

The Generatif Trajectory of Meaning, a semiotic analysis method for graphic creations in practice

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The Generatif Trajectory of Meaning, a semiotic analysis method for graphic creations in practice.

Abstract

At the client's request, a designer seeks to ensure that his design is understood and appreciated by as many people as possible. From a semiotic point of view, an advertising document is a solution to a problem expressed in a brief that delivers a content that the designer is responsible for expressing. Graphic design is therefore a combination of an expression plan and a content plan. The designer expresses the content (the brief) by combining the elements of the expression plan (colours, shapes, proportions, typography, text, etc.) to generate meaningful articulations. These ones make up the first of three levels in the generative trajectory of meaning. From a neuroscientific point of view, from simple intuitive understanding to sophisticated analysis, the brain works in stages to adapt to the environment by making the best possible use of its capacity to learn by inference; it makes deductions on the basis of automatisms that consume less energy but are potentially a source of error. This logic of reducing the brain's energy consumption would favour the use of categories and the constant search for the best possible use of the social part of meaning to facilitate shared understanding of the perceived design. This new adaptation of the generative trajectory of meaning incorporates these advances in neuroscience to achieve meaning that is probably shared by the greatest number of people.

Keywords: Design, Semiotics, Neurosciences, Trajectory, Meaning

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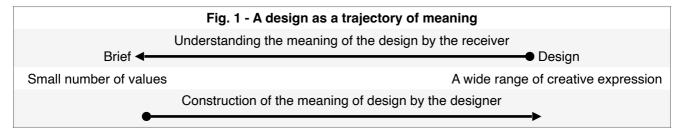
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Beyond the creative, marketing, sociological or other issues, design is also a question of meaning, with customer demand often posing a paradox for designers: design must be original and appreciated by as many people as possible; but the more original you are, the less you are appreciated by as many people as possible, and vice versa. On the other hand, in order to understand or appreciate a product or service, the receiver - whether consumer, user, patient, customer, etc. - must somehow grasp the meaning, but not just any meaning. In fact, as soon as the problem of inter-individual exchange arises, meaning is no longer just individual, but also meaning in circulation; and we are forced to postulate that the inner process by means of which each person perceives meaning has a dual nature: individual (subjective and particular), and social (objective and interdependent). Beyond this individual aspect of meaning, as a professional, the designer must be able to assess the relevance of the meaning of the creations produced. To gauge the meaning of a design, designers usually try to understand it intuitively on their own or by questioning their colleagues; when the receiver sees a particular design, he or she proceeds intuitively in the same way. Understanding the process of meaning in order to improve its functioning is one of the objectives of semioticians and a necessity for designers. Both need to avoid relying solely on intuition, which can be likened to a random series of transformations of signifying elements that are difficult to discern and rationalise, or even to subjectivism.

In a competitive business environment, anything that is difficult to discern can lead to doubt, be tantamount to reckless risk-taking and result in mistrust or even distrust; a damaging relationship for both the client and the designer. So the subjectivity of the designer and/or the receiver represents a risk for the client. If mass-produced design is the overly subjective production of a designer, how can the client be sure, within a reasonable time, that his design will be understood and will appeal to the greatest number of people? If design can be used in so many different ways, how can the client be sure that his design will be shared for what it is by as many people as possible? The client seeks to reduce these risks by drawing on various disciplines in management science and the humanities. But these disciplines do not measure meaning in the same way; for marketing, the main discipline used, meaning is an event whose effect on the user it seeks to consider. For semiotics, meaning is a series of transformations whose stages and outcome need to be understood, which is useful for increasing relevance in the design and creation phase.

At the outset, the designer uses a brief that he has to transform into a design; in these specifications, the client puts imperatives, technical constraints, history, values, etc. At the end of the process, the receiver perceives a design, the promise of a whole of meaning from which he reconstructs the meaning units given in the brief. So a design is a trajectory with two directions of reading: one upwards from the deeper level (the value written in the brief) to the surface (the design that best expresses this value) and, conversely, from the design to the value. A designer's reading that goes from the brief to the design and a user's reading that perceives the design and values it (Fig. 1). The receiver needs to grasp meaning in order to value a particular product and choose it. So, knowing that meaning is based on value systems, the client often implicitly asks the designer to be on both sides of the trajectory; to go up and down it, to be both designer and receiver to ensure that neither the meaning nor the value that is most likely to be shared is lost. One of the designer's missions is to ensure that these two readings overlap as perfectly as possible. The greater the gap between these two paths of meaning, the greater the risk for the client: risk of misunderstanding, misidentification of function, risk of faulty perception or sensory stimulation, etc. In this logic, we need to understand that there are far fewer values than there are ways of expressing them; this logic allows the designer to deploy all his creativity for the same value. In this context, semiotics applied to design is a descriptive and differential discipline that aims to verify transcoding operations in order to minimise the risks of altering the meaning that can be shared.



1. Semiological prerequisites for the generative trajectory of meaning

Pour comprendre le rôle de la sémiotique, on peut la comparer à l'astrophysique. Par sa démonstration sur l'héliocentrisme, Copernic a montré que le bon sens ou la simple observation du ciel ne pouvait suffire à résoudre et à expliquer le mouvement des planètes. La sémiotique est aux phénomènes de sens ce que l'astrophysique est à l'expérience du monde naturel ; elle permet d'expliquer rationnellement la production de sens comme l'astrophysique, au-delà des apparences, explique rationnellement le monde naturel. Pour comprendre comment le sens est généré, non seulement la perception ne suffit pas, mais on ne doit pas imaginer que son apparente simplicité (je vois la terre plate donc elle est plate) est en soi une explication. Ainsi la sémiotique tente de fournir des modèles scientifiques d'interprétation du sens. Ce dernier est l'objet d'étude de la sémiotique. Le sémiologue cherche à comprendre comment il est produit sachant qu'il naît de différence (Saussure, 1971) ; ainsi pour saisir du sens, il faut saisir des différences (Greimas, 1986). Celles-ci servent aussi à construire des catégories (Courtés, 1971) et des styles de catégorisation (Fontanille, 2003) plus simples à manipuler car moins nombreux et détaillés que les occurrences qui les constituent. Les catégories sont cognitives quand les styles sont perceptifs et sensibles. Les deux fonctionnent de façon similaire, chacun produit des oppositions sur la base de traits communs (des ressemblances) et d'autres distinctifs (des différences).

1.1 To constitute a category, there are three types of opposition:

- 1. Gradual opposition when the differences are produced by stages or gradients; for example, the category [temperature] has "+/-" in common: burning, hot, warm, cold, freezing. I understand the meaning scorching hot by gradual opposition with hot, lukewarm...;
- 2. Categorical opposition when the difference is produced by a "to be vs. not to be" condition; examples: to be just or not to be, to be true or not to be, to be legal or illegal, etc.
- 3. Privative opposition when the category is produced by a common feature and the presence or absence of a relevant feature. For example, the common feature of the category [seat] is /seat (what you sit on)/, but the relevant feature is /with without/. The armchair has armrests (with), the stool has none (without); the footstool has no legs, but the stool does; the chair has a back, but the footstool has none, etc.

1.2 To group objects under the same categorisation style, we look for similarities :

For example, the different brands and models of vehicle are grouped together under the category [car] because of their similarity; yet in France, according to the Civil Code (article 516), all goods are movable or immovable. In French justice, we have a categorical opposition between movable and immovable property. The [movable] category includes furniture and automobiles, even though it's easy to see the similarities between furniture on the one hand, and cars on the other (even if both are mobile). The similarities and differences are perceptible when stationary and more obvious when in use (for example, vehicles drive on public roads when others do not). On the basis of perceptible similarities and differences, I understand the meaning of /cupboard/ as opposed to /lorry/. In terms of similarities, a piece of furniture and a vehicle can hold something, have wheels, be outdoors, be made of wood or metal, be motorised, be sitable... whereas in terms of differences, the latter are equipped with legal lighting devices, have a large number of functions...

For grouping by categorisation style, similarities can be totally identical and in large numbers, as in a series, or more random and unevenly distributed, as in a family (the son is more like the father, the daughter more like the mother, both take after their uncle, etc.). What's more, they may be based on an object with only a few traits, but which is valid for the whole group. Fontanille (2003) cites the cigarette as a prohibition on smoking that applies to cigars, pipes, hookahs and so on. By the same token, objects can be assembled on the basis of the most representative, i.e. the one with the most representative properties in qualitative terms.

We generate differences to form categories so that we can use the world we perceive, exchange ideas and understand others. Categorisation is one of the founding capacities of language activity (Fontanille, 2003). This

construction of meaning by difference enables comparative advertising, for example, i.e. the search for at least one common feature and distinctive characteristics, but it is also the basis of all advertising documents. Conceivers and designers use this fundamental ability to quickly grasp the intended meaning; the extreme may be the use of stereotypes. The receiver uses the same principle to understand the message.

1.3 The Generative Trajectory of Meaning (GTM)

In design, semiotics offers tools for exploring the manifestations of meaning. Initially applied to literary texts, then to painting, photography and other types of representation, semiotics was used in advertising and design (Floch, 1985). For the semiotician, a design is an utterance made up of a plan of expression in relation to a plan of content, the substantial heterogeneities of meaning of which he seeks to resolve by explaining the construction of these plans and their relationships. These relationships are structured but depend on the subject, who defines what belongs to one and what to the other (Fontanille, 2011). The large number of possible combinations, both sensory and intelligible, within the expression plane, the content plane and between the two constitute these heterogeneities (Floch, 1983). They generate confusion, additions or losses of meaning that cause the receiver to misunderstand, sensitively misplace or misuse - in short, to deviate from the meaning intended by the brand (the sender). Although it responds to a precise request from a client, in other words, it proposes the meaning the client wants, a design, understood as an utterance, is polysemic; the designer must therefore enable the receiver to quickly eliminate the least relevant meanings and move towards the most appropriate one.

The model presented below is based on a semiotic conception that aims to reconcile (1) the conditions for grasping and producing meaning, seen as structural constraints prior to and independent of their assumption by an instance of enunciation of Greimasian semiotics (Greimas and Courtés, 1993, pp. 339-346) with (2) with the coherence strategies that emerge at the end of an activity attributable to an enunciative instance of Geninasca (1997). However, we do not refer to the complete theoretical bodies of these authors. Although there are several approaches to the analysis of meaning that use other concepts, principles and operations, such as Geninasca's (Schulz, 2017) or Pierce's (Everaert-Desmedt, 2011), the semiotics presented continue the work of Greimas and Floch. In other words, meaning is not conceived as a simple process of communication, but is constructed as a model of transformations (Floch, 1985). A perceived design is therefore a construction of meaning that results from a systematisation of experience based on a previous act of perception and associated with the values inscribed in the memory by use (Fontanille and Arias Gonzalez, 2009). Fontanille and Tore (2006) explain that "the realisation of programmed values is eminently problematic; configurations, existences and their meaning become unstable, that is to say, as Greimas himself writes, liable to be disrupted at any moment, subject to transformations". In Du Sens II, Greimas (1983) writes that "communication is not simply a transfer of knowledge", but that the make known of communication presupposes a persuasive act on the part of the sender (make-believe) and an interpretative act on the part of the receiver (believe). Examining the discursive process, he shows the different alternatives and semiotic combinations involved in the epistemic act of making-believing and believing, which are based both on the structuring of the discourse and on the transformations undertaken by the receiver. We can thus agree that meaning is neither purely semantic, linked to a defined content, nor solely objective; it has a social nature that can be shared, inter-individual or even objective, but also an individual part, particular to each person, that can be appreciated in the experience of design that the receiver experiences in a certain situation.

Not knowing the intended audience, the designer must therefore think about how to organise the meaning of his design in such a way that it is shared by as many people as possible. The problem of structuring meaning, organising the expression and content planes and their relationship, arises when the receiver does not know how to grasp the meaning of a perceived design. In a way, they find themselves faced with a poetic text: unable to understand its meaning. This hermeticism, this incompetence in reading, requires them to implement a "coherence strategy", according to Geninasca (1997, p. 235). A "coherence strategy" involves operations and probabilities of meaning that the receiver draws on and chooses to associate. This means that the utterance, in this case a design, proposes different "coherence strategies". The receiver must therefore assemble and

combine different elements, each of which carries a part of the meaning, in order to recompose the whole of meaning that is a design.

En design graphique au niveau du plan d'expression, les éléments porteurs de sens sont des assemblages de traits visuels : formes, couleurs, dégradés, contrastes, effets, matières, cadrages, etc. Ces paquets représentent plus ou moins fidèlement le monde naturel. Lorsque leur combinaison formelle est reliée à un sens particulier selon une convention culturelle partagée voire universelle, on les dénomme formant figuratif (photo ou illustration d'une chaise...). Lorsque ces traits visuels organisés permettent des investissements de significations autres, Greimas (1984) parle de formants plastiques (certains logotypes, etc.). Dans les deux cas ils forment au plan de l'expression des articulations signifiantes au plan du contenu. Mais le designer articule d'autres langages comme quand il utilise une certaine typographie pour exprimer à la fois le contenu du texte et autre chose (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Examples of syncretism between several languages



In this example, we can see that the meaning is constructed by the photography, the text and the typography (the aesthetic dimension of the writing). The calligraphy, or design of the letter, is reminiscent of Arabic script, while allowing the meaning to be read and understood in French. Typefaces are subject to an international classification known as the Vox A typ. I classification; the one shown here is a graphic (manual or *manuaires*) enriched with elements from the Non-Latin class (the lozenges).

(1994, Publicis Conseil)

In this example, the meaning is mainly created by the syncretism between the collage (positions and layout) of the different elements (ears of wheat, fabric, buildings, solid colours, etc.), the colour mood, the photography of the bottle and the text of the tagline, the typography and the brand name.

(2023, BBH London - illustration M. Lopez)



In accordance with the client's request, the designer combines the elements of the advertising document's expression plan to deliver a meaning that is shared by as many people as possible. These elements are the result of *syncretisation* procedures and generate *meaningful articulations* that are to some extent predictable and shareable (Fontanille, 2011). These are not logical forms converted into other logical forms, but signifying articulations that the trajectory progressively modifies, increases and makes more complex. Following Greimas (1979, p. 158), Floch observed that in order to be constituted, signification passes through a generative process at three levels: figurative, thematic and axiological (Floch, 1985, pp. 194-197). Developing the latter, the generative model of meaning presented here breaks down an advertising document for analysis in order to

reconstruct the meaning and value probably shared by the greatest number of people. This meaning, which is probably shared by the greatest number, results from the removal of other probabilities of meaning as the generative trajectory of transformations progresses. For the designer, this adaptation of the GTM makes it possible to go beyond false evidence, received ideas or simple intuitive deduction to transform a creation considered as a risk into an opportunity (measured risk). Indeed, a design is often perceived as an economic and financial risk by the client.

2. Neuroscientific prerequisites for the Generative Trajectory of Meaning

Questioning the meaning of a given design requires us to suspend our judgement to allow analysis of the expression plan that leads the greatest number of people to experience or understand precisely a given notion (sensation, emotion, feeling, idea, value, etc.) in terms of content. The hypothesis proposed is as follows: knowing that the receiver chooses what belongs to the expression plan only and what he associates with the content plan; knowing that his body participates in this construction thanks to his global sensory neuronal device and, to a cognitive elaboration based on the modulation of systems 1 and 2 (Kahneman, 2016) as confirmed by several studies in psychology (Wood and Rünger, 2006; Fishbach and Shen, 2014; Galla and Duckworth, 2015); the receiver constructs meaning using his sensory system, emotions, working memory and euristic system (1) and/or, thanks to his analytical system (2) linked to long-term memory. These three systems (sensory, euristic, analytical) function with the body successively, simultaneously or alternately in the global neuronal workspace (Dehaene et al., 1998). We also know that the brain consumes a lot of energy (Neuroscience, 2017); in particular, the information processing function consumes more energy than routine intellectual processing. Without a functional necessity, the brain will therefore seek to reduce its energy consumption. From simple intuitive understanding to sophisticated analysis, the brain seeks to adapt to the environment in stages, making the best possible use of its capacity to learn by inference. According to Borst (2019), the brain makes deductions from what it observes, generating automatisms that consume less energy but are potentially a source of error.

This logic of reducing the brain's energy consumption would favour the use of categories and the constant search for the best possible use of the social part of meaning to facilitate shared understanding of the perceived design and thus consume less energy from the brain. In the context of analysing industrial designs, and in particular mass-produced designs such as advertising documents, this logic reinforces the relevance and probability of semiological analysis in achieving meaning and value shared by the greatest number of people.

So, depending on the content, the receiver would use (1) the euristic procedure, which requires little time and energy, to generate meaning and/or (2) for a more elaborate meaning, checks and calculations under system 2. This iterative and modulated process from system 1 to 2 is not just a change in the quantitative but also the qualitative processing of information. Depending on the cognitive systems used, we can see a whole range of advertisements: (1) requiring only the euristic system of judgement, (2) alternating the use of the euristic system and the analytical system, and (3) requiring the second system in particular.



Fig. 3 : exemple de publicité intuitive (2015, CBA)

This announcement would only require a simple Euristic procedure based on a glance at the packaging and the solar figure that unites background and fruit to arrive at a formulation such as Tropicana preserves all the natural energy of the orange.

3. The Generative Trajectory of Meaning adapted to advertising documents

In this analysis of the production of meaning, we consider the document as a self-sufficient utterance, because we cannot know what the receivers do or do not know about the brand, product or service. A meaning in circulation which presupposes an accessible coded social part and a more or less accessible subjective part. Among all the virtualities of meaning, we validate the most probable meaning without any specific information about the receivers. However, this does not presuppose knowledge of either the sender (the brand) or the object of the advertising document, which cannot be semiologically evaluated by the receiver, i.e. can be directly apprehended by semiotics. This distinction leads to the identification of objective differentiation logics rather than subjective hierarchies based on satisfaction or emotions, which are more accessible through qualitative and quantitative marketing research when semiotics can dismantle the process of meaning to propose conceptual and creative alternatives.

Generally speaking and through its tools, semiotics applied to design proposes a three-stage method; the GTM follows this logic:

- 1. Description involves transcribing information from one language into another. The more precise the description, the better the chances of arriving at a relevant analysis. The construction and interpretation of graphic design is very generally based on the syncretisation of visual and textual elements, as can be seen in the three examples above, where the respective messages are constructed by combining visual and literary units of meaning. The descriptive stage transcodes the visible into the legible. Description is the stage prior to GTM;
- 2. Explanation, where we seek to analyse the meaning construction of a creation in order to better control its relevance and propose more effective alternatives. With the history of economic exchanges, the number of designs is increasing, competition is intensifying and complexity is growing. This requires designers to be both creative and more relevant. The GTM is useful upstream of the design-creation phase to analyse existing designs and help with positioning, during to improve the relationship between expression and content plans, and downstream to select the most relevant concepts and creations. At the figurative level, the analysis reconstructs meaning units which, when combined, give rise to meaningful associations that lead to the thematic and axiological levels;
- 3. Synthesis: where the aim is to deliver the meaning most likely to be shared by the greatest number.

Fig. 4: GTM, principle for constructing meaningful associations

Figurative level: breaking down the expression plan into meaning units

- 1 formant + formant + figure = such a meaning units
- 2 formant + formant + formant + figure = such a meaning units
- 3 [1+2] + figure + formant + figure + figure = this meaning units
- 4 figure + formant + formant + formant = such a meaning units
- n. [4+...] + formant + figure = this meaning units

Thematic level: A simple sentence relating to the product

Axiological level: usually a word (a value)

The model is a reconstruction of meaning (Fig. 4). It does not reconstruct how the receiver thinks or the meaning he or she reads. It provides the units of meaning needed to grasp the meaning and the levels through which it passes, but does not give the order used by the receiver. Although not every order is possible for grasping the relevant meaning, the receiver can use all the meaningful associations proposed by the trajectory, or part of it, in one order or another, or by syncopating when he or she does not use a particular meaning unit. Each association leads to a unit of meaning that contributes to the overall meaning of the document. They are combined and the whole is converted to the next level. As the GTM is a meaning reconstruction, the proposed

order of the meaning units is arbitrary. To simplify understanding of the meaning trajectory, we suggest starting with the most general unit of meaning and working down to the most specific.

By convention, to make the analysis easier to read, we have chosen to use mathematical symbols to write the meaningful associations of the GTM figurative level (Fig. 5). The thematic level is a rather short and simple sentence, whereas the axiological level is generally expressed by a word for a value. What is meant by a value is that by which an individual promotes his or her actions (an act of purchase or membership, for example). Among the advertising documents that we have been able to study over thirty years, we have noticed that advertisements (posters, inserts or magazine pages) rarely express more than one value; on the other hand, company brochures and websites contain more.

Fig. 5: GTM, a convention for writing meaningful articulations

Figurative level: each signifying association is numbered

- + Refers to the addition of a formal unit (plastic or figurative formant) or another meaning unit designated by [n] which is part of the signifying association.
- = Indicates a logical or analogical relationship between the signifying association and its result, the meaning unit
- [n] Quote the number of the previous association involved in developing a new meaning unit

We chose two advertisements from a large corpus of ads. This random selection is of little importance and a completely different choice could have been made. The only selection criterion was to provide two examples that were not too complicated in order to better present the model application. The two advertisements below (Fig. 6 & 7) are very different both in their formal treatment and in what they sell: a mass-market product for the first and an internet service for the second. Not all the possible meaningful associations are presented, and these are discarded after comparison with other formal or meaningful units. For example, for the first advertisement, some receivers did not construct the unit [vehicle bonnet] until later, while others did not; among those who did, some first elaborated the meaning of [table/blue tablecloth] and then matched it with the formal elements [black + light grey + horizontal + diagonal + shape + position] on the left of the bottle to construct the units of meaning [windscreen] and then vehicle.

Fig. 6: GTM and description (preliminary stage) applied to an advertisement



A photo. In the background a cloudless blue sky and orange trees. The whole is blurred. In the 2d foreground, the lefthand corner of a windscreen and the bonnet of a car in a blue close to that of the sky; the vehicle is full of oranges. Even if the slope of the windscreen, the windscreen wiper, the air intake under the windscreen and the central relief in the middle of the bonnet suggest that this is the front of the vehicle, this is not obvious; we can conclude that it is not important; except to make it clear that this is not a lorry loaded with crates of oranges and not an industrial production. The windscreen is blurred, while the bonnet comes into sharp focus in the foreground. This shot shows an Innocent bottle with two orange segments on the left and a chick on the right. The blur comes from the depth of field; the natural light is quite harsh because the shadows are so pronounced; this makes it look like summer and gives an indication of the ripeness of the fruit. At the top, in Lineal font (Vox A type I classification), the tagline The best oranges. And nothing else. To the right of the bottle, the chick says "Hey, we're dressed alike"; he's not a young predator like a baby hyena (he's symbolic of sympathetic innocence). The brand appears under the bottle. Like the label, the poster's composition, colour scheme and typography are simple and precise. The photo is not a snapshot of life taken on the spot, but a simple composition like that of the layout. Aided by the masses of sky and car of a similar blue, a central axis guides the eye towards the bottle at the centre of the intersection of the triangle created by the windscreen and that created by the orange trees. (2016 agence Shops)

FIGURATIVE LEVEL

- 1. photo+framing+netting+colour+material+proportions+light = plausible reality
- 2. [1]+ brightness+colour+blur+light+framing = **natural ambience**
- 3. [1+2]+quantity of oranges+oranges = orchard, orange grove (sufficiency)
- 4. [1+2+3]+quartiers+degraded orange+light = ripe fruit
- [4]+glass+transparency+black seal+windscreen wipers+slope+grille+metallic look+oranges = car loaded with
 of selected ripe oranges (≠ truck body loaded with all the oranges, ripe or not)
- 6. Label+white background+sealed cap+slogan+types+layout+sky blue & auto = simplicity
- 7. [1to6]+quantity of oranges+oranges+depth of field+bottle+1er shot+background = link oranges/juice
- 8. [1 to 7]+oranges background+juice in bottle foreground+quarters = juice directly from oranges
- 9. Chick+orange colour+chick text = **humour**
- 10. [9]+Poussin+white background label+aureole+"innocent "+typo+naive design = **sympathetic innocence**
- 11. [9+10]+chick+orange colour+chick text = chick/orange juice comparison = **naturalness** (not deceptive no clothes, "what you see is what I am" appearing to be what we are = truth)
- 12. [1 to 11]+sealed cork = equivalence between fruit and juice = first state = no transformation of taste
- 13. "."+"." in the slogan = **affirmation** (indisputably)
- 14. [5+13]+slogan+oranges left on the orange trees = **selection** (chosen fruit)
- 15. [5+12to14]+sealed stopper+packaging+"100% squeezed oranges "+logo = **short circuit professional**
- 16. [12 to 15] = **competence** (professional knowledge)
- 17. [1 to 16] = the natural taste of selected mature oranges directly bottled

THEMATIC LEVEL: Innocent, selected orange juice, simply natural

AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL: authenticity (a taste for the authentic)

Fig. 7: GTM and description, preliminary stage, applied to an advertisement



Background: a cloudy sky that varies from orangewhite in the bottom right to blue in the top left. The pale cast is more reminiscent of morning light. In the lower third, a large city with skyscrapers. The whole background is a little hazy, as is usual for large, busy cities.

Foreground: on the roof of a skyscraper, a cherub seated with an armed professional crossbow resting on the roof in his right hand. He has curly blond hair and rosy skin, swathed in a white loincloth around his waist; his face lit up by the sun, he gazes intently but with a slight smile at the city he dominates. In his quiver are two arrows with red tips and tubes; the tip of the arrow in the crossbow is heart-shaped, and its tip and tube are red. The weapon is black with a long-range sight. Although the cherub is an imaginary being, the whole piece is treated like a colour photo, making the visual plausible (framing, point of view, scale, proportion, atmosphere).

logo: Executive Search Dating signature: Precision matchmaking Site: executivesearchdating.com

(2016, Rethink communication, Canada)

FIGURATIVE LEVEL

- 1. Photographic treatment+colour+view+framing = plausible reality
- 2. Buildings + skyscrapers + views + smog = a big, bustling city
- 3. Partially naked body+small child+no muscle mass+light+smile = kindness
- 4. [3]+size of child+white cloth+soft lighting+smile = innocence (integrity)
- 5. [3+4]+wings+white cloth = **cherub**
- 6. [3à5]+colour of arrows+heart shape tip = Love
- 7. [3à6]+colour of arrows+shape of heart tip = Cupid (Eros) god of Love
- 8. Cupid+crossbow+arrows+point of view = hunter
- 9. [3to7]+lunette+balance+point of view = precision (skill)
- 10. Photographer's point of view + orientation of face + lighting = **concentration (reflected)**
- 11. [3 to 9]+ few arrows = few chosen (selection)
- 12. Quantity of buildings+horizon+viewpoint+cupidon+crossbow = hunting ground
- 13. [1+2] = homes+offices = many people
- 14. [7+8+12+13] =urban receiver, the prey
- 15. [1+7] = actualisation of belief in unexpected Love (via Eros)
- 16. [1à15]+logo+signature+size = efficient, selective and discreet dating agency
- 17. [16]+lunette+balance+point of view = the agency is the dedicated instrument
- 18. [8+9+10+11+12+15+16+17] = the competent agency that helps Eros
- 19. [3+4+9] = confidence (competence+integrity+benevolence)
- 20. [15+16+17] = thanks to a third party, you can meet Love with complete confidence
- 21. [18+8+9+10+11+12+13] = this third is the precision instrument for finding your other half

NIVEAU THÉMATIQUE: The trusted agency that helps you find Love

AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL: Professionalism (quality, precision, specialised approach per customer)

Conclusion

If we admit that the receiver buys a product/service or adheres to a brand from the moment he/she values it, then taking into account the data established above, rationally analysing the meaning of an advertisement with the GTM makes it possible to determine the value probably shared by the greatest number. In the context of a comparative study, this information can be used to position the creative but also to ensure consistency in the communication of the client brand's values. Once the value has been identified, we can look for possible themes and expressions that can be oriented to the target audience.

The GTM is neither a purely logical or chronological trajectory, nor a psychological interpretation based on a sociological profile of a receiver. It is a semiological trajectory that follows the logic of meaning, but it remains constrained by cultural, community or societal limits. It is a trajectory that descends from the figurative to the axiological level to enhance the value of the product or service proposed when you are a receiver; but which rises from the axiological to the figurative level for a creative when it is a question of conceiving and expressing the value of the product or service proposed in a relevant way. It's a trajectory of statistical and causal inferences; depending on the context in which it appears, the signifying articulation under consideration will be probably or causally linked to another.

This analysis model makes it possible to work on a large corpus when intuitively guessing each advertising document is a real challenge, or when it is not possible to carry out qualitative or quantitative marketing research during the design-creation phase. It enables professionals to better master the elements of the expression plan and to better manage the relationship with the content plan.

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