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The use of stereotypes within South African television car advertising using the German language: A multimodal social semiotic approach

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Abstract
The use of the German language is a rare phenomenon in the South African television car advertising context, and thus, when used, has a specific purpose. The question arises as to what advertisers hope to achieve with the use of a foreign language and how this language use creates interest in the product. As audio-visual advertisements cannot be understood through linguistic utterances alone, this article includes a multimodal analysis which incorporates the visual mode. Through a social semiotic approach, we examine the use and function of German and South African national, gender and occupational stereotypes portrayed within car television advertisements in South Africa that use the German language. This approach highlights how advertisers use stereotypes to orientate the consumers in a complex environment. We analyse how stereotypes are conveyed through the use of the German language, together with the visual portrayal of social actors, in order to describe this phenomenon within a South African context.

Keywords: German language use; semiotics; linguistics; stereotypes; advertisements

1. Introduction

The goal of this article is to determine and describe the use and function of stereotypes that are portrayed within South African television car advertisements that use the German language. The use of the German language is a rare phenomenon in the South African television car advertising context. However, Hornikx, van Meurs and Hof (2013: 152) note that "the use of foreign languages in advertising" occurs in other parts of the world where code-switching happens, like Asia, Europe, South America and the USA. Africa is not among the listed continents, although code-switching is a regular occurrence on this continent (Mesthrie 2014: 285). The frequent use of code-switching in South Africa is not surprising given its linguistic

diversity which is reflected by the recognition of multiple official languages,[1] including English, in the South African Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: 1245). While the Pan-South African Language Board, established by national legislation, is supposed to "promote, and create conditions for the development and use of […] all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German […]" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: 1245), German is neither an indigenous nor an official language. Its occurrence in South African advertisements would thus seem to have a specific purpose, which is analysed here. This article therefore contributes a South African perspective to a phenomenon that has been reported on other continents.

When examining the slogans of German automobile companies, it is apparent that there has been a shift from the use of German-only slogans to slogans that are translated into the languages suited to the target audiences. Audi is the only German car manufacturer that still uses a slogan in German internationally. Volkswagen (VW) changed their slogan *Das Auto* to their brand name *Volkswagen*, possibly in an attempt to regain the trust of their customers after the "Dieselgate" scandal in 2015 (Rodriguez 2015), and in 2017 Opel changed from *Wir leben Autos* to the slogan *Die Zukunft gehört allen*, which is translated into English ("the future is everyone's") for international audiences.[2] The international nature of German car brands is briefly discussed in terms of the advertisement genre in section 1.

According to Hornikx et al. (2013: 153), "the foreign language evokes associations with the country where it is typically spoken, and these associations are expected to be transferred to the product". Consumers do not need to understand the German car manufacturer Audi's international slogan, *Vorsprung durch Technik*, but it is in the identification of the slogan as German that associations are triggered, which are then transferred to the product (Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen 2018: 3). This slogan "evokes the associations of reliability and technical expertise, which are seen as characteristics of Germany" (Hornikx et al. 2013: 153). It is these associations of a set of characteristics with a social category, such as the positive national associations mentioned above, that define a stereotype (Petersen & Six 2008: 21). We discuss stereotypes in further detail in sections 3 and 4 of this article.

Having identified the phenomenon of foreign language use in advertising as prevalent on other continents around the world, this article seeks to explore the stereotypes foreign languages invoke within South Africa, therefore contributing knowledge on this topic for research in Africa. To examine this phenomenon, two video television advertisements that were either produced in South Africa or by a South African branch of a German car company were selected from YouTube.com. Aside from being situated in a South African context, the advertisements were selected based on the following two criteria: (i) is this video advertisement for a similar product (e.g., cars) in order to examine a similar type of advertisement? and (ii) is the German language present in the advertisement? The creation of a large corpus of such advertisements, for example as undertaken by Zappavigna (2020: 5), was determined to be beyond the scope of this study, which focuses on a more fine-grained, comparative analysis. The intricacies of stereotype portrayal, which can differ greatly from advertisement to advertisement as highlighted by our research, cannot be described in detail within a corpus. A corpus would be

[1] While the Constitution notes 11 official languages (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: 1245), South African Sign Language has recently been added as the 12th official language of South Africa (du Plessis 2023).

[2] cf. Opel SA (2015) in comparison to Autosvillag.com (2017).

preferred if highlighting specific trends of specific modes within the genre. Furthermore, the methods of studying multimodal corpora that involve audio-visual media have not evolved sufficiently enough to be utilised objectively in a study such as this – there is a lack of multimodal software that can assist in finding similar multimodal trends within other modes aside from language, as well as examining trends in the relationship between modes. As stereotypes are a social association of a social activity or people, a social approach is consequently needed to explore such a social construct.

According to Bezemer and Jewitt (2010), linguistics research displays a trend of categorising research in multimodality as everything semiotic, which has become synonymous for non-linguistic items. This often leads to the erroneous classification of multimodal semiotic analyses as non-linguistic in nature (Kress 2015: 53), yet the creation of a social semiotic framework by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), a semiotician and a linguist, indicates the large influence of linguistics within the development of social semiotics. While linguistics seems to be more apparent in the integration of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) meta-functions in multimodal analyses, a trend Van Leeuwen (2005) began that led to the establishment of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) (O'Halloran 2008: 443), broadening a linguistic-born framework to encompass other modes does not create a solely linguistic analysis any more than broadening a semiotic framework to include language does. Rather, for an audio-visual medium such as video advertisements, a mono-disciplinary focus can lead to an unbalanced analysis of the linguistic, as the growth in the field of applied linguistics has illustrated that language does not exist solely in a vacuum (see Kress 2015). An examination of what the use of the German language in a social context achieves along with its accompanying visuals thus firmly classifies this research as linguistic in nature. While it may examine the German language as one sign of many, it does not only place an equal focus on language and visuals, but also maintains a sociolinguistic lens in its description of the use of this language, along with other languages in the videos, to create social impressions and stereotypes.

Furthermore, while SF-MDA may use linguistic meta-functions to analyse other modes, Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016: 186) illustrate a reason why a more traditional social semiotic approach can still be used over a modern SF-MDA approach. While the aim of an SF-MDA approach is to understand how systems of meaning are organised and used, a multimodal semiotic approach is used to recognize the agency of social actors (advertisers, viewers, and actors within the video) and the social/power relations between them (Jewitt et al. 2016: 186). Since the advertisements are examined in terms of the social associations they portray, the focus of this research is thus on power and social relations in terms of social actors rather than systems, which is why a multimodal social semiotic approach is used above SF-MDA and other multimodal approaches. Section 5 of this research examines the multimodal social semiotic framework used to analyse the advertisements and why this specific framework was chosen.

This research is intended to answer the following questions, by employing a multimodal social semiotic approach:

1. Which kinds of stereotypes are used to portray Germans in two car advertisements in South Africa that use the German language?
2. Which kinds of stereotypes are used to portray South Africans in these advertisements?

3. How do these stereotypes manifest through the presence of the German language and the visual portrayal of social actors within these South African television advertisements?

The answers to these research questions are discussed within the analysis in section 6, as well as in the conclusion of this paper.

2. German car brands as global, foreign brands in South African television advertising

The texts within the genre of advertising are "[…] systematic masses of complex intricate socio-cultural relations that have been ordered in very specific ways to produce a variety of meanings" (Fuery & Wagner 2003: 87). South Africa has never had its own locally-created car company or brand, and with the end of apartheid, many of South Africa's car company subsidiaries were incorporated into their parent companies' global manufacturing operations (Wright & Ferris 1997: 80-81; Barnes & Kaplinsky 2000: 800).

Significant value is placed on particular foreign brands in developing countries like South Africa (Frith & Mueller 2010: 42). The availability of international cable network/satellite programmes has also helped nurture a particular type of consumerism in South Africa (Oyedele & Minor 2012: 93). Developing countries' advertising agencies focus on an imitation of what researchers from the Global North[3] like Frith and Mueller (2010: 40) call "Western mores" as clients and consumers look up to their brands and media.[4] Frith and Mueller (2010: 243) assert that "Western branding and marketing have created the global desire for branded goods". Therefore,

> [g]lobal brands are most often associated with a quality signal that is important for many consumers world-wide; global brands set a standard. Hence, global companies are advised to compete aggressively on quality signals while addressing consumers' scepticism about them.
>
> (Arnould 2011: 5)

While luxury brands such as Mercedes-Benz target an affluent market (Michman & Mazze 2006: 144), Opel buyers are mainly middle-class with mid-incomes (Tuma 2012). Moodley (2007) supports this observation in terms of a South African context with his study on the consumer behaviour of car purchases by the black middle-class[5] South African market. More participants owned Opel automobiles (12%) than Mercedes-Benz (2%), yet when asked as to what brand they would buy in the future, Mercedes-Benz (7%) was the only one of the two to re-emerge (Moodley 2007: 65;106). Family, friends, colleagues and partners or spouses were the most influential in brand choice (Moodley 2007: 97), and price and brand were the top two product factors that influenced these buyers when purchasing (Moodley 2007: 132).

[3] "Global North" and "Global South" were coined to rectify "the use of other economically based terms," as they provide an inclusive and broader definition of global difference, in which a great "trend line" divides the globe into a developed, richer north and a developing, more impoverished south (Del Casino Jr. 2009: 26).
[4] By the term "Western", Frith and Mueller (2010: 37) refer to North America and Western Europe specifically.
[5] Moodley (2007: 34-36) bases his definition of middle class on degrees of consumption routines, "economic independence," the level of education and "physical conditions". He further recommends that policy-makers should standardize a definition of "black" and the black middle-class and skilled group (Moodley 2007: 134).

Due to such a competitive market, companies are under strong competitive pressure, exhibiting a competition for attention, which leads to advertising overload, and thus recipients of advertising are dependent on strategies, such as employing stereotypes, to cope with complex cognitive processes and to orientate themselves in a convoluted environment (Nielsen 2016: 231-232). Television, in particular, can convey a highly simplified, distorted and one-sided picture of reality, thereby using stereotypical ideas (Schleicher 2009: 67).

3. Stereotypes

The term "stereotype", originally the term for a duplicate printing plate of an original in the late 18th century, was first used in the social sciences by Walter Lippmann in 1922 (Szewczyk-Zakrzewska & Avsec 2016: 95). His concept is similar to the printing process in that it imposes or stamps a certain character upon the group from which it takes an individual's characteristics (Petersen 2011: 233; Lippmann 2004: 54). A stereotype thus consists of simplified concepts and Lippmann (2004: 52) describes the maintenance of stereotypes as not just a means of economy of effort, but as a defence of our position in society. This phenomenon still occurs to the present day as stereotypes are a necessity that assist in orientating us a complex world (Schleicher 2009: 64). Experiences are constantly standardized and ordered into categories – without this, we have to rediscover and observe an experience as something new each time, and thus become overwhelmed (Schleicher 2009: 64).

Stereotypes can therefore be described as a general cognitive guide of the world and their reduction function serves an important role in advertising as a strategy for both reception and production (Nielsen 2016: 234). Stereotypes manifest through communicative reproduction, which serves to maintain them within society (Hort 2007: 89). As Volf (2001: 25) explains, "Media does not just portray reality, they create reality". Stereotypes thus not only reproduce power relations and suppression mechanisms, but they also reflect them (Schleicher 2009: 67). Stereotypes can be said to derive from salience effects in perception (Petersen & Six 2008: 21).

The term "salient stimuli" refers to "information that sticks out from a particular setting or context in order to capture the attention of all people some of the time" (Kardes 2002: 38, cited in Han 2016: 1). Saliency is identified as an important category within multimodal social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996:177), which is discussed in section 5 of this article. Allen (2016:216-217) asserts that,

> [w]hile stereotypes are broad generalizations that only apply to a relatively small population or economy, they are often based on demonstrated characteristics that are perceptible to outside observers or casual visitors, such as the preponderance of luxury cars in Germany [...].

Hort (2007: 19) claims, in turn, that the images of social categories are classified according to characteristics such as gender, age, education or occupation and origin, which are supposedly visually and audibly obvious (e.g., a darker/lighter complexion, hair, language and accents, etc.) (Schleicher 2009: 64).

As Kaschula (2013: 37-38) illustrates, a stereotype can manifest linguistically and non-linguistically, for example, if a person uses a specific form of a language, this can signify their social class, and an image of a person may cause impressions of the form of language they

speak. This is highlighted in the Mercedes-Benz advertisement in the language of the car guard, discussed in section 6. In an African context, this is observed by Mushore's (2010) study of stereotypes within advertisements in the Zimbabwean banking sector. The study shows that respondents in some instances could arrive at the same message by either looking only at the visual or verbal signs, or looking at both signs (Mushore 2010:171). This illustrates the importance of examining both the linguistic and visual mode within this study. He identifies from the advertisements and from interview responses that the linguistic sign "We" in the sentence "We understand value" refers to men as logical thinkers, implying that women do not understand the value and are not logical thinkers, consequently conveying gender stereotypes (Mushore 2010: 116). This message is also conveyed in the images of men and women in the advertisement. Gender stereotypes are discussed further along with other types of stereotypes relevant to this research in the next section.

4. German and South African cultural stereotypes

Nielsen (2016: 234-235) illustrates the most frequent stereotypes of social categories used in advertising, namely, national, regional, gender and occupational stereotypes. National stereotypes are used as "shortcuts to establishing a basic familiarity with a particular country/ethnicity, upon which branding campaigns can build" (Allen 2016: 216). This is due to national brands resting "on deeply rooted perceptions of a country's character and identity" (Allen 2016: 216). An example of a national stereotype would be that Germans do not have a sense of humour (Nielsen 2016: 234).[6] Although national stereotypes are no longer seen as mimetic representations of empirical reality, but as subjective constructs (Chew III 2001: 6-7), the establishment of multinational companies in a twentieth-century global capitalist society preserves problematic national constructs (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2000: 151), which, as we highlight in our analysis, are still present in advertisements today.

While German multinational companies maintain national stereotypes about Germany in advertising (cf. Allen 2016) and Germany has a history as a nation state (Ziblatt 2006: 6-7), one country or nation does not equate to one culture (cf. Taras, Steel & Kirkman 2016). Nielsen's (2016) category of regional stereotypes within Germany indicate the multiple cultures within a German national culture, thus highlighting how national stereotypes do not portray a complete duplicate image of reality. A single national stereotype applied to a South African context, in particular, would not lead to an in-depth analysis of the intercultural portrayal within these advertisements, due to South Africa's different historical context, as well as the country's multiethnic nature (Collin & Martin 2013:120). Nevertheless, Germany is moving away from a homogenous national tradition and recognizing its multicultural status (Collins 2017: 22-25), despite the continued use of national stereotypes to represent the country's population in German media (Nielsen 2016: 234). Often, national stereotypes are portrayed in German advertisements in a humorous way, perhaps illustrating that they are no longer taken seriously, as can be seen in the Baden-Württemberg (2008) advertisement.

The focus of this research includes the specific categories of gender roles, occupation, class, race, and ethnicity within cultural stereotypes. Culture is "the enduring yet evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioural patterns into which people are born but that is structurally created and maintained by people's ongoing actions"

[6] See Nielsen's (2016:234) reference to television advertisement of the Opel Karl.

(Spitzberg & Changnon 2009: 6-7). It is dynamic, made of material and non-material elements, variable across regions, class and generations and is associated with specific speech communities (Idang 2015: 97-100), and therefore it is complex. People within one culture may belong to multiple other cultures on the basis of social constructs such as language, gender roles, profession and socio-economic status or class and thus their cultural identities may differ (Hofstede 2011: 3).

Vierra (2014: 5-6) illustrates how archaic gender roles are still present in television advertisements, in which central female figures are depicted using domestic products in dependent roles and take on more submissive and less authoritative roles with less speaking time. Central male figures in television advertisements typically are in opposition to the female figures (Vierra 2014: 6). Nielsen gives an example of the housewife stereotype as a gender stereotype (2016: 235).[7] There are a wide variety of studies that focus on gender representations (Mushore 2010; Pillay 2008; Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, cited in Cowley 2016:18**)**. Mercedes-Benz advertisements, for example, seem to be aimed mostly at men, and portray men more positively than women (Jörninge 2014: 48-49).

Despite the official abolition of racial segregation in South Africa in 1994 and subsequent attempts to deracialize the country, South Africa has not rid itself of division in terms of this social construct. South African Census questionnaires (Stats SA 2011) and many other official forms still ask for respondents to indicate their race. Due to this continued use of racial categorization, also to be found in South African television advertisements, the researchers have adopted the current contextually relevant racial classifications of 'black' and 'white' when describing instances of racial stereotyping. In their recent study on racial and gender portrayal in South Africa, Maree and Jordaan (2016: 6820) indicate that black women are still under-represented in television advertisements. Ebrahim-Vally and Martin (2006: 19) undertook a semiological analysis of television commercials and illustrate stereotypes in a Consol Glass advertisement. Their findings demonstrate that, while there is a theme of unity that runs through all their advertisements with both black and white participants, the races are still segregated with regard to their portrayal, as they do not appear together in one shot (Ebrahim-Vally & Martin 2006: 26). This will inform our analysis, which will examine how black South Africans are represented in comparison to the white German actors, and the nature of the power relationship between them in terms of racial stereotypes conveyed.

Class in South Africa, like gender and race, is a construct connected to colonial domination, in particular with economic control (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 37). For example, a multimodal discourse analysis of *Destiny Man* magazine advertisements highlights that "middle-class black South African masculinity is based on the acquisition of material goods, on perceptions of power and on the ability to transition into formerly white-only spheres" (Leopeng and Langa 2019: 58). This class is further shown to have a particular lifestyle, which includes a focus on purchasing status consumables such as luxury cars, as owning these is seen as a "marker of success" (Leopeng and Langa 2019: 76), as well as moving from the rural areas to suburbs that were previously areas demarcated as "white-only" (Leopeng and Langa 2019:58). This is an example of class stereotyping, on which Burger et al. (2015: 42) elaborate further, noting that,

[7] See Nielsen's (2016: 234) reference to the advertisement for Sidol by Henkel.

> the consumer market focus on preferences and tastes has been criticised for perpetuating narrow stereotypes of the black middle class as conspicuous consumers with a taste for expensive cars, designer labels and large houses and a reputation as poor creditors.

Occupational stereotypes are also connected with stereotypes of race, gender, and class. Nielsen (2016: 235) gives as an example of occupational stereotypes, the serious and stern-looking, middle-aged man in a white laboratory coat. Occupational stereotypes are often linked to gender stereotypes, with unequal representation of men and women in advertising (Vierra 2014: 6; Nielsen 2016: 235). Spickernell (2016: 11) links occupation to class and race when examining white car guards in her South African research. She explains that the occupation of a car guard is one that falls under the informal sector and is thus stereotypically associated with black people (Spickernell 2016: 7).

Asmall (2010) argues, with a semiotic approach, that offensive local ethnic and gender stereotyping within South African television advertisements is not the goal of advertisers, but the viewers may experience the advertisement in this manner (Asmall 2010: 17). She describes how "multinational clients [...] impose global advertising campaigns on South Africa that are not always successful, as they do not cater for specialized markets" and how "[W]estern values are structurally imposed rather than culturally adopted" (Asmall 2010: 20). This imposition is discussed in relation to the Opel advertisement in our analysis. The adoption of values, however, may be the reason why "ratings confirm that when given the choice, audiences prefer regional content to foreign, as they look for content that resonates with their own culture" (Asmall 2010: 20-21). The findings of Asmall's (2010) study show that South African television advertisements promote nation building and an interracial and intercultural idea of South Africa, but in terms of appealing to the "multicultural and multilingual society" of South Africa, choosing a language still seems to be difficult for advertisers (Asmall 2010: 134-135).

In terms of language specifically and how this contributes to stereotypes, Conradie and van Niekerk (2015: 134-135) found that code-switching between English and indigenous languages causes language to act as a sign of unity and community between the audience and advertiser – connecting the idea of the advertised brand to the multilingual identities of the audience within South African print advertisements. The use of code-switching from Afrikaans to English, however, appeared to use "linguistic tokenism" (Conradie & van Niekerk 2015: 125), where embedded words are added to English phrases to invoke cultural stereotypes related to the embedded language, often exaggerated to ensure the stereotype is recalled, and the authors compare this to German code-switching, which they relate to technological precision which increases the desirability of a brand (Conradie & van Niekerk 2015: 120). Cowley (2016: 75), in turn, indicates, via interviews with multilingual readers of a South African *Nando's* print advertisement, that code-switching between Afrikaans and English also seems to establish unity and a connection with the brand. This indicates that while the use of code-switching between languages in advertisements has the symbolic potential of invoking various stereotypes, it may also be used for establishing a relationship between the viewer and the brand. The present study examines this phenomenon in television car advertisements in order to ascertain whether these patterns are further found in this medium and sub-genre, and how the portrayal of stereotypes in these advertisements differs between simultaneous German representation and South African representation.

5. Social Semiotics

We wish to analyse two of the very few advertisements broadcast on South African television which use the German language to sell their product for the aforementioned stereotypes regarding class, gender, race, etc., and have chosen a social semiotic approach as it takes multimodality into account when analysing "production, reproduction and transformation of the social practices that constitute […] society" (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen 2003: 3).

Social semiotics was influenced by SFL, semiotics and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Jewitt et al. 2016: 224). Despite the fact that Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of design was created in 1996 and the concept of social semiotics was introduced in 1978 by Michael Halliday (Jewitt 2009: 29), the use of multimodal social semiotic analyses is relatively new (cf. Kress 2010; van Leeuwen 2005; Jewitt 2009; Jewitt et al. 2016). Newer multimodal approaches such as SF-MDA still rely on the visual grammar of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) (O'Halloran 2008: 444), which is the foundation and core of multimodal social semiotic analysis. Throughout the world, multimodal social semiotic analyses remain a vital framework for the analysis of the medium of video, despite developments of other multimodal theories (e.g., Dongyan 2016; Morrison 2017; Zappavigna 2020).

Multimodality can be defined as "[t]he use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 20). As mentioned above, the term "mode" "refer[s] to a socially organized set of semiotic resources for making meaning" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 221). The word "semiotics" in the term "social semiotics" demonstrates attentiveness to communicative modes apart from, but not excluding, language, and the word "social" indicates that the theory is related to important sociological concepts (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen 2003: 3). Social semiotics "analyses multimodal texts as playing a vital role in the production, reproduction and transformation of the social practices that constitute […] society […]" (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen 2003: 3). As stated earlier, multimodal television advertisements have transformed advertising, in that viewers now depend on strategies such as stereotypes in order to navigate through a new environment made more complex by television.

Social semiotics is "an approach concerned with how the processes of meaning making (signification and interpretation or 'semiosis') shape and are shaped by individuals and societies to realize power [...]" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 224). Therefore, it differs from traditional semiotics which disregarded the individual way in which language was used (*parole*) (Hodge and Kress 1988: 17). Jewitt (2009: 30) furthers clarifies that "[f]rom this perspective, signs (e.g. talk, gestures and textual artefacts) are analysed as material residues of the sign-maker's interest". Sign-maker's interest is

> the momentary condensation of all the (relevant) social experiences that have shaped the sign maker's subjectivity – a condensation produced by the need for a response to a prompt in and by the social environment in which a new sign is made.
>
> (Jewitt et al. 2016: 103)

Signs do not often occur in isolation and are organized with other signs to portray specific meanings in a specific manner (particularly in a medium as complex as television) (Marshall & Werndly 2002: 22). Signs are also seen as motivated in social semiotics rather than their former arbitrary nature in traditional semiotics (Kress 2010: 67). Furthermore, they are also seen as

transformative – changing over time and context (Jewitt et al. 2016: 103). According to Jewitt (2012: 7), "Signs are a product of a social process of sign making, in which a person (sign maker) brings together a semiotic resource (signifier) with a meaning (the signified) [...]". A semiotic resource thus "refers to a community's means for meaning making. These are both material resources (i.e. modes) and immaterial conceptual resources, which are realized in and through modes (e.g. intensity, coherence, proximity etc.)" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 103). These immaterial conceptual resources are known as general semiotic principles, which are "principles for and features of meaning making that apply across modes" (Jewitt 2016: 95). Jewitt (2016: 95) uses the example of intensity, stating all modes have resources for producing this principle.[8]

Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal social semiotic theories understand "systems of meaning as fluid, contingent and changing in relation to context, history and culture" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 102). Social semioticians construe texts such as video advertisements as artefacts, which are a "semiotic material residue of a sign maker's interests mediated through the environment" in which the sign was made (Jewitt et al. 2016: 110). A social semiotic analysis includes the artefact's design in terms of modal arrangement, order and dominance, the detailed examination of each mode's semiotic resources and principles, as well as "the modal affordances that have been drawn on by the maker of the artefact (as well as those that have not been)" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 112). Modal affordances refer "to the idea that different modes offer different potentials for making meaning" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 218). Furthermore, this analysis examines whether meaning is remade with "a *move* [sic] across modes" (transduction) or whether there is a change in meaning "within the same mode" (transformation) (Jewitt et al. 2016: 108-109). The artefacts will be analysed in terms of the actions of social actors, which highlight specific German and South African stereotypes being portrayed.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) design framework in their work *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* indicates how linguistic meaning is realized visually through categories of representation, interaction and composition, see Figure 1. Composition is comprised of three systems (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 177). Information value (how elements and participants are placed), salience (see definition of salient stimuli in Section 3) and framing ("the presence or absence of framing devices") (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 177). Within the representational category, narrative structure deals with vectors, which indicate relationships and are oblique lines that convey directionality (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 46;59). This category is made up of conceptual processes and narrative processes; the latter will be a focus in this research, which is "[w]hen participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 59). There are two main kinds of narrative processes: action and reactional processes. Action processes occur when "[t]he Actor is the participant from which the vector emanates, or which itself, in whole or in part, forms the vector" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 63). Reactional processes occur "[w]hen the vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more of the represented participants, [...] and we will speak not of Actors, but of Reactors, and not of Goals, but of Phenomena" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 67). Both these processes can be transactional and non-transactional and in the case of action processes, Actors and Goals become Interactors to show their double role (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 63-67). The

[8] Jewitt (2016: 95) lists some of the known intensity realizations by mode: volume and 'lexical' (e.g., *very*) in the spoken mode, speed in the gestural mode, and saturation in the mode of colour. Kress (2010: 80) further mentions using bolded written language as an instance of realization of intensity in the written mode.

interaction category deals with image act and the gaze, social distance and perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 114-129). Due to the interaction category dealing with interactions between sign-makers, in this case producers and interpreters, and not social actors, our analysis will not include this category.

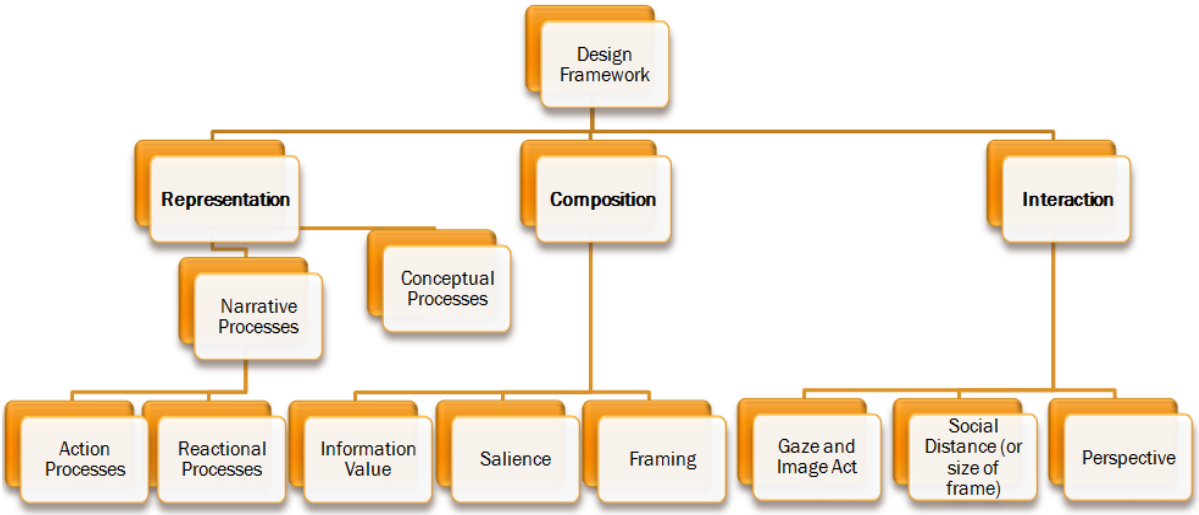

Figure 1: Design framework (based on Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) framework)

Machin (2009: 182) highlights three reasons why multimodal approaches like social semiotics are "promising to both linguists and non-linguists", noting that social semiotics goes beyond the individual sign, but attempts to examine how signs combine to create meaning. Traditional semiotics created lists of iconographic signs but never attempted to "account for the system of choices that lay behind these," and a multimodal approach like social semiotics allows us to gain more insight into the types of communicative functions of visual texts (Machin 2009: 182). It is thus a versatile approach that can be adapted to many genres and mediums (Jewitt et al. 2016: 194) and is consequently even more descriptive than traditional semiotics. A multimodal social semiotic approach "goes beyond a 'pure' description and the mapping of features," as "[i]t combines a conceptual and an empirical focus [...]" (Jewitt et al. 2016: 115).

As discussed in section 1, two South African television car advertisements that use the German language, which are available in the public domain on Youtube.com, are analysed, namely (i) a Mercedes-Benz television advertisement published in 2016 by the company Joe Public,[9] a South African advertising agency, and (ii) an Opel television advertisement published by Opel SA for their campaign "Meet the New Germans" in 2015.[10] These advertisements are analysed by using a qualitative social semiotic analysis in order to establish the relations between social actors and sign-maker choices, which impact the presentation of stereotypes.

6. Mercedes-Benz V-Class (Joe Public 2016) – advertisement analysis and findings

Using a man in a white lab coat speaking German without subtitles for a South African audience in the Mercedes-Benz V-Class advertisement (Joe Public 2016) conveys many stereotypes about Germans on the level of national culture, as well as on the level of occupation. There are

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTmP6X2q8Uw
[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcbx4PWGoKY

also national stereotypes connected to this occupational stereotype: engineering and other scientific work has to be precise, and the choice of this figure, as a representative of the German nation, evokes the positive stereotypes of German precision, efficiency, quality work, reliability and technical expertise, which are discussed as being invoked by the language in other studies (Conradie & Van Niekerk 2015: 120; Hornikx, et al. 2013: 153). These positive stereotypes are further emphasized by the exaggerated actions which the scientist as the embodiment of a park assist system performs (0:24 and 0:28-0:31). As with Audi's slogan, the use of German in this advertisement has a similar function and the lack of subtitles indicate the language is not meant to be understood, although many South African speakers may pick up meanings of the words *ja* ("yes") and *super* due to their similarities to Afrikaans and South African English. The gestures of the actor portraying the German engineer allow viewers to comprehend that he is directing the driver in parking the car and thus it is not a requirement that his speech be understood. The German engineer appearing from and disappearing into the vehicle means he is an extension of the product – the 360° camera within the Mercedes-Benz V-Class. Therefore, any positive stereotypes of Germans that he evokes are immediately transferred onto the product. A German accent or English subtitles, for example, instead of the sole use of the German language would have taken away authenticity towards the product, as other associations could possibly be evoked by the presence of another language, causing the strength of the positive German connotations, to diminish. We propose that the use of German, instead of just the use of a German accent or translated subtitles, is a realization of the principle of intensity (see Jewitt 2016: 95 and section 5 of this paper). This choice by the sign-maker augments the German language connotations in this advertisement.

In addition, the fact that German may be incomprehensible to a South African audience makes the man and his actions more foreign, and the (easily solvable) mystery is then also transferred onto the product. This is the opposite of the multilingual and complex connection which establishes a relationship between viewer and brand observed in Conradie and van Niekerk (2015) and Cowley (2016) in their observations of Afrikaans and English code-switching. This, however, makes sense as German is not an official language that is found within the usual multilingual repertoire of a typical South African viewer, consequently the opposite of an inclusive connection is invoked.

The German language in this advertisement is the dominant sign. The dominant mode is consequently the spoken mode, as it connects the other modes together in order to evoke positive stereotypes referring to Germans linked with the brand and the work within the country, in which the brand was developed. Without the language, the engineer could not be recognized as German as quickly, as the image of scientific professionalism conjured by the white lab coat and glasses would not be as strongly connected to the brand and its origins without its presence. The intensity and dominance of the use of the German language thus create a stronger image of these stereotypes that are connected with the product.

Despite the emphasis on the German language in this advertisement, the sign-makers use a variety of semiotic resources to ensure this advertisement is recognisable as South African, from salient signs such as the car guard's uniform and the isiZulu he speaks, to the subtleties of the GP licence plates on the vehicles and the South African "No Stopping" sign visible in the background (0:00-0:02). The choice of the use of isiZulu over another of South Africa's 11 languages has the audience assume that he may be umZulu (although this is not necessarily an accurate assumption as people who speak isiZulu may not necessarily associate themselves with

the amaZulu culture), and while the language appears only briefly in terms of the other three languages in the advertisement, the few utterances that appear without subtitles can only be understood by an isiZulu-speaking audience. The isiZulu spoken here is not formal, but slang, with words such as the interjections *eh-heh* (used to indicate agreement in this context) and *ayeye* (used to indicate upcoming trouble or danger in this context) present. This not only ties the language to urban regions such as Johannesburg, but stands in contrast to the archaic German *Fräulein* ("Miss") (0:21) used by the German engineer. The car guard is stereotypically black and male, the stereotype identified by Spickernell (2016: 7) earlier in this paper, thus portraying an occupational stereotype, as well as highlighting stereotypes according to race, ethnicity and class. Interestingly, the 'engineer' actually does not speak German correctly, using phrases like *kleiner, kleiner* ("smaller, smaller") (0:17) when he means *noch ein kleines bisschen* ("just a little more") – it is as if either the advertising company did not care that someone speaking incorrect German and mispronouncing words would represent 'Germanness', or, similarly to the car guard's language performance, just the semblance of 'Germanness' and 'Zuluness' is deemed enough: *langue* is less important than *parole* (terms discussed in section 5 taken from Hodge & Kress 1988: 17). This relates to a similar phenomenon found in print French advertisements analysed by Conradie and Van Niekerk (2015: 125) which illustrates that incorrect and exaggerated language allows for a stereotype to be invoked quicker and more accurately. It is a play with stereotypes of language and culture which is performed here; possibly funny for the viewers who pick up on it, of no consequence for viewers who do not, and either way, the product remains associated with positive stereotypes regarding the quality of German engineering.

The black woman seems to have authority as the driver, and this appears to be a forward-thinking initiative on the part of the sign-makers. Her presence behind the wheel of a Mercedes-Benz elevates her class from the car guard as Mercedes-Benz is a brand notably marketed and targeting upper classes (Gartman 2013:116). The audience, however, does not actually see an emphasis placed on the action of her driving, rather the camera only centres on her when she is out of the vehicle, her position as Given information in the Composition system. She is thus dependent on the male German engineer for guidance, which connects to stereotypes of women having to depend on (white) men when it comes to technology and driving. This is further emphasized by her silence, as she does not utter a single word throughout the advertisement, and it is only the men that speak. This not only illustrates the trend of class stereotyping of a black middle class and their love of luxury items mentioned by Burger et al (2015: 42), but it also shows that the advertisement, appearing to transcend gender stereotypes, still adheres to unequal gender representation found in advertisements in studies referred to earlier in this paper.

In the visual portrayal of social actors and their interaction, and referring to the theory outlined in section 5, the German engineer is given the most power in this advertisement, which results in the South Africans represented having the least power. This is clear upon examining the design of the advertisement. With regard to the representation category, the majority of processes are narrative. It is clear that the German engineer is mostly an Actor. The car is also a participant and due to the car moving upon the engineer's instructions, it could be argued that it is a transactional process, and that both participants are Interactors, which also highlights their relationship. While the woman driver does participate in action processes, they are minimal, for example, pressing the button that causes the engineer to appear (0:10-0:011). The car guard also participates in a few action processes, such as talking to a driver (0:03-0:05) and

attempting to direct the V-Class driver before the appearance of the German engineer (0:06-0:07), but he is mainly a Reactor, gazing at the German engineer in surprise (0:16-0:17; 0:22). Furthermore, in alignment with the composition system, the German engineer is also proven to be the most salient participant, mostly appearing in the centre of the shot, and mostly framed with the car guard on the left (associated with given information, the past, general, and bad) and the car on the right (associated with new information, the present, specific, and good) (van Leeuwen 2005:201). This again results in the German engineer, and by extension, the car, literally being the centre of attention and having positive stereotypes to be transferred onto him and thus the car, in contrast to the car guard, who simply reacts and is inferior to the German engineer by his position.

A salient interaction that takes place within this advertisement involves the two signs from two different modes – the gesture 'OK' and the spoken *super* (0:34-0:36). The positive interpretation of the 'OK' gesture is reinforced by two other modes to ensure the correct meaning is conveyed, namely by *super* in the spoken mode and his facial expression. It is one of the few times the audience sees the German engineer smile, therefore the positive connotation of the sign used is also conveyed through facial expressions in the gestural mode. The German language, however, is the dominant sign and thus the spoken mode is the dominant mode in this advertisement. It can therefore be argued that the gesture 'OK' is simply a transduction or rough translation of the spoken *super* into another mode, although, similar to the act of language translation, a translated word may be close in meaning, but not exactly the same as the original. This is the case with these two modes, since they are not perfect substitutions for one another, but they are similar, and both are positive. There is, however, a slight change of meaning when the car guard uses this sign and word. He mimics the original gesture, action, and utterance of the German engineer, and while the original meaning is naturally still present, an extra meaning is added, and the sign is consequently transformed. The South African car guard using this sign and attempting to mimic the German engineer, instead of reverting to his old ways of assisting cars to park, implies that the German engineer's ways are superior and that the car guard's ways are consequently inadequate. The sign, therefore, exemplifies that 'the German way is the best way.' In placing German engineering in a superior position, the result is that South Africa, and both South African participants, are placed in an inferior position to the German. One could interpret this as problematic in terms of European-African colonial discourse from these power dynamics based on race (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 37), but the decision to not even try to make the product a part of a new South Africa emphasizes the product's desirable otherness, as discussed above.

7. "Opel SA presents the New Germans" (Opel SA 2015) – analysis and findings

Similar to the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, there is an older German engineer or scientist with grey hair present with a white lab coat and glasses in the Opel advertisement "Opel SA presents the New Germans" (Opel SA 2015). There is, in addition, a younger German in a suit. The older German's surroundings are that of a laboratory, and partially dated, visible in the old computer model in the background. The older German is not, however, presented in the centre of the shot, rather he is presented initially on the right with a black microscope presented in the centre of the shot (0:00-0:07), and thus the microscope is the most salient object in the initial frame, especially due to its colour differing from the surroundings in white. It is thus established that the older German has a scientific background. A vector can further be noted with the engineer's left arm reaching behind and touching the microscope (0:00-0:10) which aims to

connect the older German to the microscope and the scientific associations it signifies. He thus portrays the national-occupational stereotypes similar to the engineer in the Mercedes-Benz advertisement. Furthermore, the stereotype that wearers of glasses are more intelligent and trustworthy (Leder et al. 2011:221) is emphasized by the fact that the older German frequently has his hand on them (0:00;0:09;0:52). The positive national stereotypes of German precision, efficiency, quality work and technical expertise are consequently evoked. His identity as German and these positive associations are further intensified by the use of the German language. Unlike the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, however, English subtitles are present (0:01-0:07).[11] This shows the German is intended (at least partially) to be understood by the audience, unlike in the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, which opens up the relationship between the social actors and the audience further. This lessens the mystery and almost exotic image of the German, which is present in the Mercedes-Benz advertisement. While the positive German connotations that comprise German national stereotypes found in the Mercedes-Benz advertisement with full language use are also evoked here by the German accent and the German language accompanied with English subtitles, the strength (and thus intensity) of these connotations in this Opel advertisement is diminished.

The presence of a younger German man attempts to add new associations with Germanness. He is depicted as creative (sketching the Opel cars and being surrounded by sketches and an easel) and involved in extreme sports (kite-surfing, cycling over ledges, sky-diving), which illustrates his willingness to take risks, which is not present in the portrayal of the seated, older German. This is reinforced by his statement (in English): "Taking Opel engineering, design and style to new levels of innovation" (0:26-0:31). Thus, the new image does not negate the associations with science and engineering. The younger German is further presented as more personable and informal due to his more casual suit and the absence of a tie which the older German is wearing. The younger German speaking English (but with a noticeable German accent) also shows the sign-maker's willingness to adapt to their audience (or at least their English-speaking audience), but the presence of his German accent allows for the positive associations, as evoked by the stereotypes that the older German portrays, to linger. Unlike the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, this seems to suggest that the language change between German to English would create a connection of unity between viewer and brand similar to Cowley's (2016) findings of Afrikaans-English code-switching and Conradie and Van Niekerk's (2015) findings of English and indigenous language code-switching. English as a dominant language in advertising, as identified by Conradie and Van Niekerk (2015: 121), continues to perpetuate colonial unequal power relations and the lack of other indigenous language use within this advertisement could also potentially create an excluding dynamic between multilingual viewers and the advertisers.

The most salient participant is the younger German, who is mostly an Actor. In addition, the older German's initial position on the right side, indicating he is presented as new, present and 'good' information (van Leeuwen 2005:201), changes when the younger German is introduced.

[11] There is only a translation of *Die Deutschen bauen die besten Autos der Welt seit über hundert Jahren* ("The Germans have built the best cars in the world for over a hundred years") and no subtitles given for the second sentence. This may well be a simple error on Opel SA's part, as two months later they released a shortened version of the advertisement further promoting the Opel Corsa (cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bByC0GWLZFg), in which the second German sentence had been omitted. They may have felt it was unnecessary to keep it in, but despite this, it is interesting to contemplate the possible reasons that the sentence *Wir haben unsere Methoden und vermeiden Unnötiges* ("We have our methods and avoid the unnecessary") was not translated.

The deliberate framing with the black line between frames separates the old information on the left (the older German) with the new and present information on the right (the younger German). At the end of the advertisement, the older German as a Reactor looks through this frame, (showing it is not a true boundary) at the younger German Actor. This artificial framing disappears as the younger German crosses over to the left and 'older' side and is replaced by a natural frame, highlighting the blending of old and new into one image of what represents Germany. The younger German moving to the left and placing his arm on the older German's shoulder instead of vice versa reinforces the younger man's words earlier in the advertisement of being "rooted in" their "proud German heritage" (0:07-0:015). This illustrates that despite wanting to add to associations of German quality, Opel SA utilizes the national German stereotypes because they are beneficial to them; they are all positive and promise product quality. These findings are similar to the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, and research conducted by Conradie and van Niekerk (2015) and Hornikx et al. (2013).

Unlike the Mercedes-Benz advertisement, the Opel advertisement is an example of local advertisers mimicking Global North stereotypes and style, as well as those found in standardized advertising, as one can only tell it is a South African advertisement because a young family gets into a car with a KZN number plate (0:44). This illustrates how such advertisements continue to adopt Global North norms, as discussed by Asmall's (2010: 20) study. The depicted family and couples are simply shown interacting with their Opel cars in various ways either by being framed by them or connected by vectors. The depiction of the family may be attempting to portray a targeted South African audience, but the family unit is the typical portrayal used in the Global North. These participants are completely silent. There is also a lack of female presence, and when there are women present, they do not have a voice, similar to the Mercedes-Benz advertisement and other examples of gender portrayal in advertisements mentioned in section 3. The brief presence of the white male driver of the silver Opel and the family, as well as of the diverse couples, emphasizes the younger German's words "And building relationships that bridge generations" (0:46-0:49). This clearly tries to demonstrate that Opel cars assist in creating relationships across ages and races, a strategy that entices buyers of diverse backgrounds. Yet, while South Africans in this advertisement are portrayed as members of possibly diverse cultures, the designers of the advertisements are still adhering to national stereotypes.

8. Conclusion

The application of social semiotic theory has shown that the 'mystique' of the foreign language which is associated with a strong economy and sound science is not only transferred onto the foreign product, but that the product is subsequently 'domesticated' and brought into the sphere of the familiar for South African viewers, similar to findings of Asmall's (2010: 20) study. This is similar to uses of German code-switching in South African print media (Conradie & van Niekerk 2015; Hornikx et al. 2013). This is stronger within the Mercedes-Benz advertisement due to their predominant use of German. However, there are attempts at establishing inclusivity between South African viewers and the Opel brand by code-switching from German to English in this advertisement, a phenomenon discussed by Cowley (2016) regarding Afrikaans-English code-switching and Conradie and van Niekerk (2015) between indigenous languages and English. This may, however, not work due to the adoption of Global North advertising norms, as well as English's colonial dominance and further research should be undertaken in terms of

viewer interviews to determine whether viewers predominantly establish inclusive or exclusive connections with the brand based on this advertisement's use of code-switching.

Various kinds of cultural stereotypes co-occur, which is unsurprising considering the complex nature of cultural representations. The portrayal of 'Germanness' in these advertisements, however, does not surpass the national level, and cultural representation seems to adhere to the existing idea of a national culture, of which the German language represents a salient aspect. In contrast to stereotypes that refer to Germans, South African representation is shown on a more culturally (and racially) diverse level, which is not to say that there is no diversity in Germany. South African social actors in the advertisement reflect various class stereotypes in addition to racial, gender and occupational stereotypes. The presence of the clumsy male car guard in comparison to the wealthier dressed woman driver of the Mercedes-Benz advertisement illustrate clear class lines between the car guard and the drivers of such a product. The car guard's race emphasizes racial and occupational stereotypes. The black woman driver's silence further reinforces racial and gender stereotypes in terms of male dominance of the German scientist. Mixed-couple representation as well as a black family represented in the Opel advertisement may highlight diversity as well, but in both advertisements the silence of South Africans not only highlights gender stereotypes, but also symbolizes national, if not cultural, continuing hegemonic structures.

In both of these advertisements, the power relations between German and South African representation stand in complete contrast, due to the presence of stereotypes. As our social semiotic analysis demonstrates, the stereotypical national representations of Germans in the advertisement reflect hyper-positive connotations that are transferred to and associated with the product. The use of multiple modes assists in strengthening positive connotations to an extreme degree. This hyper-positive portrayal of German national culture in these advertisements consequently leads to less positive portrayals of South Africans, and their roles as silent social Actors emphasize that they are merely present to attract a diverse market interested in the product. The Opel advertisement is less South Africa specific than the Mercedes Benz advertisement. Positive stereotypes produced by the 'sign-makers'[12] that have endured for, and clearly developed over, a lengthy period of time, are beneficial for such advertisers, which is a possible reason for their continued use in this type of advertising. Furthermore, in portraying South Africans as diverse regarding class and race, the potential of reaching and connecting with a wider audience is increased.

We have thus examined not just the impact of language in the portrayal of cultural stereotypes in television advertisements with a social semiotic approach, but also taken the impact of other modes into consideration and how language and other modes work together in these television advertisements. The complex world in which television advertisements occur require an approach in which one no longer examines aspects such as language in isolation, but a multidisciplinary approach in order to account for the different types of meanings present. Within our qualitative analysis, the system of interaction and its categories had to be omitted and thus further research is needed to utilize other multimodal analyses for similar advertisements.

[12] Both producer and interpreter.

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