

**Television Advertising and Television Audiences
in Contemporary South Africa**

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Table of Contents:

Acknowledgements.....	Page	1
Abstract		2
General Introduction		3
Section 1: Empirical Survey of Advertisements		6
1.1. Introduction.....		6
1.2. Methods and Data		13
1.3. Statistical Analysis.....		15
1.4. Results:		17
1.4.1. Speech type.....		17
1.4.2. Race		28
1.4.3. Use type		34
1.4.4. Gender		37
1.4.5. Activity		39
1.4.6. Lifestyle		40
1.4.7. Rhetoric		43
1.4.8. Style		46
1.4.9. Social grouping		48
1.4.10. Interpersonal relationships		49
1.5. Conclusion: Quantitative differences between SABC1 ... and SABC3		50
Section 2: South African Identities		55
2.1. Introduction		55
2.2. Telkom: Hello South Africa		57
2.3. Borrowing and Lending: Sanlam & Sales House		69
2.4. Horingboom, Halfway to Hotazel: The identity of		81
the Other		
2.5. Changing worlds: South African Visions		95
Conclusions		114
Bibliography		116

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Abstract

The three television channels provided by the South African Broadcasting Corporation target different demographic sectors of the South African population. A survey was conducted quantifying advertisements shown on SABC1, which caters for a mainly black audience, and on SABC3, which caters for a mainly white audience. The semiotic codes employed to engage the viewers were recorded, tabulated and measured. The differences between the codes used on each channel were compared and tested for statistical significance. Significant differences were observed in the type of speech used by the advertisements, the race of the characters, the types of products advertised, the lifestyles portrayed and the type of rhetoric used.

Specific examples were subjected to textual analysis to gauge where the approaches to the audiences differed or converged. A number of strategies were observed, reflecting the advertisers' perceptions of the audiences' relationships with the economic and political establishments. Corporate advertisements often represent the diversity of South African society, establishing a corporate identity as a unifying feature. Advertisements for financial services either exploit white anxieties, or black optimism, encouraging investment or credit purchases respectively. A stereotype representing South African isolation and backwardness is often presented as a negative identity, implying a progressive alternative to which the product is integral. Allegories of societal transformation also feature, with varying moods of anxiety or excitement depending on the audience.

Introduction:

Advertisers have one overriding purpose: to convey to as many viewers as possible (given the target audience) an association between a positioning concept and a product name.¹

When I have told people the topic of this dissertation, their most frequent response has been: "What does advertising have to do with the study of literature?" The answer is not obvious, and the research I have done differs in many ways from the traditional analysis of written literature, and from the content of the coursework which made up the rest of my studies for this degree.

My interest in the topic of the relationship between audiences and advertisements began with the problem of readers and texts. During my Bachelor's and Honours degrees in English at UCT I concentrated on South African literature, and frequently encountered a problem with defining the addressee, the difference between the actual readers and the implied readers of South African fiction². I began to wonder about whether the fantasy world of ordinary South Africans were being reflected and catered for in the often turgid political angst that has emerged from our writers.

¹ Robert Goldman, p.45

² Field (1991). Field (1992)

I began to wonder about discourses that were in active engagement with their audience, and the mass media, and in particular advertising, sprang to my mind as the most obvious examples of fictional discourse that actively sought to engage with the everyday concerns and desires of the public.

In order to put this engagement into practise, the public is carefully monitored and scrutinised, and the advertisement is engineered to slot between the personal interests of the individual viewer, and the commercial and ideological interests of the corporate advertiser, in turn reflecting the hegemonic interests of the market.

This dissertation is divided into two sections. The first is an empirical survey of advertising shown on the South African Broadcasting Service's television channels. My concern here is to quantify the similarities and differences between the advertisements constructed for various sectors of the population.

The second section examines specific advertisements, concentrating on the strategies employed to prompt identification

between the advertisers and the audience. The interaction I have taken to allegorise a broader dynamic between the forces of market capitalism and South African society, and as such it often reflects very different relationships with different South African communities.

Section 1

Empirical Survey of Advertisements

shown on SABC1 and SABC3

1.1 Introduction:

The relationship between advertising as a commercial tool, and as a window onto our consumer culture is a vital one, but generally ignored or oversimplified by academic and marketer alike. Advertisers tend to assume that the connection is an easy one; for them advertising works by reflecting the world as (a) commercial. The social commentators who analyse advertising get carried away with their portentous conspiracy theories, and endow the industry with menace and cunning, but allow no sense of proportion to what it is the advertisers themselves think they are about.

Furthermore, advertising is interesting on *both* counts, and it amazes me that most studies restrict themselves to only half the story. As a commercial practice it has a history, a culture and a methodology all its own. And as a key-hole on our world it offers a fabulous and voyeuristic view on our cultural values, both good and bad. It is morally ambiguous, an expression of an impulse as deep as any - the love of trading, hustling, selling and persuading; but at the same time, it is shameless, exploitative and garish."¹

The aim of this project is to use the commercials currently aired on South African television as a gauge of the prevalent cultural values. Immediately I need to draw attention to the narrow aperture of our window on South African culture: all

¹ Davidson (1992) p.3

we can truly see through the study of advertisements is the *advertiser's* own understanding of the culture of his selected public. When it comes to television advertising the public is cropped even before viewing patterns are established, as the poorest sector (albeit decreasingly) do not have access to television sets, and the wealthiest (to some extent) may well limit their viewing to video, satellite television and so on.

The view we are offered of South African cultural values is a peculiar one. In terms of Raymond Williams' model of culture², there is an interstice between the economic and political dominant, residual and emergent forces, which manifest themselves in interesting ways. Because of the extreme division along the racial barriers that apartheid imposed, South Africa has a unique situation in which the economic divisions of the consumer market coincide to a very large extent with cultural values, social class and language. The political changes during this decade have meant that businesses are needing to change, both with regard to their market and their internal composition, and one industry that is affected is advertising.

² Jameson (1991) p.6

The ambiguous nature of business practices (in which ethical considerations usually are motivated by profitability) is reflected in advertising, which is both a business in itself, and a mode of communication through which other businesses can address their public. On the one hand South African advertising pre-empted the end of apartheid: when industry and the National Party started negotiating with the ANC, our television screens were already preparing us with comradely post-apartheid lager drinking in commercials. On the other hand, the deeper seated prejudices and fears of the consumer are still pandered to, if not re-enforced. In our commercials there is still a reassuring racial ratio that will allow the viewer to feel benevolently secure in his post-apartheid pub, without feeling threatened and overwhelmed.

In order to gauge the ways in which the two largely separated markets are approached, and their cultural values interpreted, by the advertising industry, I have attempted to conduct an empirical study of the various codes used in television commercials to communicate with the South African audiences.

The quantitative aspects of my research are loosely based on Sut Jhally's studies of the differences between television advertisements intended to reach a mainly female audience (during prime-time) and those intended to reach a mainly male audience (during sports broadcasts)³. Jhally has developed a coding protocol for the analysis of commercials which breaks down various aspects of style, content and mode of address into series of criteria. Using an adaptation of his method, I have tried to quantify the textual content of the advertisements in my study to try to distinguish the general differences (if indeed there are any) between the perceived cultural values of the audiences of SABC1 and SABC3.

I have used (with amendments) Jhally's method of breaking down each advertisement into a number of individual codes. From Jhally I have taken: use-type, person, social grouping, interpersonal relations, activities, lifestyle, rhetorical form and style. In addition, because of their relevance to the South African situation, I have designed three more codes: speech type, race, and gender. Within each of Jhally's codes I have conflated some categories, and added extra categories, so that they might more adequately reflect the South African situation.

³ Jhally (1990) especially chapter five: *Advertising codes and fetishism: an empirical study*.

My reason for choosing to record advertisements only on SABC1 and SABC3 for my study is that the audience composition of the two channels is distinctly polarised (see figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) with SABC3 having a predominantly WCA⁴ (White, coloured & Asian) audience, and SABC1 attracting a mainly black audience. SABC2, which seems to have established itself as a channel dedicated to serving minority audiences, broadcasts in a mixture of English, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Tswana, Venda and has a fairly high proportion of multilingual programs. SABC3 is entirely English medium, and SABC1 has about half of its broadcasts in English, a third multilingual, and the balance divided equally between Xhosa and Zulu. As a result of the language composition, and most probably the programming choices intended to compound the segregation of the audience, SABC1 and SABC3 have clear and distinct patterns of viewership by the two markets, whereas SABC2's audience seems to fluctuate with the particular show being screened.

⁴ In the South African advertising and market research industries, the trend is to divide the population into WCA (white, coloured and Asian) and black. Interestingly, the All Media and Product Surveys (AMPS) changed their format around the same time as the democratisation of the country: whereas previously they had been published in four volumes entitled "White", "Coloured and Asian" "Black" and "All", they are now divided into "The established market", "the emerging market" "the potential market" and "all". In content they seem the same.

One interesting observation is that the WCA audiences of SABC2 do not seem to be watching in significant numbers at the same time as the Black audiences: in Fig.1.2 the time-slot of peak WCA viewing (Saturday 18:00 - 19:00) and the peak Black viewing time (Tuesday 19:00 - 20:00) do not really correlate at all. The message is that as far as South Africa's television viewing is concerned, apartheid is still alive and kicking.

The choice of channels and times was based on the All Media and Product Surveys (AMPS) publications⁵ and AR (Audience Ratings) demographic statistics⁶. According to the market research used most commonly by South African advertising agencies, SABC1 and SABC3 consistently attract distinct audiences in terms of racial categories, whereas SABC2, the third public broadcast channel, seems to waver between WCA and black audiences. The pattern on SABC2 is, however, still segregated- usually each time slot is watched either by a mainly white audience or a mainly black audience, and very rarely is there a mixed audience.

⁵ All Media Products Survey (AMPS) 1993 & 1995. Johannesburg: South Africa

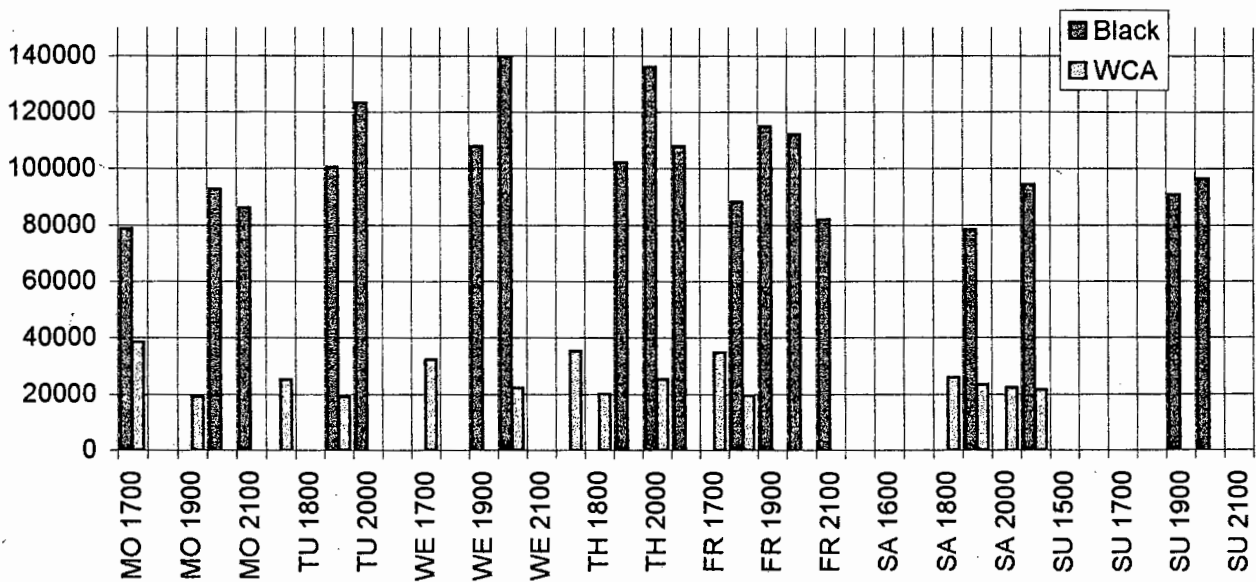
⁶ TELMAR Transmitted for Ogilvy & Mather Cape Town, September 1996 - February 1997

The reason for this segregation is the program choice: each channel is geared towards a particular sector of the population in order to concentrate audiences (for advertisers) as well as concentrate viewing material according to the tastes of the public. SABC3 is entirely English language broadcast, with a high concentration of British programmes, and was introduced as replacement for the English service of the old SABC channel TV1. SABC1 broadcasts a mixture of Xhosa, Zulu and English, and screens a fair number of black American sitcoms and dramas. SABC2 is a catch-net for the remainder of the population: Sesotho, Tswana, Venda, Sepedi and Afrikaans, as well as English medium and multilingual programs are shown. This would explain the swings in audience: a largely WCA Afrikaans speaking audience may watch an Afrikaans medium show, but switch over or switch off if the following show is broadcast in Sepedi.

Typically on a weekday night at eight, SABC1 will have a black audience of between 80 000 and 140 000 , and a WCA audience of 20 000 or less. SABC3 at those times consistently has a WCA audience of between 60 000 and 80 000 , and a black audience generally under 40 000.⁷ The English News,

⁷ See Figures 1,2, 3: Graphs of SABC1, SABC2, SABC3 Audiences

Figure 1
SABC1 - Audiences



Source: Data obtained from TELMAR Audience Ratings, transmitted for Ogilvy Mather, Cape Town, February 1997

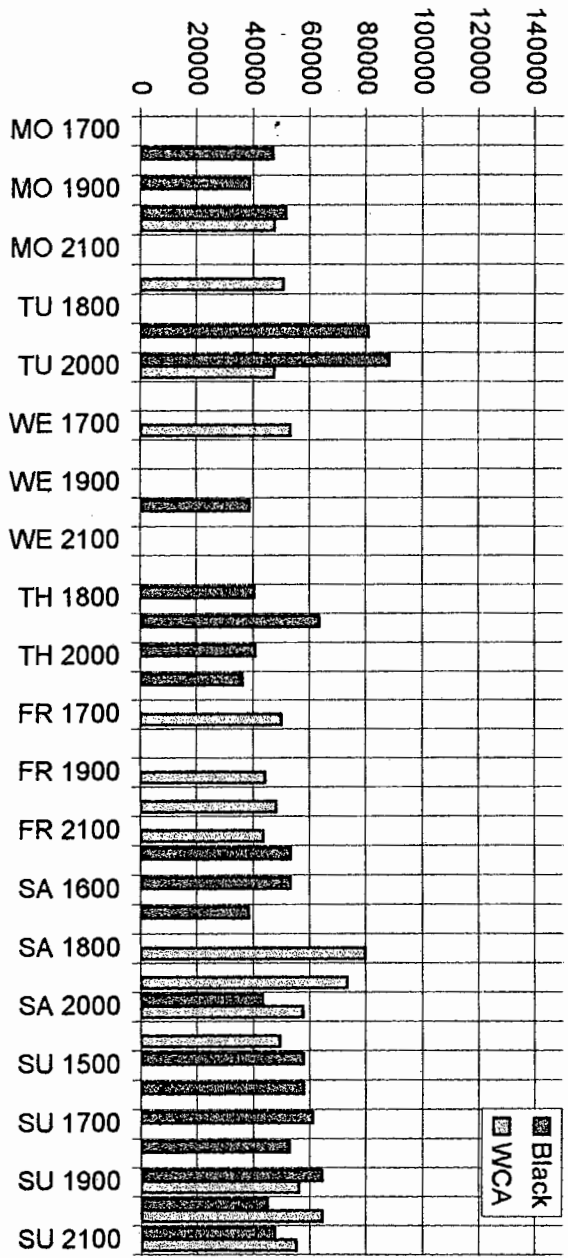


Figure 2
SABC2 - Audiences

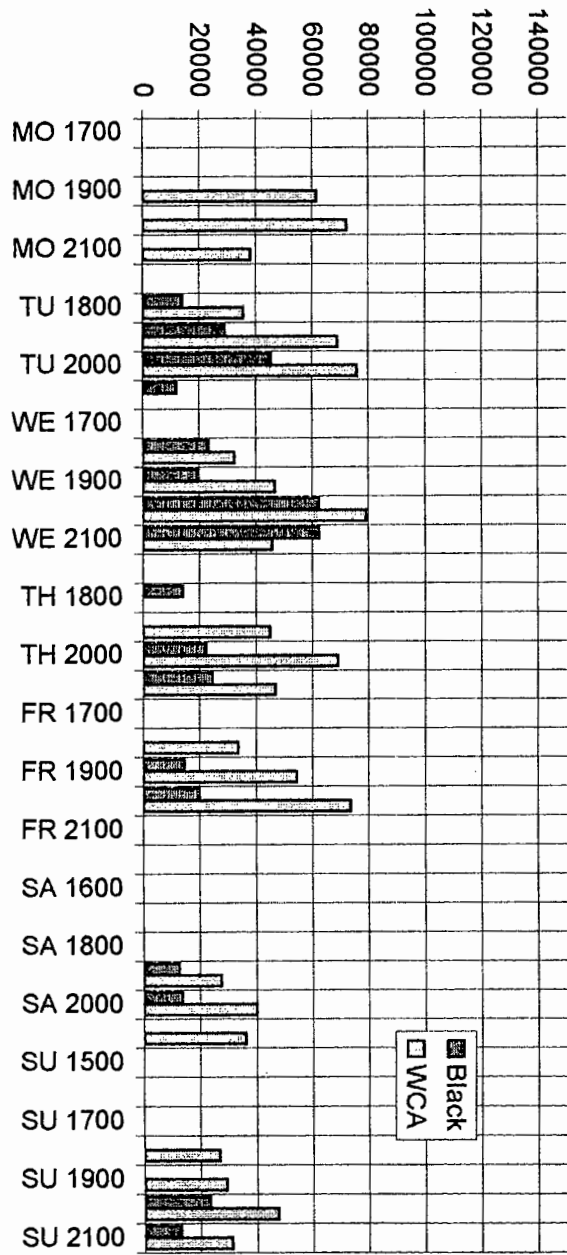


Figure 3
SABBC3 Audiences

broadcast daily on SABC3 at 20:00, increases audience size for both racial categories.

1.2 Methods and Data

The advertisements were recorded simultaneously on two channels (SABC1 and SABC3) between 7pm and 9pm (prime viewing time) during the working week (Monday to Friday) over the course of several months in early 1997. The data shown in this analysis represents the sampling of 253 commercial slots from SABC1 and 265 slots from SABC3. Of the 253 advertisements recorded on SABC1 there were 93 individual commercials (excluding repetitions). Of these 18 were excluded because they were in languages other than English (see below). On SABC3 there were 144 individual advertisements making up the 265 screenings.

Already we can see a difference in the advertising patterns on the two channels: the mean number of screenings (in my sample) is 1.84 on SABC3 and 2.72 on SABC1. This indicates a difference in strategy in marketing towards the audiences of the different channels. The SABC1 prime-time audience is presented with far more hard-sell advertisements for basic consumer items, and the general frequency of screenings is

certainly a sign of this strategy. The SABC3 audience, in contrast, is presented with a larger variety of advertisements, and the method of persuasion is, in general, more subtle. The differences in strategy will become apparent in my discussion of the trends with regard to the style, the rhetoric, the type of characters portrayed, and the type of products advertised.

1.3 Statistical Analysis

In order to investigate whether there is a difference between the frequency of advertisements observed for SABC1 and those collected from SABC3, I used the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical test.⁸ Chi-square tests the difference between the observed frequencies (the advertisements recorded that fit a particular category of a code) and those expected based on a hypothesis that there is no difference between the frequencies of each category between the two channels (the *null hypothesis*).

The equation for chi-square is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(exp - obs)^2}{exp}$$

Here, Σ is "sum", *obs* is the observed frequency, *exp* is the expected frequency, and χ^2 is chi-square. In order to test for significance, the result is compared with a table of critical values of the chi-square distribution.⁹ The number of categories included in the test, and the number of fields (in my case two channels) are used to calculate the *degrees of freedom*. Each

⁸ Jhally (1990) used Cramer's V test for significance, but the mathematicians I spoke to saw no reason not to use the Chi-square, which is widely accepted as a standard test.

⁹ Zar (1984) Chapter Five, Tables, pp. 479-481

individual category in each field is given a chi-square value, called the chi-square contribution, all of which are added together to form the chi-square value for the whole code. From the chi-square contribution we can tell which particular categories contributed most to the overall value of chi-square for the code.

The test takes into account the size of the data set, so that a finding that 4 out of 5 dentists preferred a certain brand of toothpaste would give a result of less significance than if the sample was 400 out of 500 (both give a percentage of 80%, but the larger sample of 500 means that there is a much smaller probability of chance: for this reason one needs to make chi-squared calculations using the actual frequencies of observed data, and not percentages.)

It is standard practice in the humanities and biological sciences to regard a 95% significance as valid, but I will also indicate when the chi-square test gives a significance of greater than 99%. The chi-square values are not valid for comparison, but merely indicate either that there is a statistically significant difference between the two fields or there is not.

1.4 Results

1.4.1 Speech type

The types of speech I categorised were: BBC English¹⁰, USA English, South African WCA English, South African Black English, None, Other English, Mix, Afrikaans, and Black African languages. My categorisation is subjective, and the intention is to try to ascertain the type of identification that the advertisers intend to arouse in the viewers.

BBC English is my own cipher for a neutral English This is fairly close to Roger Lass's Conservative South African English speech type; based on "a (vision of) the Southern British Received Standard", it is "typical of 'serious' news announcers... common among the 'first families' of older urban areas like Cape Town... and in general upper-middle-class people of a normative disposition."¹¹

¹⁰ "English" refers to English language except when specified as otherwise. English nationality will be referred to as British (unless to the exclusion of the other territories which make up Great Britain).

¹¹ Roger Lass (1995) pp. 93-95

The main criterion of this speech type is that it has no obvious traces of South Africanness, while not aligning itself in any obvious way with any other particular nationality. It is most closely associated with Anglo-Saxon white South Africans, but does not have the telling idiosyncrasies of what I have classified as WCA South African English. It is also probably fairly close to the speech-type most commonly used in the boardrooms of the companies who are being advertised: as a “corporate voice” (as I will discuss later) this is quite apt!

WCA (White, Coloured & Asian) South African English draws attention to its South Africanness, showing obvious influences from Afrikaans, or in some instances, Indian dialects of English. Lass uses the categories “Respectable South African English” and “Extreme South African English”: broadly speaking the former being more middle class, the latter working class speech types.¹² Generally in the narrative speech of the advertisements studied, the emphasis seems to be either on neutrality (BBC) or on an exaggerated South Africanness (W SA), so that Lass’s bridging category, the Respectable SAE of the white English speaking middle class, is usually excluded.

¹² Lass (1995) pp 93-95

W SA English's use often indicates either typicality (as in man-or-woman-on-the-street endorsements) or the comical portrayal of South African stereotypes. The effectiveness of these devices are often achieved by their juxtaposition with a BBC English narrative voice.

Black South African English is similar to W SA English in that it is obviously associated with a particular group, although the usage in the advertisements surveyed is quite different. In terms of the social associations B SA English is probably most often portrayed as the speech-type of a black middle-class, or an idealised working class. There is very little of the type of exaggerated and comedic use of dialect such as is found with W SA English.

Black South African English is used both as the voice of the product via a spokesperson, and as the voice of the consumer, in endorsements, interviews and representations. As such it can be seen to be the equivalent of both BBC and W SA English.

USA English refers to the dialects of North America (or the South African attempts to mimic them), and is used both by imported advertisements for American products, and as a

symbol of jazzy, hip, Americanised lifestyles. The incidence of USA English on SABC1 (11/75: 15%) is more than double that of SA W English (5/75: 7%).

The category "None/Other" includes all dialects and speech types not included in the above, as well as mixtures of speech types. Examples of other speech types found in the ads are Scottish English, strongly accented British English, and a kind of parody of aristocratic British English. There were a few advertisements that used a mixture of speech types, without any being obviously dominant. Many advertisements took the option of avoiding the issue of speech types altogether, and do not use any spoken language.

I have excluded all data for advertisements not using English, including Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, and other South African languages. The reason for this exclusion is that many of the advertisements broadcast in black African languages are, apart from the spoken soundtrack, identical to those broadcast in English, which would mean that those repeated advertisement would either be counted twice in all the categories (apart from speech type), or I would have to choose which language to use for analysis in the speech field. There is

also the problem of translation: It would be difficult for me to gauge the arguments & nuances of speech in a language other than English. A basic assumption that the translation between two ads identical in all aspects (apart from speech type) would be literal, might well be wrong.

According to Jane Du Preez (Ogilvy Mather) the trend in TV advertising is increasingly to use English, and the production of advertisements for exclusive use in other languages is fading away.¹³ In my sample there were 18 advertisements in other languages (all in Xhosa or Zulu, and all on SABC1). The fact that SABC3 consists almost entirely of English language programming, and that SABC1 has mainly English, Xhosa and Zulu, does account for the complete absence of Afrikaans and other African languages- SABC2 would certainly have a larger proportion.

Of the 18 advertisements on SABC1 which were in Xhosa or Zulu, ten were straight translations of advertisements broadcast

¹³ Jane Du Preez. (1996) pers. com.

in English¹⁴. These are either remakes in which equivalent black characters enact an identical shooting script, shot for shot (e.g. Glen Tea), or else a voice-over is translated over the same visuals (often constructed in such a way to overcome lip-sync problems, using cartoons, off-screen speakers, and so on.) One of the advertisements, Bakers Eet-Sum-More, used an English language song as its main message, but had the textual mortise at the end in Xhosa.

Although there were no advertisements in which the primary language was Afrikaans, Afrikaans did appear in some ads, but always framed within an English narration, in such a way that the Afrikaans text appeared either as a voice of a consumer (in washing powder ads, noticeably one consumer out of two or more on the same ad) or as an object of humour or satire.¹⁵

¹⁴ This comparison is only between Xhosa or Zulu advertisements screened during my sample recordings and English ads screened during my sample recordings: of the remainder most of the ads are certainly direct translations of English ads, but I didn't record any samples of the English language equivalent.

¹⁵ This is later discussed in detail with regard to the rural/urban dichotomy - particularly with reference to ads related to the automotive industry. See pages 82 -95 below.

Table 1: Speech Type

SPEECH TYPE	SABC1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
BBC ENG	20 (27)	33	4.83	75 (52)	62	2.52
USA ENG	11 (15)	7	3.10	8 (6)	12	1.62
SA W ENG	5 (7)	10	2.45	24 (17)	19	1.28
SA B ENG	33 (44)	16	16.69	15 (10)	32	8.69
NONE/OTHER	6 (8)	10	1.34	22 (15)	18	0.70
speech total	75 (100)	75	28.41	144 (100)	144	14.80

total χ^2 for speech type = 43.21

more than 99% level of significance at 4 degrees of freedom
(99%=13.2%)

The overall result ($\chi^2=43.21$) indicates a level of significance well over the 99% (i.e. there is less than a one percent chance that the differences are due to chance.)

The most significant chi-squared contribution in speech type was from South African Black English. On SABC1 33 of the 75 advertisements (i.e. 44%) had South African Black English as the dominant speech type, versus 15 out of 144 on SABC3 (10%).

The next highest contribution is from BBC English on SABC1: The expected frequency is 33/75, but the observed frequency was lower: 20/75 (27%). On SABC3 there was a

greater frequency of BBC English than expected (75/144 - 52%). USA English was used more frequently on SABC1 than SABC3 (11/75 - 15% - on SABC1, and 8/144 - 6% - on SABC3).

Of most interest here is the clear (and not surprising) differences between South African Black English, South African White English and BBC English. Obviously the general practice is for Black SA English to be used to address a black audience. In most cases the speaker is acting as a representative or spokesperson for the product (as opposed to a character in a story-style ad, or an image based ad), and the idea behind this focus in advertising to a black market appears to be that political change, and in particular economic empowerment of black South Africans, is a positive image.

In contrast the low significance of Black SA English directed to the generally white audience on SABC3 indicates that the connotations of a black voice are negative (although there were no examples of Black SA English being mocked or lampooned, as WCA SA English often is). The political connotations of the two overtly South African English dialects are very different. WCA SA English is noticeable for its difference from BBC

English, and is generally associated with lower class status in comparison with the more cultured, conservative image of BBC English. B SA English, on the other hand, signifies a difference in race from BBC English, and (particularly amongst the black public) any negative class associations are giving way to positive national identification.

The type of product advertised on SABC3 using a B SA English narrative were for mainly for food and beverages (8/15), corporate or public service (3/15)(South African Airways, Telkom and Water Conservation), discount furniture, lottery scratch cards, deodorant, and jazz CD's. The type of advertisement that involves making a serious financial decision is not present (with the exception, perhaps, of the Lewis ad for discount furniture). But, as I will discuss in the section on product use type, the advertisements on SABC1 are generally for items for consumption, rather than investment.

The corporate ads and public service announcements all, to some extent, project a national image. The one advertisement (which I have described here as corporate) for South African Airways is the build-up to the announcement of the airline's new livery, and focuses on the presence of SAA as a national

emblem during political celebrations in post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike advertisements for other airlines shown on South African television (British Airways, Virgin, British Airways domestic- although not all shown during my sample periods) there is no mention of the airline's function as a way for consumers to travel cheaply, luxuriously or effectively from one place to the next. Instead the entire message is one of an airline as a representation of a nation, and the positive changes that both are undergoing. The advertisements for Telkom and Water Conservation are each part of a series, with the others being narrated in BBC English, or (Telkom) in a mixture of dialects.

The greater frequency of use of USA English on SABC1 is related to a perception of the USA, and particularly black American society, as being a cultural prototype for a black middle class in South Africa (one which has long historical roots reaching back to the origins of the coon carnival in American minstrels, through Sophiatown's jazz chic, to contemporary fashion and trends such as basketball, rap, and so on). There is a greater frequency of imported American programme material on SABC1, while SABC3 screens more of the programmes imported from Britain.

One advertisement that is striking in its use of American English is for Trinko Tea. This advertisement was screened twice on SABC1 in English, as well as in Xhosa (although I can't be sure how the dialect differences were translated). The animated advertisement features a family of dinosaurs having tea the "old way", and they are portrayed as bored, and stereotypically aristocratic and British. Their speech is a parody of upper-class public-school English. Then the butler introduces Trinko Tea, which wakes them up, and they start dancing, wearing bright clothing, and talking in American accents. This advertisement's message is that Trinko Tea changes the experience of teatime from an archaic British ritual, into an exciting and American experience. The use of speech type in making these associations clear is interesting in this advertisement, which seems to be targeting the black consumer, in that the use of animation avoids the issue of portrayal of race, but the notion of a changing culture, and the need for new cultural role models to replace the old colonial ones is obvious.¹⁶

¹⁶ This ad is discussed later in terms of its relationship to transformation. See pages 102- 104 below.

1.4.2 Race

The second aspect of the advertisements I examine is closely related to the first: the race of the dominant characters. My classifications are based on the AMPS segregation of the population (WCA & Black). I have also included the category "none" (for ads in which race is either obscured, or people are absent) and "mix" (for ads in which there are more than one race, and no single category seems to be given more emphasis).

In many advertisements there is only a narrator, or voice-over spokesperson: in these instances I have attempted to distinguish between racial categories from the type of speech used (i.e. BBC Eng. or W SA Eng. would be classed as WCA, and B SA Eng. as black). My purpose here is to map out the ways in which advertisers expect the audience to identify and situate the personalities representing the product .

Table 2: Race

RACE	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NONE	7 (9)	9	0.55	20 (14)	18	0.28
WCA	19 (25)	38	9.51	92 (64)	73	4.95
BLACK	38 (51)	19	18.47	18 (13)	37	9.62
MIX	11 (15)	9	0.69	14 (10)	16	0.36
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	29.22	144 (100)	144	15.22

total $\chi^2 = 44.44$

over 99% level of significance at 3 degrees of freedom (11.34)

Not surprisingly, race came out as having a greater than 99% chance of significant difference between the two channels.

The highest contribution is from black primary characters in ads on SABC1: there were over twice as many as expected (38/75 - 51%), and on SABC3 there were half as many black primary characters as expected (18/144 - 13%). With regard to white characters, the case is pretty much reversed: 19/75 (25%) ads on SABC1 had WCA protagonists, as opposed 92/144 (62%) on SABC3.

What is interesting (and obvious) is that over 50% of the ads on each channel have as the main characters members of the racial category that their channel targets. There is a bias

towards WCA characters (over half of all the ads on both channels had WCA protagonists, and only a quarter black). The bias towards WCA characters probably reflects, to some degree, the economic hegemony: most companies are still white owned. In commercial terms, whiteness still comes with the connotations of wealth, expert knowledge, cosmopolitan; in short, corporate.

The advertisements anticipate a reluctance of consumers to purchase products obviously associated with the other racial category. For white consumers, products explicitly marketed for black consumers are viewed as cheap, and, conversely, black consumers suspect products marketed for whites as being extravagantly expensive. Martin Davidson talks about the importance, for advertisers, of creating a "perceived difference" between the advertised brand and the other similar or identical products. "In other words, a brand is powerfully different to other brands because its advertising is different."¹⁷ The racial schisms in South Africa mean that advertisers already have a deep-rooted perception of differences with which to work.

¹⁷ Davidson (1992), pp.33-34

The traditionally split markets, such as supermarket chains, use these divisions to their advantage. A brand such as Pick 'n Pay (which aired advertisements 3 times on SABC3, none on SABC1) uses BBC English, with a presumably white, male spokesperson describing how the quality of produce is preserved by the quick passage from farm to supermarket shelf. The narrative, accompanying visuals of an owl watching the produce being harvested and transported at dawn, announces that "If you are wise..." you will harvest your vegetables and fruit when its cool, and rush them onto the shelf via refrigerated transport.

Interestingly the "you" in the narrative is referring directly to the brand, Pick 'n Pay, as wise. After all the consumer doesn't have anything to do with the harvesting or transport of the produce. The quality of being wise is offered as being for sale. In the same way that the narrative includes the viewer in the process of production through their visual representation and the important use of the second person pronoun, the consumer is invited to share some of the credit for the superior delivery of fresh food, merely by shopping.

The semiotic construction of the Pick 'n Pay ad equating the early harvest and wisdom with a shot of a vigilant owl relies on the viewers familiarity with the symbolism of an owl as nocturnal (a biological fact) and as wise (a cultural construct). The idea of an owl as representing wisdom is not a universal, cross-cultural given: for at least some African cultures, the owl features as a harbinger of death.

The emphasis for OK supermarkets (with a brand name that hints at mediocrity, surely accidentally!) is entirely on price. 31 ads were screened, all on SABC1. Of these seven were a series of interviews in which a (black) interviewer confronted groups of (mainly black) people on the street and asked them to guess the prices of various basic household commodities (cans of sweetcorn, blocks of margarine). Invariably he would, to their amazement, better their lowest guesses with OK's current special offer.

The other 24 OK ads were from the "Buy!... Get!... Free!" series in which a voice-over would announce various give-aways with certain purchases.

The two strategies are typical of the type of rhetoric used to appeal to the different markets, which is discussed later in this chapter, and in more depth in the second section of this dissertation.¹⁸

The alternative to racial segregation and separate markets in South Africa's advertisements is to avoid using people of identifiable race altogether, or to have characters from all racial groups represented equally. The categories here are "none" where race is avoided, and "mix" where representatives of two or more racial groups are given equal emphasis.

As can be seen from Table 2, SABC1 has a bias towards a representation of racial mixing, and SABC3 towards having no representation of race: if television advertisements do represent political and social trends, surely this phenomenon would indicate that the black population is more keen to find solutions to the problems of a segregated society, while the white (and coloured and Asian) population are more eager to ignore them. In terms of my early assertion that brands marketed (or perceived to be marketed) at a particular group become stigmatised for the other, this difference could be

¹⁸ See pages 43-45 below.

indicative of a greater reluctance amongst WCA consumers to buy "black" products.

1.4.3 Use Type

Table 3: Use type

PRODUCT USE TYPE	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
GROCERIES	26 (35)	24	0.17	44 (31)	46	0.09
ALC/TOBAC	6 (8)	5	0.05	10 (7)	11	0.03
CLOTHING	5 (7)	3	1.19	4 (3)	6	0.62
PERSONAL CARE	8 (11)	10	0.50	22 (15)	20	0.26
LUXURY	3 (4)	4	0.16	8 (6)	7	0.08
HOUSEHOLD	14 (19)	8	4.07	10 (7)	16	2.12
LEISURE & TRANSPORT	11 (15)	13	0.42	28 (19)	26	0.22
BUSINESS & FINANCE	2 (3)	7	3.43	18 (13)	13	1.79
TOTAL	75 (100)	75		144 (100)	144	

total χ^2 product use type = 15.19

more than 95% level of significance at 7 degrees of freedom
(95%=14.07, 99%=18.48)

The Product Use-Type category groups advertisements according to the type of product they advertise. The chi-square result for this test showed that there was more than 95% significance, indicating that there are real differences between the types of product that are advertised on SABC1 and SABC3.

The most significant contribution is from the "Household" category, which includes household appliances, hardware, furniture, and household audio-visual equipment. There is a greater concentration of commercials on SABC1 (19% versus 7% on SABC3). The market here, as with clothing (SABC1 7%, SABC3 3%), tends to be for discount stores, often offering credit, and tending to be for items with status connotations rather than practical value. The rhetoric used in the SABC1 ads is almost entirely straightforward statement of price/special offer (thirteen of the fourteen), whereas only four of the ten household ads on SABC3 used this strategy.

The texts in the Business & Financial category include corporate advertisements (often to boost a company's profile, rather than market a particular product), advertisements for business related equipment or services (fax machines, computer training), advertisements for financial services (including banks and insurance companies)¹⁹. In some instances the distinction is hazy: when Standard Bank advertises a cricket match, I have assumed it to be an investment in their public image. Likewise there were three public-service announcements (two for water

¹⁹ See the analyses of Telkom, Sanlam & Sales house in the second section, pages 55-81.

conservation, one for literacy) which I have included in this category.

Of the twenty advertisements in this category, only two were screened on SABC1: a Telkom ad describing the company's crucial role in Cape Town's 2004 Olympic bid, and the public service announcement urging the public to increase literacy.

There are similarities between the incidence of ads on both channels for most of the other product-types. But, as discussed above with reference to the portrayal of race in supermarket advertising, there are differences in the way that the advertisements present themselves. However, there is a more-or-less equal attempt to target both audiences with ads for groceries, alcohol and tobacco, personal care products, luxury items, and leisure and transport.

1.4.4 Gender

Table 4: Gender

GENDER	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NONE	4 (5)	7	1.19	16 (11)	13	0.62
MALE	38 (51)	40	0.07	78 (54)	76	0.04
FEMALE	12 (16)	13	0.04	25 (17)	24	0.02
MIX	21 (28)	16	1.75	25 (17)	30	0.91
		(0)			(0)	
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	3.04	144 (100)	144	1.59

total $\chi^2 = 4.63$

under 95% level of significance at 3 degrees of freedom (7.81)

There is no significant difference between the two channels with regard to the gender of characters in the advertisements.

It is worth mentioning that there is a noticeable dominance of male characters on both SABC1 (51%) and SABC3(54%). As with white characters in the examination of race, and BBC English in the section on speech, this reflects a hegemonic voice, the representation of the economic status quo. As the political and economic environment undergoes transition, this will surely be reflected in the demographics of characters portrayed. A survey examining trends in advertising over time would definitely show some interesting results, in one direction or the other.

It would also be interesting to compare the statistics on gender with Jhally's study of differences between advertisements targeted at male & female TV audiences in the USA, but unfortunately he didn't look at the gender of the characters in his advertisements.

Gillian Dyer cites a content analysis survey of 170 commercials broadcast on British TV (Granada) in 1981, and notes that 66% of advertisements for financial ads had men as the voice-over narrator or central figure²⁰. If we compare that with the nineteen financial ads on SABC1 and SABC3, fourteen had male protagonists, three had a mixture of male and female, and two had no identifiable human protagonists. In percentages, 74% of South African financial advertisements used a male protagonist.

Dyer's judgement of the British advertisements with regard to gender probably holds true for the South African case as well: "This treatment of women in ads amounts to... the 'symbolic annihilation' of women. In other words, ads reflect the dominant social values: women are not important, except in

²⁰ Dyer (1982) p.108

the home, and even there men know best, as the male voice-over for female products suggest.”²¹ To this we can add that here it is likely to be a middle class English speaking white man’s voice.²²

1.4.5 Activity

Table 5: Activity

ACTIVITIES	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NONE	18 (24)	21	0.4	43 (30)	40	0.21
REST/RELAX	11 (15)	6	4.61	6 (4)	11	2.4
RECREATION	13 (17)	12	0.04	23 (16)	24	0.02
WORK	10 (13)	10	0.02	18 (13)	18	0.01
SOCIAL	3 (4)	3	0	6 (4)	6	0
PERSONAL CARE	5 (7)	5	0.04	11 (8)	11	0.02
INTERVIEW / NARRATION	8 (11)	7	0.34	11 (8)	12	0.18
OTHER	7 (9)	11	1.64	26 (18)	22	0.85
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	7.08	144 (100)	144	3.69

total $\chi^2 = 10.77$

under 95 % level of significance at 7 degrees of freedom (14.07)

The chi squared result for activities is not significant. There is a noticeable difference in rest/relaxation category, with 15% of the ads on SABC1 and 4% of the ads on SABC3 portraying

²¹ Dyer (1982) p.108

²² In the last chapter of section two the role of women is discussed with reference to representations of transformation in ads.

rest or relaxing as the primary activity. All the others are remarkably similar.

1.4.6 Lifestyle

Table 6: Lifestyle

LIFESTYLE	SABC 1				SABC3			
	observed (%)	expected	χ^2	observed (%)	expected	χ^2		
NONE/MIX	10 (13)	18	3.9	44 (31)	36	2.03		
FAMILY	5 (7)	3	1.19	4 (3)	6	0.62		
YOUNG FUN	8 (11)	8	0	15 (10)	15	0		
EXOTIC	4 (5)	3	0.58	4 (3)	5	0.3		
PLAY/CHILDREN	2 (3)	3	0.59	8 (6)	7	0.31		
SOPHISTICATED/ GLAMOROUS	11 (15)	11	0.01	22 (15)	22	0		
HEALTHY/ ATHLETIC	2 (3)	4	1.35	11 (8)	9	0.7		
NATURE/ RURAL	2 (3)	4	0.83	9 (6)	7	0.43		
TRADITIONAL	3 (4)	2	0.97	2 (1)	3	0.5		
WORKING CLASS	6 (8)	3	1.94	4 (3)	7	1.01		
MIDDLE CLASS	12 (16)	11	0.1	20 (14)	21	0.05		
URBAN/ TOWNSHIP	10 (13)	4	10.31	1 (1)	7	5.37		
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	21.77	144 (100)	144	11.34		

total $\chi^2 = 33.11$

over 99% level of significance at 11 degrees of freedom (24.72)

The chi-square result for this test showed that there was more than 99% significance, indicating that there are highly

significant differences between the lifestyle codes used in ads on SABC1 and SABC3.

In categorising advertisements by lifestyle I recorded only the lifestyles that were portrayed as central to the advertisement's intended appeal. Where there were more than one lifestyle portrayed, I decided on the dominant one, or recorded it as "mix". In some cases there is an overlap (between, say, "family" and "middle class") and I tried to ascertain which category was most relevant. Jhally, in some of his variables (although not in his analysis of lifestyle), used a dual ranking to account for cases where there might be overlapping or coexisting categories.²³ I decided not to employ this method in order to keep my study from becoming too complicated. There is however a danger of my own prejudices influencing my decisions, and I have tried to employ objective criteria in my categorisation.

The highest contribution is from the Urban/Township category. On SABC1 there were ten ads which portrayed an urban lifestyle, while there was only one on SABC3. This ad, for LG Electronics, looks as if it has been imported from

²³ Jhally (1990) pp. 154-158.

Europe, and shows a highly sanitised apartment block being transformed as Goldstar changes its name to LG Electronics, ushering in the era of the futuristic city. This is a far cry from the reality of inner city Johannesburg and the street life of South Africa's townships.

There is also a high contribution from the None/Mix category. Ads on SABC3 are less likely to pinpoint a particular lifestyle, and either avoid the issue of lifestyle altogether, or give equal attention to a range of lifestyles.

In terms of class, SABC1 and SABC3 have similar incidences of middle class lifestyles. Ads portraying working class characters are more prevalent on SABC1 (8%) than SABC3 (3%).

1.4.7 Rhetoric

Table 7: Rhetoric

RHETORICAL FORM	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NONE	4 (5)	5	0.25	11 (8)	10	0.13
RATIONAL	5 (7)	5	0	10 (7)	10	0
PRICE/OFFER	23 (31)	15	4.17	21 (15)	29	2.17
EFFECT	18 (24)	27	3.03	61 (42)	52	1.58
WORRY	1 (1)	5	3	13 (9)	9	1.56
TYPICAL PERSON	4 (5)	4	0	8 (6)	8	0
STATUS GROUP	8 (11)	6	0.55	10 (7)	12	0.28
FAMOUS STAR	4 (5)	2	1.84	2 (1)	4	0.96
OTHER	8 (11)	5	1.16	8 (6)	11	0.6
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	14.01	144 (100)	144	7.3

total $\chi^2 = 21.31$

over 99% level of significance at 8 degrees of freedom (20.09)

The differences in rhetoric used on SABC1 and SABC3 are more than 99% significant. The highest contributions come from the appeal to effect (prevalent on SABC3 with 42% versus 24% on SABC1) and the appeal of price or special offers (prevalent on SABC1 with 31% versus 15% on SABC3).

The difference is that ads on SABC1 aim to convince people that they can afford to purchase the product, while on SABC3 they try to convince people that they want the product.

There are two possible explanations for the absence, on SABC1, of ads persuading consumers that they want the product. Firstly, the audience may already be saturated with commodity desire: the connotation, say of style with a certain type of clothing is already there. Most likely the *desire* is created by other channels, and is deeply entrenched, and the commodity itself is generic (rather than branded). A Sales House suit might be no different from a Edgar's suit or a Bee Gees suit, but might be more affordable through credit. Advertisers express a sense of bewilderment at trying to introduce new products, especially consumer durables, to the very large urban black working class population. In many instances there already is such a long-standing and strong loyalty to certain brands, even those that have not had campaigns targeted at that particular market, that new products are met with distrust.²⁴

The second explanation is that the *assumed* desirability is a strategic ploy: by not trying to persuade the consumer that they want the product, but just persuading them that they can afford it, the consumer is duped into believing that they do want it.

²⁴ Jane Du Preez. (1996). pers.com.

The rhetoric on SABC3 is more concerned with effect. The ads demonstrate how a certain product will improve the viewer's life. Related to this is the category of appeals to worry or relief (9% on SABC3 versus 1% on SABC1 used this approach) which demonstrate how your life will be worsened or even jeopardised by not purchasing the product. In general the advertising on SABC3 tends to be more devious than the direct offer on SABC1 playing to the viewers' fears, vanity, and insecurities.

1.4.8 Style

Table 8: Style

STYLE	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NONE / OTHER	9 (12)	8	0.16	14 (10)	5	0.08
EXCITEMENT	6 (8)	5	0.3	8 (6)	9	0.16
SONG, DANCE	5 (7)	4	0.4	6 (4)	7	0.21
PRESENTATION	17 (23)	11	3.84	14 (10)	20	2
STORY	2 (3)	2	0	4 (3)	4	0
LIFESTYLE	6 (8)	7	0.04	13 (9)	12	0.02
DEPICTION						
IMAGERY	13 (17)	15	0.28	31 (22)	29	0.15
PRODUCT DEMO	3 (4)	8	3.31	21 (15)	16	1.73
CARTOON/ETC.	5 (7)	4	0.19	7 (5)	8	0.1
HUMOUR	9 (12)	12	0.74	26 (18)	23	0.39
OTHER	8 (11)	7	0.09	13 (9)	14	0.05
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	9.28	144 (100)	144	4.87

total $\chi^2 = 14.12$

UNDER 95 % level of significance at 9 degrees of freedom (16.92)

There is no statistically significant difference between the styles of ads on SABC1 and SABC3.

The highest contributions are from Presentation (23% on SABC1 versus 10% on SABC3). This style usually involves a studio shot of the product while a spokesperson, either on screen or on voice-over, narrates the products qualities. It is mostly employed by the Price/Offer category of the rhetoric variable.

The product demo category is noticeably higher on SABC3 (15% on SABC3, and 4% on SABC1). Typically these ads are for domestic products (dandruff shampoo, detergents, cosmetics) where their effect is shown with the product being shown at work, in comparison with other products, or in comparison with not using the product. The type of rhetoric is usually the appeal to worry or relief, effect, or rational reasoning.

1.4.9 Social Grouping

Table 9: Social grouping

SOCIAL GROUPS	SABC 1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
NO PERSONS	16 (21)	22	1.44	47 (33)	41	0.75
SINGLES	20 (27)	21	0.04	41 (28)	40	0.02
COUPLES	16 (21)	11	2.73	15 (10)	20	1.42
FAMILY	6 (8)	6	0	12 (8)	12	0
FEMALE GROUPS & CHILDREN	3 (4)	3	0.02	5 (3)	5	0.01
MALE GROUP	6 (8)	8	0.31	16 (11)	14	0.16
GROUP	8 (11)	5	1.16	8 (6)	11	0.6
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	5.71	144 (100)	144	2.97

total $\chi^2 = 8.68$

under 95 % level of significance at 6 degrees of freedom (12.59)

The chi-squared result for the social grouping showed a lower than 95% significance.

On both channels No Persons and Singles are the highest categories (collectively 48% on SABC1 and 61% on SABC3).

The most significant difference is the higher incidence of couples (and collectives of couples) on SABC1 (21% on SABC1, and 10% on SABC3).

1.4.10 Interpersonal relations

Table 10: Interpersonal relations

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS	SABC1			SABC3		
	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2	<i>observed</i> (%)	<i>expected</i>	χ^2
ABSENT	26 (35)	32	1.19	68 (47)	62	0.62
INDEPENDENT	10 (13)	10	0.02	18 (13)	18	0.01
ROMANTIC	9 (12)	6	1.3	9 (6)	12	0.68
FAMILY	11 (15)	6	3.79	7 (5)	12	1.98
PARENTAL	1 (1)	3	1.1	7 (5)	5	0.58
FRIENDS	7 (9)	9	0.28	18 (13)	16	0.15
OTHER	11 (15)	10	0.21	17 (12)	18	0.11
TOTAL	75 (100)	75	7.9	144 (100)	144	4.12

total $\chi^2 = 12.02$

under 95 % level of significance at 6 degrees of freedom (12.59)

There is no significant difference between the portrayal of interpersonal relations on SABC1 and SABC3 overall.

The one category that does have a noticeable difference is Family: 15% of ads on SABC1 use families as the central social grouping, versus only 5% on SABC3. Otherwise 43% of ads shown on both channels were seen as having social relations as absent, and the other categories were spread fairly evenly.

1.5 Conclusion:

Quantitative Differences between SABC1 and SABC3

Briefly, these are the main differences I found between the advertisements on these two channels:

Speech type: SABC1 is more likely to use South African black English, and SABC3 BBC English. There is also a noticeable presence of USA English on SABC1 - possibly playing to the identification with American role models, particularly amongst black youth. It is also a co-textual effect: the advertisements fit seamlessly into the fabric of English language programming on the channel, which largely comprises American sitcoms.

Race: This is the most expected difference, with SABC1, geared to a black audience, having a very high proportion of black characters in its ads, and SABC3, aiming at a white audience, using mainly white characters. The aim here, to quote Robert Allen, is "to give the viewer at home an image of himself or herself on the screen and to make sure the viewer knows that he or she is the person to whom the show (and the accompanying commercials) is offered."²⁵

²⁵ Allen (1992) p. 125

Use type: Although most product types (groceries, alcohol & tobacco, personal care, luxury goods, leisure & transport) were advertised fairly evenly across the two channels, there were two exceptions that rendered the difference between SABC1 and SABC3 statistically significant. Products relating to business & finance were virtually absent from SABC1, while they made up 13% of the total ads screened on SABC3. On SABC1 there were a large number of ads for household furniture & appliances, and a slightly higher concentration of ads for clothing. These two trends are not unrelated: it is likely that the SABC3 audience is more likely to use the financial services of banks and insurance companies to invest their surplus capital or to borrow funds. The poorer SABC1 viewers are more likely to invest in consumer durables - furniture and appliances- and many of the retailers advertise using their credit facilities as a drawcard.

Lifestyle: Both SABC1 and SABC3 shared a fairly high incidence of ads portraying sophisticated lifestyles, youthful and fun lifestyles, and middle class lifestyles. There was a much greater proportion of ads using a mixture or no discernible

lifestyle on SABC3. On SABC1 there was a far greater proportion of ads using an urban or township lifestyle. This, in combination with the higher incidence of ads using working class lifestyles as a code, could be an appeal to the anti-apartheid and trade union movement's political valorisation of the urban working class.

Ads portraying workers on SABC3 tend to focus on the services they provide for consumers. Examples include Ithuba, where the supermarket cashiers discuss the lottery winners to whom they have sold scratch cards, Quikfit, where the workers get tyres ready for the sale, and Boss paving where, bizarrely, workers do military marching drill while they sing about the advantages of boss paving.

On SABC1 the workers are more often figured as consumers themselves, and are often portrayed with the rugged glamour borrowed from socialist realism (as in the Black Label ads which repay the workers who have "earned their beer at the end of the day"). Eve Bertelsen has commented that political representations and symbols are incorporated into the repertoire of advertising, replacing the original meanings of

socialist transformation with new meanings relating to consumerism and the free market.²⁶

Rhetoric: The basic difference in the forms of persuasion used are that ads for SABC1 audiences tend to demonstrate the low prices or easy terms of payment, and those for SABC3 audiences rely on demonstrating the effect that the product would have on the consumer's life. This difference, I believe, plays on a difference between white and black perceptions of their future in the country. The optimism of black consumers, recently empowered by the eradication of apartheid government, carries over into a willingness to embrace consumption. The role of the advertisers here is to convince them that they can afford products, rather than to persuade them of the desirability of the goods themselves. White consumers are more likely to be driven by insecurities: of the rising crime rate, of the potential decline of their relative wealth, of the threat of the dissolution of their closeted and privileged lives. Here the advertiser's role is to play on these fears (and even generate them).

²⁶ Bertelsen. (1997)

In the next section I will show how some of these codes come into play in specific examples drawn from advertisements screened on SABC1 and SABC3 during the period of the survey.

Section 2

SOUTH AFRICAN IDENTITIES

2.1 Introduction

It matters, then, who an ad is implicitly addressed to, which may or may not include you.¹

It is not coincidental that commercial television has developed a sophisticated rhetorical mode of viewer engagement within which much energy is expended to give the viewer at home an image of himself or herself on the screen and to make sure the viewer knows that he or she is the person to whom the show (and the accompanying commercials) is offered.²

The demographic differences between the audiences of SABC1 and SABC3 are reflected in the codes used by advertisers, as I have shown in the previous section. In this second section of the dissertation my aim is to examine more closely the textual strategies employed in order to engage the various demographic sectors. The problem lies in the image of the self that is reflected to the viewer by the characters on the screen. There is a history of division and distrust between the races and cultures of South Africa, and in many cases a potential consumer's inference that the addressee really belongs

¹ Dyer (1982) p. 116:

² Allen (1992) p. 125

to a group other than their own could terminate their attraction to the brand's identity.

In the first chapter of this section I look at Telkom as an example of corporate advertising projecting an image of a South African identity comprising diversity. The role of the product is to hold all these cultural and racial threads together in a single strand. This strategy is seldom used for products involving personal consumption, but rather it is employed to generate confidence in the large company, and its integral economy.

The second chapter looks at two very different approaches to advertising financial services. The Sanlam advertisement, screened on SABC3, uses anxiety and fear as a motivation for investment. The Sales House ad, shown on SABC1, does precisely the opposite, lulling the consumer into a sense of optimistic comfort with the promise of easy credit, and no need to worry about the future.

The next chapter looks at a phenomenon I found most interesting: there were several ads in which the identity of an heroic protagonist is not supplied, being replaced by an anti-

hero. The image of the self is inserted by the viewer in opposition to the characters, portrayed as provincial, isolated and idle.

The final chapter looks at visions of change in South African ads, which I interpret as bearing a relation to the excitements and anxieties of political and economic transformation, as experienced in the discourse between businesses and their customers.

Throughout this section I have included the tabulated codes that I used in the statistical analysis, in order to provide a sense of continuity with the first section. These are intended to give an idea of how the individual advertisements fit into the schema discussed previously only in quantitative terms.

2.2 Telkom: Hello South Africa

Table 11: Codes for Telkom "Hello" (Shown 3 times on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
Mix	Mix	Business (Corporate)	Mix	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Imagery (Sentimental)	Mix	Social	Mix	Friendship

An advertisement for Telkom, the parastatal telecommunication monopoly, shows a number of people saying "hello" into their telephones. The editing is such that at first one is justified in thinking that each is greeting the speaker of the previous frame. The voice-over, in the neutral version of English favoured by presenters on the English channels of South African radio and television³, talks about a "little word" that can mean so much.

The characters portrayed in this advertisement represent a cross section of the South African public, across age groups, languages, classes, races. We have an elderly Afrikaans couple in a rural town, a small black girl in a township house, a fireman at the fire station, a coloured fisherman looking out over the sea, a white businessman in his skyscraper office, a rural black woman running towards a call-box amidst chickens, an anxious white woman beside her stopped car and motorboat on a trailer.

The characters are not, of course, all talking to another. The advertisement can be read as a game, in which we can try to fit together the couples. The message, however, is that the

³ This is more fully discussed in the section on Speech Types. See page 17 above

connection between these people is their participation in the economy of the telephone. It uses the cinematic convention of using a shot of a person talking into a telephone to cut to another shot of their partner in conversation to create an impression of their interconnection.

The centre around which this advertisement is organised is a product: the telecommunication services provided by the company Telkom. Because of the company's monopoly, anyone who uses a telephone (aside from cellular telephones) in this country is supporting Telkom. The ad is thus not encouraging us to make a choice between competitors, merely to appreciate the importance of the service. Because we do not make a choice when we decide to use a telecommunications company (apart from, perhaps, the choice between not communicating, or using another mode of communication, such as letter writing) this ad's primary intention is to create an awareness of the company, to raise its profile.

This text belongs to what Robert Goldman calls "a style of television advertising called 'Legitimation ads' - corporate ads that represent their presence in our lives in explicitly social terms. Legitimation ads for consumer goods are akin to public

relations and... the 'engineering of consent'"⁴. Goldman continues:

Modern corporations require a stable 'environment of confidence' in which to pursue their primary goal of capital accumulation.... A diminishing faith in the [American] nation's economic future aggravated a widespread perception of large corporations as greedy and unconcerned with the public good, placing many corporations on the defensive.⁵

The South African economic and political environment of the 1990s is characterised by conflicting moods of optimism (the end of apartheid, and sanctions, the excitement of new markets and opportunities) and uneasiness (the crises of administration, the rise of crime, the unpredictability of a new government). As is true of most of the schisms in South African society, this divide does tend to lie on the familiar racial faultline.

⁴ Goldman (1992) p.10

⁵ Goldman (1992) p.86

The real purpose of Telkom's "hello" advertisement, and as I will argue through this dissertation, of nearly all advertisements broadcast on SABC, is to portray the advertiser, and by synecdoche, the economic system through which the advertiser operates, as a central and unifying feature of South Africa. The telephone here acts as a symbol of communication (the advertisement is, after all, about communication) but each act of communication is personal and private, rather than public. The links between the scenes are not real, instead they are breaks: what appears to be a chain of communication is in fact a series of private relationships between the individual and his or her telephone. Telkom, as the author of the advertisement, represented by the spokesperson's voice-over, is the thread that holds all the characters together, while simultaneously keeping them apart as distinct and separate identities.

Goldman describes legitimization ads in the USA as using "paleosymbolic" scenes, scenes which correspond to the viewers' own private emotions of intimacy with their closest loved ones. In this way the most basic emotional responses are associated with corporate brands.⁶ Corporate advertisers use

⁶ Goldman (1992) pp 89-09

these nostalgic emotional responses to attribute to their brand connotations of tradition, family values, permanence, security.

The multicultural and multilingual nature of South Africa is taken on by Telkom as a metaphor for the various types of communication for which telephones are used. This multilingualism means, however, that the possibility for any dialogue beyond the greeting shown is limited: the word "hello" has been well chosen as a virtually extra-lingual word, used in all the languages of the country. In Bakhtin's terms, the advertisement involves a kind of heteroglossia, an intersection between many discourses, in different voices and different languages. All of these discourses, however, are enveloped within the single voice of the spokesperson's monoglossic voice-over.

Guy Cook⁷ discusses the relevance of Bakhtin's theories of discourse to advertising, pointing out a tension between the openness of interaction between many voices, reflecting the

⁷ Cook (1992) pp 180-90.

need of the characters in ads to mirror the audience, and closed assertion of the advertiser's singular truth. He says that

...there is in ads a reluctance to leave matters open, which results, even in the most heteroglossic ads, in the assertion of a single monologic and authoritative voice at the end. This in turns leads to a clearer separation of voices. The reason for this is the constraint imposed by the client: the overall judgement must be final and closed.⁸

While the Telkom ad seems to be about an opening up of the channels of communication, the monologic control of the spokesperson's last word gives a more accurate picture of the real dependence that the consumer has on the absolute control the company has on telephone technology.

There is a second visual device used in the montage between the cameos. In several shots an object is focused on, and the sequential shot begins with an equivalent object being shown. The scene of the fisherman is followed by a woman at a roadside phone-booth, and the last image of a fishing boat at sea is linked to an image of her leisure boat on a trailer. Similarly, a scene with a black villager ends with the camera focused on a bicycle lying on its side, wheel spinning, and it is

⁸ Cook (1992) p.190

followed by the image of an executive's toy bicycle being pushed idly across his desktop.

The message of this advertisement, as is true of any advertisement, is that the product would enhance the viewer's lifestyle. What is special about this advertisement is that the image of the *self* that the viewer is offered is not singular: there is a spectrum of individuals and situations amongst which at least one would relate to the experiences of most South Africans. The speech, "hello" uttered with various inflexions and accents, would similarly satisfy the need for familiarity.

But alongside this familiarity there is also difference, and the objects that supply the visual links give some indication of this: the real bicycle (a viable form of transport, and possibly part of the chain of communication, its wheel still spinning from a messenger's rush to call the woman to the phone) is contrasted with the toy bicycle on a businessman's desk. The fishing boats, in use at sea, are contrasted with a leisure craft, on a trailer. While the advertisement offers the gift of communication to all South Africans, it also reminds us of the differences, the social and cultural restrictions that preclude dialogue between sectors of the population.

The characters combine to make up a picture of South African society, which can "give the viewer at home an image of himself or herself on the screen"⁹ that is realistic enough to be recognisable without exposing tensions and conflict that in many ways characterise South African society. The image is a reflection insofar as each segment is realistic and plausible, but the whole depends on the product- a telephone, representing telecommunication- as a unifying principle. The function of the ad is to demonstrate that telephones equate to communication, and communication is a part of national unity. The reality of the discourse, however, is that we see none of the characters actually engaging in communication.

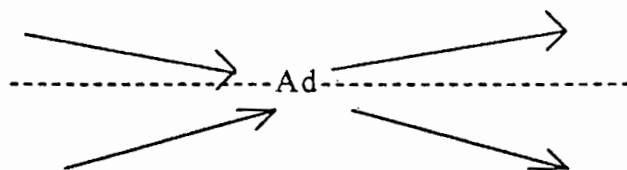
The real act of communication mirrors the actual discourse of the advertisement, between the audience and the corporate advertiser. Each character appears to be communicating with another person by telephone, and the viewer is invited to project himself or herself into that position. The speech is directed at the telephone as a symbolic object, standing in for Telkom. The utterance on the screen is addressed to an

⁹ Allen (1992) p. 125

imaginary figure, and its appearance as communication between two individuals is an illusion.

Visible Communication ("private"):

Personal Character (addresser) Individual viewer (receiver)



Corporate Advertiser (sender) Targeted Market (addressee)

Hidden Communication ("public")

The advertiser wishes to make an impact on the individual, and the character is intended to reflect and attract the targeted market. The aim is for the advertisement to attract the public to the advertiser, and the strategy is for the individual viewer to relate to a character associated with a product. So when, for example, Chanel wishes to advertise a perfume to a certain sector of the public, they aim for individuals within that sector to relate personally to Catherine Deneuve and associate her personal image with Chanel No.5.¹⁰ The real act of communication is between an organisation (the makers of Chanel perfumes) and the individual viewer.

¹⁰ Williamson (1978) p.25

In terms of the diagram above the communication occurs between a (hidden) sender and the receiver. The advertisers anticipate that their market (which is an abstract model of the type of people they think will buy their product) will relate favourably to the character Catherine Deneuve (addresser - addressee in the diagram). The individual viewer, if the ad works, sees the communication as being personal, between themselves and the character (addresser - receiver). And, in terms of the advertising strategy, if enough viewers have this reaction, the advertiser is successful in communicating with their market (sender - addressee).

The communication of the advertisement (of any television or cinematic text, for that matter) is a similar illusion: the sender (Telkom) appears in the guise of an actor who appears to be addressing the viewer as one person to another. As Davidson writes: "A brand is a product that has a personality we relate to as though in dialogue with it. The illusion of dialogue is sustained symbols, meanings, images and feelings."¹¹

¹¹ Davidson (1992) p. 28

The illusion is that we are engaged in a personal relationship with an actual individual. The hidden discourse, however, emanates from an impersonal and highly effective organisation involving market researchers, copywriters, film crews, and television broadcasters. Their perception of the viewer is theoretical and pragmatic, in terms of demographics, viewing habits, income, patterns of consumption.

This union between an impersonal corporate mechanism and a faceless mass needs to be remoulded into something that an individual viewer can relate to. This model, however, needs to assimilate both the personal qualities that make it accessible, and the feeling of power and reliability that gives it authority. As Goldman writes, corporate advertisements construct “commodity-signs in which the corporate logo assumes the role of protecting and nurturing our personal relations.”¹²

In short, the identity of the product needs to mediate between the public and private elements of corporate activity. This dichotomy between public and private is a central contradiction which all advertisements must deal with in some way.

¹² Goldman (1992) p.91

2.3 Borrowing and Lending: Sanlam & Sales House

Added values are ... relative to the time and place that produce them. There are moments when it is appropriate to project the notion of economy and value; later this may seem drab and need to be replaced with more glamorous and cosmopolitan values.¹³

In the South African situation advertisers have a challenge, as the historic divisions enforced by apartheid have established separate histories and traditions for the different communities. Not only different times, but different communities within a geographical region, or within a socio-economic sector, can require that entirely different value systems be reflected in advertising strategies.

To illustrate this difference in the types of values I will compare two advertisements for similar products: finance. During my survey of ads broadcast on SABC1 and SABC3, there was no advertising for financial institutions on SABC1.¹⁴ However, many businesses, such as the clothing retailer Sales

¹³ Davidson, p.29

¹⁴ Pages 34-37 above.

House, as well as furniture retailers, advertise using their credit facilities as a draw card.

On SABC3 there were seven advertisements for financial institutions (banks and insurance companies), and I will be examining one brand, Sanlam.

Table 12: Codes for Sales House "All the time..." (Shown twice on SABC1)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA Black English	Black	Clothing	Mix	Price/ Offer

Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Song/Dance	Sophisticated	Personal care	Couples (implied)	Romantic (implied)

The Sales House advert shows a leisurely montage of two people, a black man and woman, selecting and donning elegant clothes. We see them as a compilation of body parts: a hand choosing a tie, a leg being covered in tights, a shirtfront being buttoned.

The musical accompaniment is Louis Armstrong, singing "We have all the time in the world. Time enough for life to unfold all the precious things love has in store. We have all the time in the world...."

The voice over, in Black South African English¹⁵, tells us:
“With longer to pay, more flexibility. The lowest monthly instalments and the highest credit. Imagine all the fashion you could afford right now. Come into Sales House to find out how easy it is to get all the time in the world.”

The visuals end with shot of a woman’s leg, and then a shot of a man wearing a suit. The Sales House logo is shown on a black screen, with their slogan “Where you have longer to pay.”

¹⁵ See page 19 above

Table 13: Codes for Sanlam "Trapeze" (Shown twice on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
BBC English	WCA	Business/ Finance	Male	Worry

Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Imagery	None ¹⁶	Sport	Male Group	Other

The Sanlam advertisement shows a group of trapeze artists preparing to swing between two high office buildings. A great deal is made of the height and the danger: at one stage one of the characters drops his bag of chalk dust and we see it fall and fall and then burst dramatically as it hits the pavement below. Clearly this is what could happen to the swingers.

They swing, and then one lets go and somersaults through the air in slow motion to be caught by his partner, his wrists gripped firmly by his partner's well-chalked hands. We hear a voice-over of a man saying "There are times when you just have to put your trust in somebody's hands." The mortise shot¹⁷ simply shows the Sanlam logo, with the inscription "Sanlam: Your future in good hands."

¹⁶ There was no obvious reference or appeal to lifestyle as a social value.

¹⁷ Robert Goldman equates the final frame of a TV ad, when the product's brand name, logo and slogan are shown, to the mortise inserted in print ads. Goldman (1992) p.65.

These two ads have little in common, apart from the fact that they both offer a financial service. Sales House offers credit to its customers, and Sanlam is in the investment and insurance game. What is strikingly different is the mood, and, I will argue, the implicit interpretation of South Africa's economy.

Cook breaks advertisements down into three means of communication which he terms "modes": music, pictures and language. These modes, each of which may belong to a different discourse, combine to create the meaning of the advertisement as a whole.¹⁸

In the Sales House ad, the music and visual modes complement each other. The song is leisurely, with connotations of stylish laid-back American jazz, and the sung lyrics reinforce this with their assurance of "all the time in the world." The images on the screen show two people getting dressed at an unhurried pace, choosing their clothes carefully. So far this ad seems to be about having enough time to get dressed. The intrusion of the voice-over rectifies this: we are actually being offered time to pay for the clothes, more time

¹⁸ Cook (1992) pp.37-8

(presumably) than the competitors (“*longer* to pay... *more* flexibility... *lowest* monthly instalments... *highest* credit”).

The topic of the song (“all the precious things that love has in store”) is given a new meaning: “Imagine all the fashion you could afford right now!” The concurrence of these two messages, delivered in the sung and spoken sub-modes of language, equate the “precious things” of the song with “fashion.” The topic, which was presumably about abstract and emotional moments in the song’s original context, are realigned with a new set of pecuniary values.

The word “fashion” is used in conjunction with “now”: the difference between “fashion” and “style” is temporal. While style is not determined by any particular period, fashion is. This ad is not telling the consumer how much clothing he or she can afford, but how much *fashion* they can afford *right now*, the point being that there is little point in having fashion next season, or next year, because it will no longer be fashion.

The relaxed temporality of the song, of the images, of the speaker’s voice, are contrasted to the urgency of the message.

The former refers to the finance, the latter to the gratification of the desire for those qualities portrayed.

The message of the advertisement for Sales House is that the company allows the consumer the luxury of fashionable clothes, and if they cannot afford it now, they will be able to afford it later. The cold fact is that "All the time in the world..." also refers to debt, and that the consumer will still be paying for the rags when they have ceased to be fashionable. The mood, however, masks this potential drawback. The implicit attitude to the future is that the economy will be secure, that the consumer buying on credit is assured of future prosperity.

In stark contrast to this mood is the blatant anxiety of the Sanlam advertisement. Here the economy and the world of business is projected as nail-biting, high risk acrobatics. The setting for the action - the trapeze artists are swinging between buildings- is the business world, and it is left as an abstract concept. We are not told of any particular product or service the Sanlam wishes to sell us, just that in the dangerous financial world the corporation is there to save us from certain doom. The word "trust" is a pun: one of the services Sanlam

offers is unit trusts, and thus to entrust yourself to the company could mean investing in their unit trusts.

The voice-over ("There are times when you just have to put your trust in somebody's hands") implies independence as an ideal- the rest of the time, presumably, one trusts oneself. The economic anxiety is open ended- there is no particular threat alluded to. The "times" referred to here are clearly the present, and the anxiety that the build-up of tension in the action produces reinforces the feeling of immediacy. The line is a variation on their usual slogan, "Your future in good hands," itself implicitly raising doubts as to the certainty of the individual's (financial) future in South Africa, if he or she does not employ the company's services. The threat is a fall (the falling rand?), reminiscent of the images of Wall Street suicides of the great stock-market crash of the thirties.

Another Sanlam ad, for unit trusts, uses an opposite tactic. We see a small child's fingers being pulled by a man's, as he recites a version of the nursery rhyme "This little piggy went to market..." to happy gurgling from the child. When he reaches the final verse, he says "... and this little one bought Sanlam unit trusts, and went skiing in Switzerland, bought a CD shuttle

for his car, and..." The voice-over comments "Teach your children well. Sanlam unit trusts. Your investment in good hands."

Here we are proffered an indolent smug sense of security, reflected in the child-adult trustful bonding, surely a paleosymbolic moment. The nursery has been altered, not only in the last line, but the swapping of "this little piggy" for "this little one" and the usual toes being exchanged for the child's finger. Both of these switches serve to elevate the individual's status: the little one here is no degraded piggy or most base grubby digit. The security being offered is consumerism at its most opulent: the extreme pleasures of the privileged wealthy few. What is on offer surpasses security and protection from the trapeze-artists' risky dealings.

In contrast to the child of the Sasol "Baby-Carriage" ad discussed here later¹⁹, the relationship between adult and youth in the Sanlam "Little piggies" ad is one of continuity. While youth, symbolising a new political and economic order, breaks away from the stifling old generation in Sasol, the Sanlam baby is, quite literally, heir to his predecessors' legacy, at least in

¹⁹ See pp. 88-91 below.

financial terms. The mortise tells us to “teach your children well,” but the overall impression is that the ad is about supplying security for one’s family, investing wisely in the product so that one’s family can enjoy the same privileges of wealth, despite the otherwise uncertain economic terrain:

Corporate ads offer ideological justification and support for the sanctity of family life. Ideologically, these ads validate ‘the family’... Invariably, the family is situated in, and associated with, leisure and consumption activities. Only where the family is depicted as rural do contemporary family members engage in laboring activities. Otherwise, TV ads show families systematically severed from work relations and production activities.²⁰

Another financial ad that counters economic uncertainty was a very clever opportunistic once-off screened on the evening of the annual budget announcement. Quite simply, to the strains of baroque music, the lettering faded in and out against a black screen: “The following newscast carries the annual budget announcement... An announcement that could deal a crushing blow to your investments... If your money’s with Syfrets... There’s a sitcom on Channel One. Syfrets: Your partner in creating wealth.”

²⁰ Goldman (1992) pp.100-101

This ad relies entirely on its co-text,²¹ which would ensure a large audience in the advertiser's desired market. The anxiety that investors would experience while waiting to hear the announcement is seized, and turned into a joke. The music, calming and reassuring, signifies the mood of the (hypothetical) smug investor whose assets are not vulnerable to economic turmoil. What is unusual is that the ad refers entirely to its medium, breaking a general rule that ads usually refer to events outside of the impersonal television-viewer relationship²².

The ideological subtext is that the budget announcement probably will be negative in its effect on investors, which is to say that the government's policies are hostile to business. Syfrets, however, is impervious to this conflict: as in most portraits of corporations, the advertiser describes itself as being outside of the political arena, untouched by the potential instability, a stable identity amidst an ever-changing environment.

The alternative television viewing offered to the Syfrets client who doesn't need to watch the budget announcement is a

²¹ Cook (1992) describes context as including co-text, "text which precedes or follows that under analysis" (p.1)

²² See page 66 above

“sitcom on Channel One.” The implications of this are that the two choices of programming are interchangeable: if one is not reliant on the national economy, there is little difference between the laughable antics of a situation comedy and the government’s financial planning. To take this one sinister step further, channel one, or SABC1, is the primarily black station, and the smug superiority of the ad denigrates the capacity of an ANC government to plan the country’s economy with a comparison with facile slapstick programming for a black audience. Perhaps this reading is too cynical about the attitudes of business to the current administration, but the point is that there is a marked scepticism towards financial stability, especially when contrasted against the incentives to spend on credit.

Horingboom, Halfway to Hotazel:

The Identity of the Other

The problem facing advertisers is how to construct a South African subject. The two options we have investigated so far in this section we can summarise as being diversity (typically in corporate ads) or exclusive, targeting a specific sector (playing to white insecurities or to black optimism). One arena where neither of these strategies is ideal is where the targeted audience spans race and class divisions. The solution, many advertisers seem to have discovered, is humour at the expense of stock characters.

There were several advertisements screened during the survey which shared the theme of the isolated rural backwaters as a foil against which the products' image was contrasted. A common feature in all of these is that the protagonists of the ads' stories are never portrayed as consumers or potential consumers. They are all banished to remain as onlookers, or at best to indirectly and momentarily benefit from the pleasures that the product affords.

Table 14: Codes for Goodyear Eagle GTI "Off he road"
(Shown twice on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
BBC English (voice-over)	WCA	Transport	Mix	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour	Rural	None	Couple	Family

The products that use this sub-genre of advertisement seem to mostly be in the motor vehicle sector. The two ads for Goodyear Eagle GTA Tyres involve an elderly couple who live alongside a long straight road, with no other houses in sight. In the first ad, they are sitting in rocking chairs on their stoep, when a gust of wind blows the old man's hat from his head into the middle of the road. As he stumbles single-mindedly (and presumably deafly) to retrieve it, a red BMW appears, making straight for him. It swerves to avoid him, cutting a track through their dusty front garden and leaving the old couple looking astonished. The BBC English voice-over and mortise frame tell us of the tyres' superior performance "on the road, and even occasionally off it."

In the second Eagle GTA ad we see the same couple asleep in bed as night traffic passes their house. A car with Eagle GTA passes, and they both sit bolt upright in bed, startled by the lack of noise. The spokesperson's voice-over says the tyres are "so comfortable, so quiet, its almost disturbing."

Table 15: Codes for Mercedes Oxwagon" (Shown twice on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
BBC English	WCA	Transport	Male	Status
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour	Traditional	Other (travel)	Group	Other

In an ad for Mercedes Benz, we see a family travelling along a dusty track in an oxwagon. The film is jumpy sepia, appearing to be very old footage, and the soundtrack is a crackly gramophone playing "Sarie Marais". We see very early automobile driving up behind the oxwagon, and hooting to pass, the occupants waving as the car rumbles past and the oxwagon creaks out of its path. The voice-over (in clear tones, using BBC English, with a hint of amusement) says "In 1897 you either drove an oxwagon or a Mercedes Benz. A hundred years later you have the same choice."

The mortise shot shows the text “Mercedes Benz: The first car in Africa.”

Table 16: Codes for Castrol “Macarena” (Shown once on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA White English	Mix	Transport	Male	None
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour	Rural	Recreation	Male Group	Friendship

The Castrol “Macarena” ad shows three men outside a ramshackle rural garage (signed “Horingboom Oasis”, with another sign pointing towards “Hotazel”). All three are scruffy caricatures of rural hicks, two are white, one black. The soundtrack is the beginning of the “Macarena”: the song and line dance that was an international hit during mid-late 1996. One by one the three men put on wraparound sunglasses, and then they start doing their own clumsy and dusty version of the dance steps. The mortise shot shows the text “Now with all-new specs. Castrol. A can of the best.”

Two of the characters²³ featured in a previous ad for Castrol (screened at the time of the Paris-Le Cap motor race), in which a French rally driver appears on foot at the same garage. He tries unsuccessfully to communicate with them, until he comes with a word common to both their vocabularies: Castrol. One of the locals gets him a can, and he kisses his cheeks in enthusiastic thanks, much to the mirth of the other. This earlier scheme fits the model of the Eagle GTA and Mercedes Benz commercials, in that the characters are spectators to the action: for them the excitement and cosmopolitan world represented by the rally is overshadowed by their reaction of otherness to the Frenchman's cheek-kissing. The product forms a link between the two worlds, but the link is not sufficient to unite them with the action. In the "Macarena" ad the link between the product and the action is quite tenuous.

There is no reference to motoring (apart from the rusted bakkie in the background, and a couple of rusted oil drums nearby) and the song and dance do not have any clear connection with Castrol oil. The unity is in the "specs"- the sunglasses that each of the men don as a badge of their individuality and of their joining the

²³ The addition of the third, black, Castrol man in the more recent ads is surely a response to the changing socio-political climate.

modern world (compounded by their participation in a world-wide fashion with the dance). But the unity is also the joke:

the “specs” of the mortise refer to the oil’s specifications; and the misunderstanding, clearly, is attributed to the inability of the three men to comprehend.

Table 17: Codes for Sun City “Every fantasy” (Shown twice on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA White English	Mix	Transport	Male	None
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour/ Imagery	Rural	Recreation	Male Group	Friendship

The three characters from the Castrol “Macarena” ad make an appearance in another ad, for an entirely different type of product. The Sun City ad, with its slogan “Where every fantasy is a reality,” begins with our three friends sitting at the Horingboom Oasis, when a couple arrive in a bakkie. The driver asks “Wil jy gaan Sun City toe?” (*sic*) and then repeats the question in English (addressing us?) “Do you want to go to Sun City?” The three depart from their usual role of remaining dormant while the world happens without them, and take up the offer.

The rest of the advertisement shows the types of excitement and pleasure that Sun City has to offer, with morphing images of African icons (giraffes, zebras, lions) becoming the decor of the resort. Of the five visitors, only the couple who offered the Horingboom Oasis manne the lift are shown participating in the activities. Even then they are portrayed as outsiders: the man, being served a flambé dish, extinguishes it in fright with his drinking water.

The three men from the Castrol ad are shown only as onlookers, and importantly, as not engaging in consumption. We see them sitting passively on a beach, and the ad ends with them sitting on a grassy slope, watching a fireworks display, and exclaiming, each in turn, a mixture of amazement and bewilderment: “Jislike!”

Table 18: Codes for Sasol “Baby-carriage” (Shown once on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
BBC English / Afrikaans	WCA	Transport	Mix	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour	Rural	Childcare	Family	Family

Like the Eagle GTA ad, the acclaimed advertisement for SASOL fuel shows an elderly couple in a rural setting. These two are sitting on their stoep, with the inevitable hunting trophies hanging around them, trying to coax their grandson into uttering his first words. The grandfather prompts "Oupa," the grandmother hushes him, saying (in Afrikaans) that his first word should be "Ouma." They carry on like this, the puzzled baby in his old-fashioned pram looking from one to the other, until he decides to pipe up. The grandparents lean forwards to hear what he'll say, and he gurgles "glug-glug-glug." "Glug-glug-glug?" they query, to which he replies, explanatorily, "Sasol." With that his pram begins to rev like a racing car, and with a noisy scream of tyres, he tears off. The grandfather asks (in Afrikaans) where he was going, and the grandmother responds, without concern "Seker nie ver nie!" ("Surely not far.") The voice-over, in BBC English, says "Sasol 100: Pump up your performance."

In the sequel to this ad (not screened during my survey) we see the same baby in his carriage on a country highway being chased and apprehended by two Laurel-and-Hardyesque traffic officers. When asked for his name, the baby repeats his stock phrase: "Glug-glug-glug.... Sasol!"

The Sasol “Baby-carriage” ad operates by setting up a number of oppositions.

Table 19: Oppositions in Sasol “Baby-carriage”

SASOL	“not-SASOL”
BBC English (spokesperson’s voice-over)	Afrikaans
Baby / Youth	Old People / Elderliness
Technology	Agriculture / Hunting
URBAN (Implicit)	RURAL
Concerned with commodity (““Glug-glug-glug.... Sasol!”)	Family (“Ouma!”... “Oupa!”)
Going places	Stationary (“Seker nie ver nie!”
New South Africa	Old South Africa
Corporate solution (“Sasol!”)	Quarreling (“Ouma!”... “Oupa!”)

These opposing sets of symbols set up the dramatic conflict in this ad. The symbols on the right side of the table (“not-Sasol”) all have connotations of a conservative, Afrikaans, rural South African stereotype. The images (stoep, hunting trophies, old people) are shared with the other ads discussed in this section, and my contention is that these signs are deliberately employed as representations of the old South African order. The second Sasol ad, with the inept traffic cops, one complete with a Hitler moustache, employs a deliberate reference to the aggressive

police images that for so long stigmatised international media representations of South Africa.

The old couple's priorities are to maintain a stable status quo. They are eager for the child to mimic their speech, to be like them, and his response is to invent his own speech (the nonsense syllables imitating the glugging of petrol being poured into a car's tank). His first "real" word is his explanation for the noises, the product's brand name. This itself is a "nonsense" word- an arbitrary signifier that stands in for the product, petrol. The "glug-glug-glug" is a reference to another ad, with another small boy who pretends to pour Sasol petrol into a toy car, which speeds off. The signifying chain leads from one advertisement to another: the final link is the Sasol ad screened on SABC1, discussed in the next chapter.²⁴

The Sasol ads ("Baby-carriage", and "Speed-trap"), and the ads for Sun City, Castrol, Mercedes and Eagle GTA, all construct a brand identity based on difference: we associate Mercedes with *not* being an oxwagon, Eagle GTA and Sasol as being contrasted to elderly rural Afrikaners. The men from the Horingboom Oasis, both in their usual domain and in their outing to Sun City, are in

²⁴ See pages 107 -109 below

contact with the product, but only obliquely, in that the benefits of consumption have no apparent effect on their lives. Even at Sun City, where "every fantasy is a reality," they remain impassive observers. A flirtatious look between one of the three and the woman they accompany (which would appear to be the deciding factor in their visit) also leads to no further action, no realisation of fantasy.

The basic plot of all these ads is similar: the characters are shown idly passing the day, the product is introduced, performs some incredible feat, and departs, leaving the characters behind. Their lives are unaffected, and they generally display an inability to comprehend the implications of what they have witnessed. The Mercedes ad, admittedly, is much less spectacular, but when compared with Eagle GTA, we have a similar flow of events, although at a much slower pace.

In political terms, the ads are about being marginalised, literally left behind. The identity of the rural Afrikaner has connotations of the National Party government, and of the isolation of the sanctions era caused by their stubborn adherence to unpopular apartheid policies. The product, representing new opportunities for economic growth and a new South African

future (symbolised by the Sasol baby with his wide-open future and pre-installed enthusiasm for branded commodities) , promises to leave that past behind. As Eve Bertelsen comments, writing about the claim of dairy advertisement in the print media at the time of the first democratic election, "... all the spilt milk of the past will be effectively mopped up by market forces."²⁵

We are given a choice between the consumerist world promised by the product (the future towards which the 1897 Merc rumbles, the shiny red BMW speeds and the cherub in his baby-carriage rockets) and the stifling feariness of the karoo landscape, creaking windmills, and hunting trophies. This characterisation of South African country life is by no means new, and J.M. Coetzee points out that since the very first discourses on South Africa, commentators have branded first the Hottentot population, and then the boers, as inherently idle:

‘[Theirs is a] cold phlegmatic temper and [an] inactive way of life..., indolence of body and a low grovelling mind.’ Seeing sloth as by now part of the ‘nature’ of the boer, Barrow suggests that the Colony *will not become productive* until this ‘nature’ is changed, or, failing that, until the boers are replaced with more industrious and enterprising settlers.²⁶

²⁵ Bertelsen, (1997). p.5

²⁶ Coetzee (1988) p.29 (my emphasis)

While there is a definite taboo against racist portrayals of the stereotypical “lazy Hottentot” or “idle native,” the rural Afrikaner is obviously fair game. The wily old black man of the Vodacom “Yebo Gogo” series, always in repose on the roadside, at the beach, sitting on a bench, turns this dichotomy on its ear. In these ads it is the wise-guy urbanite who is constantly shown up by his refusal to stoop to take the old man seriously.

In the ad screened during the survey, the city-dweller (white, with wealth-trappings: gold jewellery, a BMW convertible) is stung by a bee while picnicking- obviously travelling through the rural landscape. He makes his way to a surgery, where the old man (“Gogo”) is sitting passively on the stoep (the image of idleness and immobility), with a parrot in a cage. “Gogo” offers to lend the ill-fated traveller his cellular telephone, but is shrugged away. As we watch a myopic and shaky medic examine him, the old man dials for the emergency services that Vodacom offer. A helicopter arrives to rescue the swollen-faced man, and “Gogo” stands up, revealing the word “Veterinary” on the wall behind where he’d been sitting. The joke is that what had been seen as idleness and isolation, in accordance with the South African model, is in fact purpose (waiting to visit the vet) and communicability (the cellular telephone).

Apart from Vodacom (which deliberately reverses the convention of the genre) the identity that these ads seem to create is a negative one. The blank space into which the consumer fits himself or herself is precisely that. The identity is only established in terms of what it is not, and these stereotypes of South African otherness are rooted in isolation, rural boorishness, stagnation, and resistance to change. The stereotype is structured around ideas about South Africa's past, including Afrikaans conservatism and traditionalism. The following chapter will discuss how possible *positive identities* of contemporary South African society are perceived in advertisements.

2.5 Changing worlds: South African Visions

The advertisement for Iwisa Maize Meal begins with a woman's voice-over in SA Black English saying "In Africa, the price of love is determined by the father of the bride." We see the formal ceremony, outside a township house, a young man with a henchman on one side, two older men on the other, all dressed in suits. A girl looks on.

The music is African jive, with a male singer crooning "I would give everything I own, give up my life, my heart, my home." The backing vocals are female, singing a chorus in Zulu, reminiscent of traditional African music. We watch the young man get his companion to offer a wad of cash. The father shakes his head in rejection. The suitor signals two assistants to fetch items of furniture, a dated-looking TV set, a reclining chair and at each offer the father looks severe and unimpressed. Finally the girl whispers to young boy, who puts a sack of Iwisa into the next gift, a cupboard. The old men peer into the cupboard, and seeing their favourite brand of mealie meal, start smiling happily.

During this last moment of the ad, the voice-over returns, as the bride-to-be (presumably) comments: "Fortunately a wise

woman knows that only the taste of Iwisa can melt a heart of stone.”

The conflict in this advertisement is between two cultural systems: the traditional and the consumerist. The old men (like the old couples of the Sasol and Eagle GTA ads) represent an old order, unbending and stuck in their ways. In this context, however, they are not portrayed with the derision afforded the others. The groom, with his slick haircut and suits, and his friends, in their Madiba shirts, represent the contemporary chic black urban yuppie lifestyle. The woman, as spokesperson and as passive catalyst in the interaction, is aligned with the product, and forms a common ground between the two worlds.

The voice-over, interestingly, starts by saying “In Africa...” The stage is set for Africanness, as opposed to South Africanness. The former refers to a set of rural and traditional practises, the latter refers to the political state. South Africa is not a part of Africa, rather it is the other way round. The old men are truly *African*, the young men represent the modern *South African* order, itself a part of a global economy.

The unsuccessful currency that the suitor offers the father all belong to the commercial, consumerist domain. In terms of the product use-type category of the quantitative survey, the products all belong to the household & furniture category²⁷, one area in which there was a large difference between the two channels. This type of product is marketed much more intensively at the black SABC1 audiences, and generally the retailers offer credit facilities. As I argued earlier²⁸, credit facilities offered by retailers of household goods and clothing serve a similar function to the services (offered on SABC3 ads) of financial institutions, and hence the products themselves have associations of investment, financial security and wealth.

The traditional bargaining over a bride's financial worth was usually negotiated in gifts of livestock to the bride's father. The transactions we see here are a modernisation of the traditional. The conflict is between the two paradigms: the father does not attach value to the consumer commodities, and the groom does not comprehend the traditional requirements (perhaps if he had arrived with a herd of cattle, his acceptance would have been immediate). The wisdom of the woman is her ability to engage in

²⁷ Pages 34-37 above

²⁸ Pages 69-80 above

both systems: the product is both a traditional value (mealie meal as an African staple food) and a branded commodity. It thus fits into the father's code of accepted and familiar symbols, and into the fiancée's set of material commodities (quite literally). The currency takes the exchange through a full circle, from the traditional custom, to the contemporary consumerism, and back to traditional values, with the added benefits of commodification.

Central to this advertisement is the role of gender relations. The woman's role in the marriage deliberations is minimal. The visual images presented are of the two groups of men, facing up to one another, and the woman is always shown in the background. The entire concept of lobola involves the woman being exchanged, a financial price being set for her, her own identity being established as a commodity, not as a participant. As the currency of exchange, she does demonstrate her power to influence the decision from within, and the use of a woman's voice as the spokesperson reinforces this power. The "wise woman" is one who knows the limits of her power, enabling her to influence the decisions (which are made by men) but not to be seen to do so, making her the perfect mediator. Like the advertising sign, which links two signifiers, the branded product and the idealised situation: "Its meaning only exists in this space:

the field of transaction; and its here that we operate - *we are this space*.”²⁹ In the space between the residual world of tradition and the emergent world of commodification, the ad situates the product, the wise mediatory woman, and the viewer is invited, through consumption, to step into that locus.

Table 20: Codes for Stayfree “Taxi - car” (Shown twice on SABC1)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA Black English	Black	Personal Care	Female	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Imagery	Urban	Work	(Potential) Couple	Independent

The advertisement for Stayfree pantyliners shows a black woman, clearly an office worker from her dress, flagging down a taxi while her companion, a man looks on. The voice-over, by a woman in SA black English, goes: “That’s life: you’re happy with the way things are, and then one day you realise you’ve changed. The safety pad you know and trust now has new channels, which mean accidents are a thing of the past. Stayfree has changed for the better, like you. While you were improving your life, we were

²⁹ Williamson (1978) p.44

improving your protection.” During this commentary we see a minibus taxi arrive, and to the amazement of her companion, it is transformed into a smart hatchback car. The woman’s appearance also changes, her outfit and hairstyle become more sophisticated. She climbs into the drivers seat and drives away.

The codes of this ad seem to be taken from a genre of ads involving cars: ads for vehicle finance have used the morphing vehicle previously on South African TV. The ad is about change, but the change it offers the consumer is not on the same grandiose scale as the car and personal style suggest. The uncertainty at first of the identity of the protagonist (the man and woman appear on screen simultaneously) and the nature of the product are effective attention grabbers. The use of a car, generally presented as a symbol of phallic authority, in an ad for an essentially feminine product is unusual. Martin Davidson comments that advertising “... used to be a monopoly of two basic types of market; grocery packaged goods (aimed at women) and glamorous consumer durables (aimed at men); washing powder and cars.”³⁰ This ad borrows its symbols from the latter to enhance the meaning of the former.

³⁰ Davidson (1992) p.4

The change refers to empowerment: both in economic terms (her upward mobility in terms of transport and personal style indicate wealth) and gender: she leaves her male companion open-mouthed as she climbs into the car alone and drives away. The world view goes from good (“...you’re happy with the way things are...”) to better.

Table 21: Codes for Trinko “Dinosaurs” (Shown twice on SABCI)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
USA English	None	Grocery	Mix	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Cartoon	Young / Fun	rest / Relax	Family	Family

In the Trinko tea “Dinosaurs” ad the voice-over (in a snobbish British accent) tells us that tea used to be “a boring drink drunk by dull people in dull places.” We see a group of bored looking cartoon dinosaurs being served tea by a butler. Then comes Trinko, shown as a teapot erupting from a volcano, and teatime becomes fun. The dinosaurs put on sunglasses and Hawaiian-style clothes, they start to dance, and one of them rides a skateboard. The accent of the voice-over (in the English version- the ad is

also screened in Xhosa) switches from a kind of aristocratic English accent, to US English.

The advertisement involves a transformation of cultural values, with an obviously aristocratic British model being replaced by young hip American model. There is an attempt here (and in the Teaspoon Tips commercial) to break an association between tea and a whole set of symbols of Englishness.

Interestingly the transformation occurs at the level of the voice-over as well as within the action of the characters. Usually the voice-over, as part of the product mortise, serves as a stable referent against which the conflict and instability of the characters' discourse is contrasted. What appears here is a symbolic transformation of a corporate identity, the advertiser's own re-evaluation of their place in relation to the changing forces in the South African market.

In political terms, the association between the aristocratic British, obviously class-based system is replaced by a younger, more exciting, hip American system, one type of economy being replaced by another. The Product is associated with revolution, immense natural transformation - the volcano (oddly, as it is

usually used as a symbol of destructiveness) which might be linked to a version of a natural history in which dinosaurs became extinct through natural disaster. But the volcano here doesn't destroy, it transforms, perhaps expressing the liberal capitalist optimism about economic change in South Africa, with the restrictive hierarchical economy (symbolised by the formal setting, and the servile butler) giving way to an American free market model.

In a more recent ad (not screened until after the survey) the product behaves in precisely the opposite way, remaining stable while the world around it changes. The advertisement for the Volkswagen Citi Golf shows a young man trying to find his identity, as his clothing, his hairstyle, his companions, his surroundings constantly change at breakneck speed. The special effects used in this commercial give cinematic equivalent of collage, with each individual frame having several elements of its composition replaced. The only thing stable is the commodity, the crux being the reliability of Volkswagen.

Robert Goldman comments that the brand name, logo and image of the product form a mortise in a print ad, a visual anchor around

which the meaning of the other images can be assembled.. "In television ads, the mortise appears most frequently in the concluding scene where it tends to be identical in construction to the structural layout of print ads."³¹ The mortise shot in TV ads is most commonly a plain screen with a slogan, a brand name and logo, sometimes with an image of the product. In contrast to the action of the ad, the mortise shot is almost always static, offering the eyes a few seconds rest from the barrage of moving images. This stillness has the effect of equating the product (and its associations) with stability, reinforcing the advertisers' desire to project an impression of a "stable 'environment of confidence' in which to pursue their primary goal of capital accumulation."³²

Change here is portrayed as something bewildering, hectic, albeit impressive in its sensory bombardment. The world shown is reminiscent of Jameson's description of a postmodern sublime, and the product is offered as a kind of anchor, a "cognitive map"³³ with which the subject can situate his identity in relation to the vast scale and pace of the universe that confronts him.

³¹ Goldman (1992) p.65

³² Goldman (1992) p.86

³³ Jameson (1991) p.51

In the South African context the “change” that the ad refers to does have associations with the political transformations that the country is going through, and the message here, on a broader scale, is that the corporate powers offer a kind of sane continuity in a climate of frantic transition. There is no negative judgement of the forces of change, but the representation is insistent that it is only through the mediation of the product (and by association the economic climate that enables the product’s production and distribution) that it becomes possible to exist meaningfully in that environment.

Table 22: Codes for South African Airways “Flyby’s”

(Shown four times on SABC3, once on SABC1)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA Black English	Mix	Corporate	Mix	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Imagery	Mix	Mix	Group	Other

Transformation features as a central theme in an ad for South African Airways, celebrating their revamped image and livery. The airline is set up as a national image, and clips of various

scenes of national unity are shown in between the shots of aeroplanes. The advertisement uses a moving choral song, introduced by a young boy singing a solo. The lyrics, "We'll take you higher..." refer simultaneously to the real properties of the product, commercial flight, and the political and cultural enrichment of the nation shown. The images are of President Mandela, rugby, soccer, cricket, celebratory rallies, the presidential inauguration. The political and sporting arena, as well as the airline, doing flyovers at these events, are portrayed as spectacles which bring the public together in unity. The airline becomes another flag, a banner that is waved when the nation assembles.

At no stage during the ad are we shown the consumerist element of airlines: the public remain on the ground, while the planes fly above, despite the song's promise to take us higher. This ad is purely corporate, advertising itself as a national symbol to a nation most of whom will never step inside an aircraft. In contrast, the other airlines advertising on SABC, Virgin Upper Class and British Airways/ComAir make a great deal out of the luxury and benefits of their travel services, with the companies being variously associated with Helen Mirren's legs or an indulgently overflowing bubblebath.

Table 23: Codes for Sasol "Taxi rank" (Shown twice on SABC1)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA Black English	Black	Transport	Male	Status Group (Sports)
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Humour	Urban/Township	Work	Male Group	Friends

The sporting event is used again as a symbol of common ground in a Sasol ad screened on SABC1. It features a man entertaining commuters while washing a minibus taxi and giving an energetic running commentary on the vehicle's bumper stickers: "Bafana-bafana" (the South African soccer team), "Ama-boko-boko" (the Springbok rugby team), "Hansie" (the captain of the South African cricket team) and finally "Amaglug-glug." For each sport he impersonates the style of commentary, in the appropriate variation of South African accents.

The last sticker he immediately recognises as a reference to Sasol petrol, and his 'performance' here seems to be the most closely aligned with his own personality, an enthusiastic and

energetic dance. The taxi drives away to show a billboard announcing that "This taxi rank was developed by Sasol". The Mortise shot appears after this reminder of Sasol's commitment to upgrading taxi-ranks, showing the slogan "Sasol: Pump up your performance."

"Performance" refers simultaneously to the improved running of a vehicle using the brand of fuel, the success of South African sports teams, the entertaining show that the car-washer gives his audience, and the social responsibility of the company in improving facilities for black commuters.

Sports are used here as a cultural common denominator and a symbol of South African pride and success. This tactic is employed elsewhere, in the local Coca Cola ads (one with a glass of cola being emptied to a parody of soccer commentary, and another with drinking straws on a shop counter giving a sports-style commentary of a customer choosing his softdrink). All these ads refer to the *commentary* associated with the sports match, rather than the game itself. The commentary is associated with the spectacle of a sports match, and implies an *audience*. This involves a sense of common purpose, a unity that transcends the usual divisions.

Table 24: Codes for Joko "School teacher" (Shown twice on SABCI)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
SA Black English	Black	Grocery	Female	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Story	Urban Township	Educational	Singles	Authority

The Joko tea ad shows a schoolteacher expressing concern about the problem of overcrowding. She has a cup of Joko tea and has an idea, to involve the parents in the development of a new school building. We see them meeting, an architect discussing plans and then the completed school buildings.

The concern of this advertisement is not a metaphorical transformation, as with the texts discussed above, but of the real problems and concerns of development in historically marginalized areas. The transformation of the school has rather a metonymic relationship with the transformation of society: what we are shown is one example of the way in which change can be affected.

The product's effect refers to its chemical constitution as a beverage containing caffeine. It works as a stimulant, which instigates an imaginative solution to the problem of overcrowding at the school. In this text (which has a more serious tone than the others discussed here) the product is not the actual agent of transformation but it assists by refreshing the teacher.

The ideological subtext is about the role of Joko, as a company, representing the private sector as a whole. Here the responsible business goes about removing social responsibility from the state, true to the economic ideal of liberalism. The product (symbolising industry as a whole) starts the ball rolling, but the actual task is carried out not by the state (who doesn't figure at all) but by the individuals. The text is populist in that it enacts solutions to the real problems facing the community (such as school overcrowding) but it doesn't offer political solutions. A political problem (ineffective education system, racial inequality) is overcome by a private solution (the product signifying the power of the individual through community, signifying free-market capitalism).

Table 25: Codes for Blossom margarine "Our House"

(Shown once on SABC3)

Speech	Race	Use type	Gender	Rhetoric
None	White (Mix)	Grocery	Female	Effect
Style	Lifestyle	Activities	Social grouping	Interpersonal relations
Lifestyle depiction/ song	Middle class	Mix	Family	Family

An advertisement for Blossom margarine (targeted at WCA audiences) sketches a different view of transformation in South Africa. The ad shows cameos of a happy, white, middle class day, set to the tranquil Crosby Stills Nash & Young song, "Our House." The action is centred on the role of the mother who provides for her smiling husband and two children. The qualities of maternal and feminine nurturing are rooted in the home, and extend to the outside world in the form of the sandwiches the son and husband take with them to school, and work. The two male subjects are shown as engaging in externalised activities, and importantly for this analysis, are both shown fraternising on an equal footing with their black counterparts. The husband's work involves construction, which, in the context of national

transformations, signifies a literally constructive role in public life.

The mother and daughter are shown at home, baking, readying the house, and at the supermarket (buying blossom). The woman is shown engaging with a woman cutting fabric: possibly this is her job, or else it could be her engaging in a transaction with a dressmaker. Whichever it may be, the product is private and personal, as opposed to the public erection (in both the mechanical and phallic sense) of the husband's economic activity.

The woman and the product are aligned with the song, "Our house, is a very, very, very fine house..." and invested with the quality of homeliness, a refuge from the outside world. It also offers a way for a woman to project her influence into the world outside (similar to the mediatory role of the product and female subject in the ad for IWISA mealie meal).

... virtually all consumer-goods ads champion patterns of corporate administration over daily life by presenting commodity consumption as an unproblematic, natural and rational way of meeting needs. Ads thus endorse the commodification of daily life as the means of attaining 'privatized utopias' without the messiness of political struggle.³⁴

³⁴ Goldman (1992) p.86

If the societal problems of political uncertainty, racial conflict
and national transformation exist, they are located outside this
happy home of the Blossom ad, in the sphere of the men's
engagement. The promise that the product makes to the female
consumer is that the private world of the home can be safeguarded
from turmoil and instability through the amuletic properties of
consumption.

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Conclusions

The overall impression with which this study has left me is that the divisions in the South African population limits the advertisers' stock of symbols of common ground and communal identity. This is particularly true in the areas where external factors (cultural, economic, and social) have already divided the society into exclusive markets.

The portrayal of transition, discussed in the last chapter, seems to be an area where there are two distinct moods: for the white audiences of SABC3 the product is generally figured as a protection against change, for the black audience the product promises to instigate transformation.

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One area where advertisements do attempt to engage both audiences is in corporate advertising, where the enormity of the corporate organisation can envelope all the diverse identities, and construct their own image out of this collage of South Africanness. Another tactic used, mainly by the automotive industry, is to portray an image of a South African identity that is

not desirable, offering the viewer the chance to escape that identity by buying into the product's image.

The advertisers' purpose, as I quoted at start of this dissertation, is "to convey to as many viewers as possible (given the target audience) an association between a positioning concept and a product name."³⁵ If there is little cultural common ground, or if the market is such that target audiences are exclusively tied to a specific culture, there is no motivation for the advertiser to make common ground.

It would be interesting to conduct a similar survey after a gap of several years, and investigate how the changes that will no doubt have occurred in our political, economic and cultural lives, are reflected in the discourse between advertisers and the people of South Africa.

³⁵ Robert Goldman, p.45

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