whether s/he sees a relationship based on colour similarity with, "I suppose if there is something really obvious, like bright pink in

the navigation and it's the same bright pink there, then it would jump out and let me think them together but otherwise, no."

In P3 and P6's case the prominence of the colour appears to be a significant aspect for constructing colour-based relationships between information modules. P3 argued that s/he would construct a colour-based relationship between information modules but would not remember it when the colours are not prominent enough. P6 argued that s/he would not construct a relationship at all when colour-prominence is not given. Especially P6's argument contradicts the statements of P4 and P1, who both constructed a colour-based relationship between information modules on the webpage.

The content-based relationships as well as the design-based relationships (based on shape and colour) outlined so far are both based on similarity. Some participants constructed content-based relationships based on the similarity in terms of the product categories seafood and food. Concerning design-based relationships, the participants constructed relationships based on similar colours or shapes.

In the area of graphic design, similarity is used as a stylistic element to create "unity", which Bennett (2005, p. 179) explains as the organisation of all the parts of a document into a complete whole. This means, that "all different parts of the design should look as if they belong together." (Bennett, 2005, p. 179)

White (2002, p. 5) provides an evolutionary explanation for the individual's consideration of similarity. He argues that the search for similarity as well as differences in a document is a human instinct for survival that evolved throughout human evolution. White (2002, p. 5) explains this phenomenon as follows :

"As humans evolved, an important attribute we acquired was the ability to see potential dangers around us, to see differences in our surroundings. Anything that moved irregularly or was a different colour or texture was worthy of our attention. After all, it might eat us. Noticing differences became an evolutionary advantage for humans. As a result, when we

modern humans look at a printed document or a monitor screen, our eyes instinctively and subconsciously look for similarities and differences among the elements used."

P6 applied a general understanding about the relationship between the financial situation of a person, healthy food/seafood, and the price range of a car like Mercedes Benz. P6 said "the first thing I'm thinking is, why is a Mercedes ad there but I suppose […] generally people who earn more money also invest more money into healthy food and maybe more seafood […]". It appears that P6 believes a person who has more money available might be interested in a car like Mercedes Benz as well as in healthy food and, in particular, seafood. P6 applied this understanding in order to construct a relationship between Ad1 and the general topic of the webpage P6 identified, namely healthy food and seafood.

Apart from content-based and design-based relationships, it appears that some participants further constructed relationships based on specific characteristics they attribute to the information modules or on knowledge they have about specific types of relationships.

P2 identified a specific type of relation between Ad1 and the webpage in general. P2 said, "the Mercedes Benz don't really go with the whole concept of the webpage but they may be a sponsor or so." P2's statement reveals that s/he has a certain understanding of sponsorship-relations. The existing conditions on the webpage, for instance in terms of design or the information content, apparently matches her understanding of sponsorship as a specific type of relation at least in so far, that P2 considers it to be relevant here.

The findings of the data analysis in this chapter constitute the basis for the following section in which I will attempt to answer the research questions.

5.6 Answers to the research questions

In the preceding sections, I reported the interview analysis procedure, the results of the data analysis as well as a discussion of the findings. This allows me now to respond to the two research questions in this study. With this I further provide a summary of the findings.

Research Question One

What types of relationships do the participants construct between the information modules that are placed on a webpage of the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

The interviews aimed to investigate what types of relationships between the information modules on the webpage the participants construct. The data analysis revealed that relationships between the information modules were constructed based on a combination of interpretations of information content, design and personal knowledge.

The types of relationships constructed by the participants are:

- Content-based relationships
- Design-based relationships
- Personal-Knowledge-based relationships

It became apparent that the aspect of similarity is an important factor for some participants for the construction of relationships. Several participants constructed a relationship between information modules based on an aspect they identified in all involved information modules, like a particular product category or a colour. Some participants further used the same aspect to separate those information modules that do not contain this aspect. For example, several participants identified a content-based relationship between those information

modules that refer to the same product category seafood. In contrast, in some cases participants explicitly mentioned that they could not identify a relationship between particular information modules because they do not contain any information about seafood. It was also mentioned by some participants that they did not construct colour-based relationships because of the missing prominence of particular colours.

The findings concerning content-based relationships, support the study results of Cho (1999) as well as Shamdasani et al. (2001). Both authors found a positive effect of congruence between the product-category in the content of the advertisements and the content of the website in which the advertisements were embedded in, on the website user's perception of the advertisement.

In the present research, several participants constructed relationships between the information modules that are not based on the information modules' appearance or content but rather on personal knowledge. P2 identified sponsorship as a potential relationship between Ad1 and the webpage.

According to Chaffey (2006, p. 390), sponsorship-relations on websites usually contain specific visual indicators like "Sponsored by", "Powered by" or "In association with". The selected webpage for this research does not contain such phrases that indicate a sponsorship relation. This sponsorship-relationship is based on P5's knowledge of this type of relationship and therefore user-centred.

Finally, in order to explain a probable relationship between Ad1 and the editorial article, P6 referred to her personal belief about a connection between a person's income and the person's attitude towards healthy food and seafood.

Research Question Two

How do the participants interpret the information modules placed on a selected webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

The data analysis revealed that for the interpretation of the webpage and its information modules, several participants referred to own experiences, knowledge and attitudes. P2 for example identified Ad2 as being about an event s/he once attended, P1 found Ad2 very interesting because her friend writes a thesis about a similar topic and P6 was interested in the editorial article because s/he has a specific medical experience with cholesterol, the information content P6 identified. Further, socio-economic influences became apparent when P1 for example used the word "hieper", a very specific word from her own cultural background. These examples elucidate the importance of the individual and the individual's personal background in the meaning-making process.

Further, the user-centred approach I followed in this research revealed that some of the participants appeared to have previous attitudes and expectations towards the information type advertising, an aspect that Stoltman (1991) calls "advertising schema". In summary, several participants mentioned that advertisements often contain a logo, promote a specific type of a product and make a reference to what the recipient needs.

For the interpretation of the webpage, some participants compared the given webpage with other websites they have experienced. Terms like "general", "usual" and "standard" in some of participants' responses indicate that they used their experience with other websites as a reference. Under consideration of Bellman and Rossiter (2004) it seems that these participants applied a website schema they have, which includes expectations about where and how to find information on a website (p. 39) or in this case a single webpage.

Some effects of environmental factors such as the place of the interview as well as time when exposed to the webpage were further unveiled. These factors are clearly user specific, also because it could be shown that the responses to environmental factors were unique to every participant. Although all interviews took place in the same building in the same room and with the basically same room layout, each interview differed only in time and date and in terms of the sounds outside the room. Despite the sameness of the interview situation, each participant reacted differently to the environmental conditions that occurred at the time of the interview. P5 mentioned for example what effect the late time of the day had on P5's ability to interpret the webpage and P6 mentioned the cameras when s/he talked about his or her attitude toward a specific topic. This supports Knapp and Hall's (2002) as well as Scollon and Scollon's (2003) discussion about the significance of the environment, for example time and location, in which communication takes place.

It can be argued that in order to analyse the webpage's meaning-affordance, it appears that a user-centred analysis can provide useful insights into the participant's interpretations of the webpage. The statements of the six participants in this research revealed how they interpreted the webpage and what types of relationships between the information modules they constructed. Also the variety and types of relationships supports the usefulness of a user-centred approach. A user-centred analysis, in addition to a system-centred analysis of the webpage, might be promising to find out how the webpage, including its advertisements as well as the editorial content, is experienced and interpreted by the webpage user.

6. Research Conclusions

The objective of this study was to examine how participants in this research interpret a webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz. In this research I followed the proposition that the person who interprets the webpage significantly determines the meaning of a webpage and its contents. My interest in this research topic derived from several approaches in the area of multimodality, semiotics as well as advertising research. Research that emphasises the importance of the individual in the process of meaning making but nevertheless analyses the meaning-affordance of a document without including an analysis of the document user's interactions with the website appears incomplete. A potential contradiction could be seen here and it was my intention in this research to investigate what insights an analysis with focus on the user of a document can provide.

In my methodological approach, I differentiated between system-centred and user-centred perspectives. A system-centred approach analyses the meaning-affordance of a document based on the objects it contains, whereas a user-centred approach analyses a document from the user's perspective. In the present study, I conducted a user-centred analysis of the stated webpage. My concern was to analyse how the participants interpret the given webpage and what this user-centred analysis can reveal. With respect to the notion of contextual advertising, this study further included the investigation of what types of relationships between the information modules on the webpage the participants construct.

This study was based on two research questions:

- What types of relationships do the participants construct between the information modules that are placed on a webpage of the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

- How do the participants interpret the information modules placed on a selected webpage from the website www.healthyfood.co.nz?

This study was informed by concepts from the field of multimodality as well as semiotics, especially social semiotics and geosemiotics that emphasise the significance of the environment and the real-time situation (context) of a social action. Furthermore, literature and research on advertising and contextual advertising informed my research.

In order to answer the research questions, I adopted a qualitative research approach to capture the participants' subjective experiences and interpretations of the selected webpage. I conducted semi-structured interviews with six participants. The participants' responses were transcribed, categorized and analysed guided by the two research questions.

The findings of the user-centred analysis in this research, provides a number of insights into the process of meaning-making within each participant when interpreting the selected webpage. The study results illustrate how several participants used personal knowledge, experience and beliefs to make sense of the information provided by the webpage. In addition, I demonstrated in the past sections that interpretation of the given webpage was guided by the personal interest of each participant in the communicative message of each information module. Results from this investigation further imply that the physical environment at the time of webpage exposure had an influence on the

interpretation process of the participant. These results support approaches of social semiotics and multimodality that emphasise the individual in the meaning-making process, and it also supports approaches of geosemiotics that further stress the significance of time and place for the interpretation of signs.

The research unveiled several types of relationships between the information modules on the webpage that were constructed by the participants. Within this context, the findings indicate that personal beliefs and knowledge play a significant role. The sponsorship-relationship and the income-investment-relationship that were constructed by some participants elucidate this aspect.

Several participants in the present study constructed a relationship between information modules based on the same product category. With this, the results seem to support studies that verified the effectiveness of contextual advertising based on similarity concerning the content of an advertisement and the content of the website it is embedded in. Further, this research expanded the work of previous research in the area of contextual advertising. The findings of the present investigation indicated that also similarity based on design, especially concerning shape and colour, played a role in constructing relationships between advertisements and non-advertising content placed on the webpage. This provides useful implications for online advertising practice, namely not only to focus on content-congruence but also to adapt the design of online advertisements, especially banner advertisements, to the design of the website on which the advertisement is placed. Congruence in terms of shapes of logos and colours in general appeared to be significant for some participants to construct relationships between the information modules on the webpage. However, some participants' responses also indicate that the prominence of colour on the webpage is important for the construction of relationships based on colour-similarity. Future research that investigates the significance of colour prominence in the area of contextual advertising would be of benefit.

I conclude that the research showed that a user-centred analysis of the webpage does provide a significant insight into the meaning processes of the participants. In addition to a system-centred analysis of the webpage, a user-centred analysis of the participants' interpretations appears to provide a thorough understanding of meaning-affordances of the webpage in combination with subjective meanings constructed by the webpage users. A user-centred analysis seems to capture several personal characteristics that are important for the interpretation of content and the meaning-making process.

With respect to the semiotic analysis of advertisements on websites, I further conclude that it appears to be useful to examine advertisements within the website context in which they are embedded in. The findings of this study demonstrate that the participants constructed several types of relationships between advertisements and the editorial content. This suggests that the website context of the advertisements played a significant role for the participant's evaluation of how the advertisement 'fits in' the webpage.

There are several limitations that frame the results of this research. For the present study, I invited the participants to look at a particular webpage. The selected webpage is a real webpage, recorded at a particular time on a particular day. Although there are no indications in the participants' responses, it is possible that one or more participants had been exposed to either the webpage or the embedded advertisements before. In such a case, the prior exposure might have had an influence on the study results because the participant may have had prior knowledge about or attitudes toward particular information modules.

To avoid this potential effect, it might be of benefit for future research in this area to create a webpage for the purpose of the study. Current web design standards might be taken into account in order to maintain a sense of reality.

Another limitation of the study is concerned with the artificial setting of the interviews. In each interview, I invited the participants to carefully look at the webpage. In a real-live situation the participants might have had examined the webpage differently. According to Dreze and Hussherr (2003) there is only a 50% chance that a website visitor looks at a banner advertisement on a webpage. The results in a non-artificial setting might have been different.

Further, in order to satisfy ethical standards of research, the participants received an information sheet, which described the purpose and the procedure of the study. Although no interview questions were revealed to the participants prior the interview, it might be possible that the information already provided by the information sheet influenced the participants in their awareness of specific characteristics on the webpage and this might have had an effect on their interpretations of the webpage as well as their interview responses.

For future research I also suggest to looking at interpretations of a webpage with a larger number of participants in order to get a more detailed insight into meaning-making processes and the constructions of relationships between advertisements and editorial content. My research was limited to a very small number of participants and it was therefore not possible to generalise the findings.

Further, my data analysis was limited to the verbal responses of the participants. However, individuals communicate through a variety of modes (Norris, 2004, p. 12), such as head movements, facial expressions and body posture. An integrated analysis of non-verbal utterances would have provided a deeper insight into the participants' interactions with me, the interviewer, the webpage they were invited to look at, as well as their physical environment. For example, the effect of environmental factors, such as the presence of the video cameras during the interviews, might have been better revealed by including an analysis of the participants' non-verbal utterances. I suggest for future research

on user's interpretations of a webpage that an analysis of both verbal as well as non-verbal data would provide valuable information.

I have further found indications in the study results that the level of involvement might be a moderating variable that determines to what extend the findings of the user-centred analysis would concur with findings of a system-centred analysis. It might be that high involvement with the information modules on the webpage lead to higher elaboration of the information provided and therefore to a higher congruence of the participant's interpretations of the information provided by the webpage and what is structurally present on the webpage. I suggest that an investigation as to the significance of levels of involvement within this context would be of benefit.

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APPENDIX I: Interview Questions

Part one

Without looking on the screen:

- Can you please describe what you have seen?

- What was your impression of this webpage? Was anything prominent?

- Was any content on the webpage relevant to you?

- Were any of the advertisements relevant to you?

Part two: Card activity

- Please decide whether the word, the colour or the picture on this card belongs to an advertisement or the informational content of the website.

Figure 7: Cards in the card activity

Part three

After card activity and with looking on the webpage again:

- Do you see any relationships between the contents on the webpage?

- Why do you relate these contents with each other?

APPENDIX II: Interview examples

Participant 6

I: I want you to look at the webpage as careful as possible. Read everything you can find. Take as much time as you need.

[Participant looks on screen]

P: Cool, I think I'm done.

I: Can you please describe what you've seen.

P: I can remember the Mercedes ad at the top and the next thing I saw was the picture of the mussels, so that's the next thing that caught my eye and there was something on the right hand side some cooking on a BBQ and there is an icon on the right hand side, I have no idea what it is about, it is pink and at the bottom there is I, I think it's a crumpet ad or something. And those are all the images I can remember.

I: Was there any text?

P: Yeah, so there is the usual main navigation at the top and the search thing and plus it says something on the car ad, didn't pay attention to it, something something, and there is the usual search box, and I read the content, that was interesting.

I: What was it about?

P: About cholesterol in seafood and there's good and bad one, cause I heard about it and I never really knew, the difference. I know there's a lot about seafood and cholesterol but I chose not to pay too much attention to it. Just focused on the parts that are low in fat cause most seafood is very low in fat. It was an interesting article.

I: Was it relevant to you?

P: Because I just know I had a blood test once and they were really surprised with the level of cholesterol. It was really, really high, but they said it's the good one. So, you know not the bad one you're fine, you're good cholesterol was really high, I'm like, okay as long as it's not bad I'm happy but that was strange. That was really high and yes, so that's why it was relevant, I suppose. That's why I was interested in what it is talking about. Some ads on the right hand side say something about seafood and there was this ad, crumpet I think and something about some games, they're usually quite lame, no offense but they're generally lame */laughs/* It's just click there and then just click something and there is, I know you can sign up for the newsletter and then, this was on the bottom and it's also all this kind of like a site map think, tell you what is on each page which is kind of cool because I was wondering what tool is about. Cause on the main, navigation it said tools, so down there yeah okay that makes sense, cause it said about some BMI calculator and blablabla and usual copyrights but at the bottom, I think I missed couple of things but anyway */laughs/*

I: You said you remember some advertisements, were they relevant to you? What do you think?

P: The first one is the Mercedes, that's the first thing I noticed and about the price range, so even though I was looking for a car kind of but yeah no and the one about the seafood was interesting if I want to know about seafood, you can find out there, so, that's cool yeah if I'm in the mood of finding out more about seafood, depends on why I'm on a website cause sometimes I'm looking for some places to buy it or don't know, and there was a pink thing about, there was a really small ad, no idea what it is about, so I wouldn't probably have clicked on it unless I'm really bored */laughs/* and the crumpet ad is, I think it's crumpet anyway, and probably wouldn't have clicked on it cause I like crumpet, I buy it but I don't need to know anymore about it. That's the three ads, four ads I can remember.

I: Now we come to the picture card activity. I will give you some cards and they depict something and you please decide whether it belongs to non-advertising, advertising or both.

/reads card: "You need"/

P: Oh.

/puts card to both/

I: Why?

P: Because I think in the content it might have said you need this type of cholesterol whatever, and also it's I think on the blue, the one on the BBQ it says something about everything you need to know about seafood or something like that. I'm not hundred percent sure but that's what I can remember.

[reads card: Pic mussels]

P: That was the content.

[puts card to non-advertising]

I: Can you remember it?

P: Yeah, it was right next to the title, you know, right next to the beginning of the article about seafood on the question, yeah.

[reads card: "New Zealand Seafood"]

P: Mmmhh not sure…. I know the blue advertising it talked about a website but by default I relate it to New Zealand seafood just, but I could be wrong, cause I don't know

if it's a website .co.nz or .com, yes, I would just assume as New Zealand seafood, I be attempted to put it there /*points to advertising*/and but can I just put it to both?

   I: Of course.

   /*puts card to both*/

   P: Just because, also, talk about mussels and by default I live in New Zealand I assume this is a New Zealand website and mussel, yeah, common in New Zealand.

   /*reads card: Colour Yellow*/

   /*puts card to advertising*/

   P: Ahaaa, crumpet /*laughs*/

   /*reads card: NZ Seafood sign*/

   /*puts card to advertisement*/

   P: Na, I think that's on the ad, on the right hand side ad, I think.

   /*reads card: Mercedes sign*/

   /*puts card to advertisement*/

   P: This kind of, it…was on the banner.

   /*reads card: Colour blue*/

   /*puts card to non-advertising*/

P: I think that is part of the website and face colour I think cause the advertisement is more to dark blue. It's what I remember.

/reads card: Q/

P: That I don't know. Really don't know.

I: When you can't decide where would it make sense to you?

P: I first, first think come into mind is the quality, trademark or something, you know something about, food quality. So it would probably appear in the, advertising. Probably.

/puts card to advertising/

/reads card: Pic BBQ/

/puts card to advertising/

P: I remember that one. This is on the right hand side.

/reads card: Colour Grey/

/puts card to advertisement/

P: I think, I associate that with the Mercedes ad, that's why I put it there.

/reads card: "Recipes"/

/puts card to non-advertising/

P: Just navigations, part of the bar, at the top and at the bottom.

/reads card: "Cholesterol"/

/puts card to non-advertising/

P: Content.

[Participant looks on the screen again]

P: Ahhh yes it's focussing on the blue, I thoughts it's the Mercedes, cause think of the blue…. I didn't pay attention to the background colour of that.

P: Oh the Q, ah the questions, ah content… You know, sometimes they got this, but not quite with food, this is more New Zealand made products, you have a quality trademark…I have no idea what this is about, that pink flossie.com… Okay, yeah….and so the recipe, I just remember it down there cause I had a quick look down there. New Zealand Seafood? Ah so there…You need?

I: It's in the flossie.com

P: Okay, no I just had a quick read and I'm like no idea what it is about, so you don't remember.

I: When you have a look on that page now and the different content types like advertisement and the article, what do you think which contents are related?

P: Well, the first thing I'm thinking is why there is a Mercedes ad there but I suppose maybe…okay, it is wrong to say that, generally people who earn money also invest more money into healthy food and maybe more seafood. But I'm uncomfortable to say that in front of cameras. But by talking about seafood and having ad seafood that makes sense. But it's kind of like, reading about seafood yum and then like crumpets? Crumpet with seafood? I know it's food, it's related but you kind of like…a more baking or breakfast part would be good.

I: And in terms of not content relation, do you see any relationships?

P: It looks really standard although I'm not sure about the Mercedes ad above the actual title of the ad that I'm not sure, cause generally you do expect to, the first thing you see at the top is what are you looking at. So, that is something I feel anyway. Then I'm, I mean the search bar is at the usual place…sometimes I would ex, ah that depends on the site I've been, sometimes with the browse articles on the other side but it's okay.

I: And would you for example relate contents when they have the same colour?

P: No, not in this case. I think for example, I didn't even register that as being with that ad what I could remember is the blue, the turquoise colour so …no didn't pay attention to the navigation colour. I suppose if there is something really obvious like bright pink in the navigation and it's the same bright pink, there, then it would jump out and let me think together but otherwise, no.

Participant 3

I: I want you to have a look on the webpage. Look at it as careful as possible, read everything you can find. Take as much time as you need.

[Participant looks on the screen]

I: Can you please describe what you have seen on the website? What was it about?

P: So, it was the healthy food website. There is an article about cholesterol in mussels basically and that there are bad and good cholesterols and to that well I guess seafood has cholesterol, it's not bad for you basically. They had an ad at the top, the Mercedes one, one on the side which was some sort of seafood thing and the crumpet one down in the bottom and then I guess is, had the the you know website name and side bar and links down in the bottom and that sort of thing.

I: Was the article relevant to you?

P: Sort of I guess, I mean I didn't know that there is cholesterol in seafood but now that I'm knowing it, so it doesn't change anything anyway because it's not bad cholesterol. But maybe if, if it was bad cholesterol then maybe yes it would be relevant.

I: Were any of the advertisements relevant to you?

P: Not really. I can't afford a Mercedes, I don't really eat crumpets and that sort of things. I can't really remember the the one that was about seafood so it can't be relevant.

I: Was there anything salient for you on the website?

P: I guess the healthy food logo in sort of like pretty…pretty good and eye catching. I mean it has nice colour scheme.

I: I would like to do the picture card activity now.

P: Okay.

I: I give you some cards with some pictures on it and I want you to decide whether it belongs to non-advertising or advertising or both and a short description why you decided that way.

P: Okay.
 [reads card: Pic BBQ]

P: I guess it goes in both. I mean it could be used to advertise some sort of seafood like whatever is on the kebabs there but it could also be used for some sort of recipe or a picture to go with something like that which then you know just in a magazine or something.

I: Can you remember it?

P: No I can't */laughs/*

/participant puts card to both/

[reads card: Pic NZ Seafood sign]

P: Again, I can't remember but I would say advertising just cause of the shape of, it looks like a logo.

/puts card to advertising/

 [reads card: Colour grey]
P: I would go for non-advertising as is a colour.

/puts card to non-advertising/

I:Do you remember it?

P: No. No. I mean it's just a colour.

[reads card: Pic Mercedes Benz]

/puts card to advertising/

P: It's a logo obviously, it's from the Mercedes ad.

[reads card: Colour Blue]

P: Again, I would have to say non-advertising for the same reasons as the other one.

/puts card to non-advertising/

I: Why do you think it's non-advertising?

P: Just because it's a colour and I wouldn't say to have anything associated with it in my mind.

[reads card: "New Zealand seafood"]

/puts card to advertising/

P: I would say advertising just because of the New Zealand before the seafood, it's advertising like a specific type of seafood.

[reads card: "You need"]

/puts card to advertising/

P: Again, this is advertising because of the terminology like You need

I: Can you remember it?

P: I have a bad memory.

 [reads card: Q]

P: I don't remember. I think it's advertising because it's a logo.

/puts card to advertising/

 [reads card: Pic mussels]
P: That, I remember and it was just part of the recipes so it's like not advertising.

/puts card to non-advertising/

I: Where do you think on the page was it?

P: It's at at at the top somewhere I think just where they talk about mussels, like near that question.

 [reads card: "Recipes"]

P: Recipes, I go with non-advertising cause, I mean it could have been one of the links on the side which is talking about recipes.

/puts card to non-advertising/

[reads card: Colour Yellow]

P: Again, this has to do the same thing as the others for the same reasons.
/puts card to non-advertising/

[reads card: "cholesterol"]

P: Cholesterol, I go with non-advertising because of the, as a part of the recipe.

/puts card to non-advertising/

P: I mean not recipe, the…article, sorry.

[looks on the screen]

P: I see. So all those colours were sort of some ads.

I: When you look on the webpage what contents like advertising and the article or anything else belongs together?

P: Well, yeah, the seafood one obviously matches the cholesterol in seafood. I guess you could say the Mercedes one belongs to the article cause the colours are similar as in the page.

I: What do you mean with page?

P: Well, cause you got the grey and the grey bar in the top and you got that sort of thing same colours in the ad and the crumpets I thought was out of place because it's crumpets and it's processed food. Ahm I didn't really noticed the flossie one before.

I: Yes, it's pretty small.

I: Do you see anything that separates the content types like the article and the non-advertising from each other?

P: It's just, I guess where they are placed. Get the content in the middle and then the ads sort of surrounded but they are not part of the article, they are sort of above, below and on the side.