
Interpreting Consumer Perceptions of Advertising: An Application of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique

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For more than three decades, research has theorized about and investigated consumers' attitudes toward advertising. In this study, we interview fourteen U.S. consumers using the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, a method that involves semi-structured, in-depth, personal interviews centered around visual images. Our metaphor and cross-case analyses further contribute to an understanding of consumers' impressions of advertising and the meanings that they associate with it. The metaphors attributed to advertising reveal that advertising has positive value, in that it relates information (hostess, teacher, counselor, enabler, and magician), provides entertainment (performer), and stimulates growth in the economy (engine). However, the goodwill derived from these aspects of advertising is countered by several liabilities, as epitomized by the omnipresent being, nosy neighbor, con-man, seducer, and evil therapist metaphors. In addition, three groups (the ambivalents, the skeptics, and the hostiles) with varying levels of appreciation for the institution of advertising emerge from our cross-case analysis.

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One of the big values of advertising is that it introduces people to new things that they may otherwise not know about. Actually people are bombarded constantly with marketing but at least some of it is of some value, because it shows you something new that can make your life maybe better.... So much of the mind is bombarded with sales images, sales images, buy me, buy me, buy me, buy me, and it just amounts to so much mental garbage. I think it's just as destructive as material waste in terms of the mind ... your mind gets completely cluttered with this crap.... Get out of my space. And in a way, that's the invasion of the home too.... If you turn on the TV, you're inviting all kinds of nonsense into your house (Informant #12).

As this quote illustrates, advertising is arguably the most visible component of the marketing mix to the consuming public. On any given day, the typical U.S. consumer is exposed to between 3,000 and 5,000 advertisements (Bower 2000). Given the pervasiveness of advertising in the United States, it is not surprising that researchers have theorized about and investigated consumers' attitudes toward and opinions about advertising for more than three decades. In their seminal work on attitudes toward advertising, Bauer and Greyser (1968) suggest that advertising has two broad effects on society: economic and social. Their work and that of Pollay and Mittal (1993) have served as a foundation for researchers examining consumers' attitudes toward advertising.

In the majority of attitude toward advertising studies, survey research has been used to assess opinions about the institution of advertising systematically (i.e., attitude toward advertising in general), as well as attitudes about specific economic, social, and personal functions of advertising. Research investigating perceptions of the value of advertising has involved not only U.S. consumers (Barksdale and Darden 1972; Barksdale, Darden, and Perreault 1976; Barksdale and Perreault 1980; Barksdale et al. 1982; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner 1998; Yoon 1995), but also consumers from Britain, Chile, Germany, and Russia (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; French, Barksdale, and Perreault 1982; Manso-Pinto and Diaz 1997; O'Donohoe 1995; Wills and Ryans 1982; Witkowski and Kellner 1998). Other studies have examined the attitudes of CEOs, marketing manag-

ers, and managers in other functional areas (Greyser and Reece 1971; Kanter 1988/89; Webster 1980). Furthermore, students have often served as respondents in studies investigating opinions about advertising (Andrews 1989; Durvasula et al. 1993; Haller 1974).

Several studies have illustrated that attitudes toward the institution of advertising are a function of a consumer's perceptions of the various aspects of advertising, such as its informational value and its use of idealized images (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Muehling 1987; Pollay and Mittal 1993). Other research streams have addressed public policy issues relevant to marketing and advertising practices (Calfee and Ringold 1994; Ford and Calfee 1986) and advertising as it relates to societal concerns, such as its impact on the moral fabric of societies (Belk and Pollay 1985; Ewen 1988; McCracken 1988; Pollay 1986; Tharp and Scott 1990). These investigations have yielded important insights about consumers' opinions of advertising, but most have done so in the context of subjects' responses to researcher-generated questions.

Our intent is to contribute further to the understanding of consumers' impressions of advertising and the meanings that they associate with it, as well as to introduce the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) more formally as a means to conduct advertising research (Zaltman 1997; Zaltman and Coulter 1995). ZMET is a hybrid methodology grounded in various literature, including verbal and nonverbal communication, visual sociology, visual anthropology, literary criticism, semiotics, mental imagery, cognitive neuroscience, and phototherapy. The method involves semi-structured, in-depth, personal interviews centered around visual images that the informant brings to the interview (Denzin 1989; McCracken 1988). Because the data are informant-driven rather than researcher-driven, the ZMET interview affords researchers an opportunity to have consumers more freely express and expand on their thoughts and feelings about the topic under investigation.

In this study, we conducted interviews with fourteen U.S. consumers to understand their impressions of advertising better (Muehling 1987; O'Donohoe 1995). As illustrated by the opening quote from Informant #12, consumers' words are powerful indicators of their positive and negative thoughts and feelings. To appreciate the scope of our informants' impressions of advertising more completely, we conducted a metaphor analysis as well as a cross-case analysis of the informants' transcripts. Although many of our findings are consistent with previous work regarding attitudes toward advertising, the scope of our find-

ings goes beyond existing research. For example, our informants talked about some issues typically not measured in attitude toward advertising studies, including the prevalence, intrusiveness, and repetitiveness of advertising. In addition, the ZMET interviews revealed more about the meanings informants associated with the various components of advertising, such as its informational value and its use of idealized images. As a result, our findings offer a broader and deeper understanding of consumers' thoughts and feelings with regard to this general area of study.

We begin with a review of the literature on attitude toward advertising and continue with a description of the ZMET methodology and our analytical procedures. Subsequently, we report our findings and discuss them in relation to a broad base of literature, including not only attitude toward advertising studies, but also research that has examined individual aspects of advertising, such as its contribution to materialistic values. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings, suggest possible limitations of our study, and offer some avenues for further research.

Consumers' Perceptions of Advertising

A preponderance of the research on attitudes toward marketing and its inherent value has focused on the advertising component. In the following sections, we use Pollay and Mittal's (1993) framework as a basis for presenting research on attitudes toward advertising. Specifically, we discuss findings as related to (1) the economic effects of advertising, (2) the personal uses of advertising, and (3) the societal effects of advertising.

Economic Effects of Advertising

Research has examined consumers' perceptions of advertising's effects on the economy, and findings have been mixed. For example, some research indicates that consumers believe advertising is a necessary component of the marketplace, is good for the economy, and, on average, raises the standard of living (Muehling 1987; Reid and Soley 1982). Other studies suggest more neutral feelings about these economic effects of advertising (Andrews 1989; Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Pollay and Mittal 1993). In addition, whereas some findings support the idea that advertising results in better products and promotes competition (Andrews 1989; Anderson, Engeldow, and Becker 1978; Muehling 1987; Reid and Soley 1982), others are less favorable in this regard (Haller 1974; Pollay and Mittal 1993). With few exceptions (Pollay and Mittal 1993), the majority

of studies suggest that consumers do not believe that advertising lowers prices of products (e.g., Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Muehling 1987; Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner 1998). For the most part, consumers seem to be somewhat ambivalent about the effects of advertising on the economy.

Personal Uses of Advertising

A second focus of attitude toward advertising research involves the personal uses of advertising. These include (1) advertising as a source of information about products, social roles, and lifestyle imagery and (2) advertising as a source of personal enjoyment. With regard to advertising as a source of product information, it appears that sentiment has become more favorable during the past three decades. Barksdale and colleagues' studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (Barksdale and Darden 1972; Barksdale, Darden, and Perreault 1976; Barksdale and Perreault 1980; Barksdale et al. 1982) find that, on average, a majority of respondents do not think that advertisements are reliable sources of information about either product quality or product performance. However, Calfee and Ringold (1994, p. 233), reporting on an investigation of studies from 1974 to 1989, state that a "strong and unchanging majority" (approximately 70%) endorse advertising as a source of information. Pollay and Mittal (1993) and Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner (1998), in more recent studies, concur that audiences use advertising to find out about local sales and particular brands, as well as product and service availability. Both of these latter studies report that younger audiences think of advertising as an information source more than do older audiences.

Research findings have been mixed regarding the usefulness of advertising as a source of information about social roles and lifestyle imagery. However, it is likely that these divergent findings are a consequence of different subject/respondent pools and different operationalizations of constructs. For example, Richins (1991) finds that female college students thought advertising was important for helping them know about and select fashion and personal care/cosmetic items. However, Pollay and Mittal (1993) find that advertising was used by a minority of respondents for learning about fashions and/or reference group buying habits. Pollay and Mittal (1993) also report that students had more favorable opinions about the value of advertising in providing social role/lifestyle imagery information than did adults.

Pollay and Mittal (1993) also classify entertainment as a personal use of advertising. Calfee and

Ringold (1994), in their survey of studies from 1974 to 1989, report that, on average, 70% of respondents think advertising is entertaining. Pollay and Mittal (1993) and Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner (1998) also note the entertainment value of advertising; they find a cohort effect, with younger audiences believing that advertising was more entertaining and amusing than did older audiences.

Societal Effects of Advertising

As documented in the literature, the societal effects of advertising include the encouragement of materialism, the corruption of societal values, and falsity, or failure to present an accurate picture of the product and/or reality (Bauer and Greyser 1968; Pollay and Mittal 1993). Findings spanning three decades have indicated that consumers perceive advertising as encouraging unnecessary purchases and promoting materialism (Anderson, Engeldow, and Becker 1978; Andrews 1989; Calfee and Ringold 1988; Haller 1974; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Reid and Soley 1982), as well as corrupting society's values by reinforcing stereotypes (Wills and Ryans 1982) and promoting undesirable behaviors (Pollay and Mittal 1993). In addition, advertising has been viewed as less than truthful, often misleading, and insulting to consumers' intelligence (Anderson, Engeldow, and Becker 1978; Andrews 1989; Barksdale and Darden 1972; Barksdale, Darden, and Perreault 1976; Barksdale and Perreault 1980; Barksdale et al. 1982; Durand and Lambert 1985; Haller 1974; Kanter 1988/89; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Reid and Soley 1982). Finally, research also indicates that U.S. consumers are more negative about the social effects of advertising than are Russian (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994) or German (Witkowski and Kellner 1998) consumers.

Summary

To summarize, research has documented both positive and negative perceptions about the various functions and effects of advertising. The positives are related to the information and entertainment that advertising offers, as well as to its contribution to a healthy economy. The negative perceptions include the belief that advertising fosters materialism, corrupts personal and societal values, and portrays unrealistic images and lifestyles. Because persons may hold both positive and negative views about the functions and effects of advertising (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Muehling 1987; Pollay and Mittal 1993), studies that ask respondents to answer

Likert-type questions about their attitude toward advertising in general (e.g., "Overall, do you like or dislike advertising?") may be misinterpreted because they yield scores close to the midpoint of the scale. However, the various facets or components of advertising evaluations should be considered to reflect consumers' ambivalence more clearly.

The Method: The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique

As we have noted, our intention was to obtain a better understanding of the deeper meanings of advertising to U.S. consumers. We employed ZMET because it is a qualitative methodology that uses an in-depth, personal interview, which thereby enables researchers to explore and probe informants' thoughts and feelings more extensively. A second rationale for the selection of ZMET was because informants, not researchers, supply the stimuli (i.e., visual images such as pictures or photographs) for the in-depth interview. By controlling the stimuli, informants are better able to represent their thoughts and feelings and identify issues that are both important to them and potentially unknown to the researcher. In addition, validation studies of ZMET applications indicate that four to five depth interviews that are focused on identifying and understanding core themes can provide up to 90% of the information available from a larger set of interviews (Zaltman 1997; Zaltman and Coulter 1995; see also other sources that address qualitative research sample size issues, including Creswell 1998; McQuarrie 1993; Thompson 1997). In the following paragraphs, we discuss the recruiting procedures, informant instructions, and probing techniques (i.e., steps in the interview) used in this ZMET application.

We recruited informants from the greater Boston area using flyers and personal solicitation. Because we were interested in selecting a sample that would represent a balance in gender as well as a range of ages, incomes, and occupations, we screened potential informants over the telephone. Thus, our sample includes six men and eight women who ranged in age from 21 to 55 years; one informant was unemployed, and the occupations of the others included both skilled and unskilled labor, as well as administrative and professional careers. The Appendix provides a summary of the informants' characteristics.

Persons who met the screening criteria and agreed to participate were sent a letter. Instructions included in the letter asked informants to bring to the interview pictures that illustrated their perceptions of the value of advertising. The instructions indicated that

the informant could bring pictures from magazines, newspapers, pieces of artwork, and/or photos taken specifically for this assignment or retrieved from photo albums. We specifically mentioned in the letter that we were interested in their thoughts and feelings about advertising in general and not about particular advertisements and that their visual images should be representative of these general thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, the images should not be actual print advertisements, according to the instructions.

The use of pictures as the stimuli for the ZMET interview is grounded in the facts that much communication is nonverbal and that pictures can serve as entry points for exploring customer concepts (Ball and Smith 1992; Weiser 1988). Pictures typically represent not only basic lower-order concepts, but also higher-order constructs that contain extensive information or defining attributes. Due to the expressive power of pictures, it is not surprising that photographs have been a central part of counseling, sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Ball and Smith 1992; Becker 1980; Collier and Collier 1986; Denzin 1989; Grady 1996; Prosser 1996; Wagner 1979; Weiser 1993; Ziller 1990). Consumer behavior researchers also have employed photographs as stimuli to elicit consumers' subconscious thought processes and/or develop theories relevant to their work (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Holbrook 1987; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991).

Each informant participated in a two-hour, one-on-one audiotaped interview (which took place ten days to two weeks after they were recruited) and was paid \$75. Four interviewers, well trained in ZMET, conducted the interviews. On average, informants brought 13 pictures representing their impressions about the value of advertising; these pictures served as the focal point for much of the interview. The ZMET interview employed several steps to bring key metaphors to the surface and determine their interrelationships, including (1) storytelling, (2) missed images, (3) Kelly Repertory Grid and laddering, (4) sensory images, (5) the vignette, and (6) the summary image. In the next several paragraphs, we describe each step.

In Step 1, storytelling, the informant was asked to describe how each picture related to his or her impressions of the value of advertising. Because human memory and communication is story based (Schank 1990) and because the informants spent time thinking about their "assignment" and collecting pictures, most informants came to the interview with a particular agenda or story they wanted to tell. As expected, the stories that accompanied each visual metaphor were very revealing (Coles 1989; Schank 1990; Spiggle 1994).

In Step 2, missed images, the interviewer asked the informant if he or she had any impressions about the value of advertising for which he or she could not find an image. The informant was asked to discuss the impression and describe an image that would illustrate that impression. Although most informants found pictures to represent their thoughts and feelings, one woman reported that she would have liked to find a picture of mosquitoes buzzing around someone's head to illustrate how pesky advertising can be. When informants reported a missed image, the interviewer made a "drawing note" of the image and included it as another "picture." This is an important step because pertinent pictures may not be available within the time period of the assignment.

Step 3, construct elicitation, employed modified versions of the Kelly Repertory Grid technique and the laddering technique as a means for construct elicitation (Gengler and Reynolds 1995; Kelly 1963; Reynolds and Gutman 1988). The interviewer randomly selected three of the informant's pictures and asked how any two of the images were similar, yet different from the third, with regard to the informant's impressions of advertising. For example, as one triad for Informant #4, the interviewer selected a picture of a baby, a camera on a tripod, and the display window of a retail establishment. Informant #4 indicated that the former images were similar, in that they were focused on people and their responses to advertising, whereas the third focused on products. Probing and laddering with regard to the former two images resulted in the informant discussing his belief that advertising creates images that exploit people by playing on their emotions and insecurities and that disappointment ultimately results, because these images are often unrealistic and unattainable. Further probing and laddering with regard to the image of the retail establishment led the informant to discuss how products are advertised to get people to make purchases as a means to feel better, though they seldom have this effect. The use of the Kelly Repertory Grid and laddering techniques thereby resulted in the informant making connections among all three images in the triad.

In Step 4, sensory images, the focus of the interview changed. During this step, informants were asked to use taste, touch, smell, sound, color, and emotional feeling to describe their impressions of advertising. Because sensory metaphors are key mechanisms for discovering unconscious thought (Lakoff 1993; Turner 1994), this step offers additional data. However, the data derived were consistent with those derived from the previous steps using visual images. This consistency in findings is not surprising because any sen-

sory event "is integrated into the mental representation of the experience" (Engen 1991, p. 114). To illustrate in the context of this study, the woman who was looking for a picture of mosquitoes buzzing around someone's head commented that the sound of advertising was a "constant buzzing," which represented the irritating omnipresence of advertising.

In Step 5, the vignette, informants were asked to imagine a short movie that would describe their thoughts and feelings about advertising. The step is based on theories involving psychodrama and on evidence that different areas of the brain are active when engaging still as opposed to moving images (Hubel 1988; Zeki 1993). This step allows for the elicitation of heretofore unrevealed thoughts, because different ideas might emerge with the activation of different areas of the brain (Collins 1991).

Finally, Step 6, the summary image, was designed to have the informants create a composite of their thoughts and feelings associated with advertising. Informants chose entire pictures or specific images from their pictures that they wanted to include in their summary image. Then a graphic artist scanned the images and demonstrated the capabilities of the imaging software to the informant. The informant then instructed the graphic artist regarding the size, color, and positioning of the pictures in the summary image. When the summary image was complete, the graphic artist asked the informant to describe the image and its meaning with regard to his or her overall opinion about advertising.

In summary, the ZMET interview employed multiple steps to establish accurate representations of the topic under investigation (Wallendorf and Belk 1989; also see Kirk and Miller 1986; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Webb et al. 1981). Each step provided a somewhat different window for gaining a deeper understanding of the informant's thoughts and feelings, and the use of multiple steps increased the likelihood of uncovering important findings that might otherwise be missed by more general techniques. A detailed discussion of ZMET procedures relative to the evaluative credibility criteria set forth by Wallendorf and Belk (1989) is provided by Zaltman and Coulter (1995), and more information about these and other ZMET steps and their theoretical underpinnings can be found in Zaltman (1997) and Zaltman and Coulter (1993).

Metaphor Analysis

To better understand informants' impressions of advertising, we conducted a narrative analysis of the

Table 1
Summary of Deep Metaphors, Thematic Categories, and Conceptual Metaphors

<i>Deep Metaphor</i>	<i>Thematic Category</i>	<i>Conceptual Metaphor</i>
Resource	New product introduction information	Hostess
	Product usage information	Teacher
	Comparative product information	Counselor
	Information supportive of product choice	Enabler
	New ways to think about products, product-related experiences, and, in some cases, non-product-related experiences	Magician
	Advertising as entertainment	Performer
Force	Omnipresence of advertising	Omnipresent being
	Intrusiveness of advertising	Nosy neighbor
	Repetitiveness of advertising	Broken record
	Manipulation and deception of advertising	Con-man
	Encouragement of purchase and materialism	Seducer
	Advertising as a fuel to the economy	Engine
The Essence	Portrayal of unrealistic images	Evil therapist

stories contained in the interview transcripts (Riessman 1993; Stern 1995; Stern, Thompson, and Arnould 1998). We analyzed the narratives to determine the metaphors that consumers use to discuss their thoughts and feelings about advertising. Our focus was on metaphors because thought is largely metaphorical and imaginative (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Ortony 1993), and through analyzing metaphors, we can better understand customer thinking (Bagozzi and Dholakia 1999; Coulter and Zaltman 1994, 2000; Zaltman 1997).

The procedure for analysis was systematic and grounded in qualitative data analytic procedures (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994; Spiggle 1994). The fourteen interview tapes were transcribed, resulting in 169 single-spaced pages of text. In the first step in the analysis, the first author and two research assistants read each transcript individually and recorded informants' metaphorical expressions, that is, the words, phrases, or sentences used to articulate an informant's thoughts about advertising. An example of a metaphorical expression from our data was advertising is like "a horse sticking his nose through the fence."

A compilation of the three readers' metaphorical expressions served as the basis for deriving a set of thematic categories. To do so, the readers individually reviewed the metaphor expressions, developed thematic categories, and identified salient metaphors used by informants to describe the various aspects of

their attitudes toward advertising. This process was iterative, in that the three readers engaged in a joint analysis during which we compared, discussed, and synthesized our thematic categories. Then, a thematic category was assigned to each metaphorical expression. For example, the thematic category assigned to the metaphorical expression in the previous paragraph was the "intrusiveness of advertising."

The next step was to abstract the thematic categories to conceptual metaphors, that is, tropes, similes, or implied comparisons used to structure reasoning, experience, and everyday language (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). These conceptual metaphors serve as useful mechanisms for organization and data reduction. For example, we used the conceptual metaphor nosy neighbor to represent the intrusiveness of advertising. The conceptual metaphors are, in some cases, our informants' words, and in others, labels determined by the research team.

Finally, the three authors reviewed the thematic categories and conceptual metaphors to identify the deep metaphors present in our data. Deep metaphors represent a yet higher level of abstraction than conceptual metaphors and are fundamental orienting concepts that can serve as an organizing framework for a system of lower-order concepts (Lakoff 1993). (For a more detailed discussion of metaphor, including metaphoric expressions and conceptual and deep metaphors, please see Grady 1997, 1998; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Ortony 1993.) On the basis

of our discussion and collective assessment, we identified three deep metaphors (i.e., resource, force, and the essence) and offer a discussion of each in the following sections. Table 1 provides a summary of the thematic categories, conceptual metaphors, and deep metaphors that emerged from our data.

Resource

Many informants made references to gaining knowledge of and understanding about products, brands, and services from being exposed to advertising. They also made references to enjoying being entertained by viewing, reading, and hearing advertisements. We use the deep metaphor of resource to capture informants' sentiments about advertising being a valued source of information and entertainment and discuss these in more detail in the following sections.

Advertising as Information. Since Nelson's (1974) seminal work on advertising as information, research in advertising and consumer behavior has acknowledged the benefits of the information contained in pieces of marketing communications (Kempf and Smith 1998). Our informants offered a broad interpretation of advertising as information, and we identified five conceptual metaphors from our readings of the transcripts. They included advertising as the hostess, the teacher, the counselor, the enabler, and the magician. We discuss and offer informants' metaphorical expressions to illustrate each of the five conceptual metaphors.

Advertising as hostess is associated with the thematic category of advertising serving to introduce new products and services, as well as improvements or upgrades to old products and services. The conceptual metaphor of advertising as teacher indicates that advertising explains the benefits and value of a product, brand, or service. With this metaphor, informants discussed advertising that describes new ways to use the product or use it more effectively. Some research has assessed these aspects of the informational value of advertising using items such as "advertising helps me keep up to date about products/services available in the marketplace" and "advertising tells me which brands have the features I am looking for" (Bearden and Shimp 1982; Pollay and Mittal 1993).

Our informants also reported that advertising helped them become aware of and know more about product offerings. They were appreciative of the information that could "make your life better" or "make you feel better." Verbatims from three informants offer examples of advertising as the hostess and teacher.

[Ads] perhaps introduce the consumer to things that will make their life better or make their life

easier ... since you didn't know you needed it or could use it, you don't have it in your mind to buy it. But the marketing of the product alerts you to, hey, this is something that could benefit you and this product, once you get the product it will make your life better (Informant #12).

I'm not real knowledgeable about lubricants for my car, and in an ad I read that I need a certain oil in the summer and a certain oil in the winter. I feel good ... knowing that I am going to be using the right product at the right time, and I'll be taking care of my car (Informant #8).

We were looking for windows and I kept looking for windows that tilted in so you didn't have to climb outside and wash the outside. This picture, all around it are the words of the name of the company ... you can see that this person is just easily standing there washing the window. So that's kind of an important, important piece of information (Informant #10).

Some informants also talked about advertising as a counselor. This conceptual metaphor is used to signify advertising providing information, much the way a psychiatric therapist might, to help the customer understand the range of products and/or services from which to make a selection. Advertising as a counselor can encompass the hostess and teacher but goes beyond them in attempting to provide emotional and cognitive benefits related to decision making.

The choice literature in marketing has documented that consumers use various constructive processes to make choices among brands (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998) and that advertising plays a key role in providing the information used in deriving a choice. Survey items designed to measure opinions of advertising that might be relevant to the counselor have included "advertising helps me to know which products will or will not reflect the sort of person I am" and "advertising tells me which brands have the features I am looking for" (Pollay and Mittal 1993). Our informants viewed this aspect of advertising as very positive and indicated that they were better equipped to make choices in the marketplace as a consequence. Two informants' comments are illustrative:

[Advertising provides] helpful information that helps me make a choice ... sometimes it really feels like [making choices among brands is] a game. It's a game of choices and sometimes I'm not really sure what I want to choose, and it may be potluck. But as much information as I have, you know, and I'm reassured of certain qualities, then I can make a choice better (Informant #11).

Just an explosion of colors, that there are so many things available, and [advertising] helps in some

ways for consumers to filter what the individual things are that are available.... This picture was just a bunch of frozen vegetables which ... represented that there's all these different things available and sometimes when you're in the process of deciding what you'll purchase ... advertising plays a big part in educating you (Informant #12).

A fourth perspective on advertising as information is captured by the conceptual metaphor of advertising as enabler. As is evident in our verbatims, advertising's role is one of reassuring purchasers, saying they have done the "right" thing by making a particular choice, thereby reinforcing the buyer's behavior. Although the attitude toward advertising studies have not addressed this function of advertising information, a long tradition of research has suggested the importance of advertising in terms of prepurchase information search (Srinivasan 1990) and postpurchase reassurance (Festinger 1957; Frey and Rosch 1984). Our informants used the words "confirm" and "reassure" in discussing advertising's ability to reinforce decisions:

[Advertising] reinforces consumer's purchase decisions, reassures them and convinces. So if you've looked at all these tons of choices, and being the educated consumer and knowing what's best for yourself you would pick something. You would continue to look at [advertising] as a means to confirm that I made the best choice (Informant #12).

[Advertising] is kind of a little fork in the road up there. It's kind of like being able to see ahead, or have some, some perspective on what it is you're considering buying or you're considering participating in. [I] can make a choice better ... if someone will just ... give me the information and reassure me of what they have. Then it is easier for me to choose (Informant #11).

Finally, with regard to advertising as information, we use advertising as the magician to describe advertising's ability to make informants think differently, beyond the ad content itself. Although the attitude toward advertising literature does not directly assess this aspect of consumers' impressions of advertising, early work by Wright (1973, 1980) draws attention to the cognitive responses elicited by advertisements, including both product-related and non-product-related thoughts. Furthermore, other work draws attention to the affective responses elicited by advertisements (Batra and Ray 1986). Some of our informants indicated that advertising made them think not only about the advertised product, but also about tangential topics, such as product-category-related activities and personal issues. They used the words "stimulate your imagination" and "evoke happy memories" in communicating their impression of advertising:

[Advertising] speaks to things that are possible in the realm of anyone's world.... I think [advertising] can stimulate your imagination. It can suggest avenues, open doors of thought. Sometimes it gives you ideas you hadn't thought about before (Informant #4).

One day I was wracking my brain, "what should I get for a gift?" I was going to this girl's birthday party ... I'm thinking, "What can I bring?" She is really fussy ... I see an ad for wine. I mean, it sounds so stupid.... I said "Oh, I'll bring her a bottle of wine with a big bow on it" (Informant #7).

Commercials try to appeal to a sense of good times. They try to either evoke memories of happy things, you know, that are usually in everybody's past. You see it in cigarette ads all the time, these people on the beach having this great time smoking a cigarette (Informant #14).

Advertising as Entertainment. We use the conceptual metaphor performer to connote advertising as entertainment. Some attitude toward advertising research studies have examined consumers' opinions about the entertainment value of advertising with items such as "Quite often advertising is amusing and entertaining" and "Sometimes advertisements are even more enjoyable than other media contents" (Pollay and Mittal 1993). Some studies suggest that consumers view the entertaining aspect of advertising quite favorably (Calfee and Ringold 1994). Other research has demonstrated that upbeat, humorous, and entertaining advertisements can help draw and hold viewer/listener/reader attention, as well as form positive attitudes and generate purchase intentions (Lutz 1985; Madden and Weinberger 1984; Weinberger and Gulas 1992). Some of our informants talked about the entertainment value of advertising and its link to favorable brand attitudes and purchase behavior. One informant even reported that an entertaining advertisement could lead to increased trust in the advertiser, a causal link that, to our knowledge, has not been made in previous research. Two verbatims illustrate:

Whenever I see these ads I just stop and look at them, you know most ads you just kind of flip through.... [Some ads are] entertaining, there's a lot to be said for that. It's not just something I have to get past to get on to the article I was reading (Informant# 9).

Entertainment.... Those commercials are an absolute stitch, and I enjoy them.... It's fun. It makes you laugh. And actually in terms of individuals that I buy things from, people who have a good sense of humor, it's appealing. If they can laugh with you, then you trust them. You can be at ease,

and that aids that feeling of belonging and community (Informant #11).

Advertising as a Force

The deep metaphor that we refer to as force captures advertising's powerful presence in society. Our analysis revealed that force is manifested in many ways. The majority of conceptual metaphors associated with force were negative; they include advertising as the omnipresent being, the nosy neighbor, the broken record, the con-man, and the seducer. A positive aspect of force is revealed in the conceptual metaphor of advertising as an engine.

Advertising as the Omnipresent Being. Some of our informants discussed the pervasiveness of advertising, and we use the conceptual metaphor omnipresent being to reflect this ubiquitous nature. Although this aspect of advertising typically has not been examined in attitude toward advertising studies, others have examined advertising clutter and reported on its negative impact on magazine circulation (Ha and Litman 1997). Our informants were very sensitive to advertising's presence. For example, one of our informants likened advertising to a mosquito: hard to evade. Another informant's quote reveals the sentiment that advertising is insidious:

We're bombarded by such a series of ads.... It's so pervasive and even if you try to avoid it, you can't ... people are trying to separate themselves from so many ads. People say, "Oh, I don't see ads, I don't listen to them, I don't watch commercials." But, you can't really get away from it. It's on people's shirts.... It's like your hands are up and you're trying to stay away and you're trying to keep away from [the advertisements] (Informant #14).

Little research has considered the ecological effects of advertising (Hyman, Tansey, and Clark 1994; Muehling 1987). However, some of our informants were personally annoyed at having to waste time and energy plowing through advertisements. They were aggravated at being unable to control advertising exposure—concerned not only about the waste of natural resources used to produce advertising (e.g., wood used to manufacture paper for print ads), but also the consequent need for attendance to recycling. Furthermore, some discussed how outdoor advertising can spoil nature's beauty. Two informants' comments are illustrative:

[This is a picture of] a burned out wasteland.... I get so much paper junk. When I think of all the trees that are burned down and cut down to make all this crap that I don't want coming to my door without my permission, it makes me sick. I just

think it's a tremendous waste.... It's a waste of my time and energy because I have to then, if I'm going to be conscientious, I have to figure out a way to recycle it. It's an inconvenience to me as well as a waste (Informant #11).

When you are driving through the countryside or across country and there is billboard after billboard on these major highways, you can't even see the scenery. It just spoils the aesthetics of the scenery, the vistas (Informant #9).

Even three decades ago, when advertising exposure was much less frequent than it is today, researchers contemplated the effects of information overload on consumer choice (Jacoby, Speller, and Berning 1974). Although the attitude toward the institution of advertising studies do not specifically address the level or volume of exposure, some of our informants reported being "overwhelmed" by advertising. While acknowledging the positive aspects of advertising as information (as previously discussed), these informants nonetheless reported that, in some instances, there was just too much information and that it was overkill that resulted in a confused and doubtful, rather than enlightened, decision maker. Two comments are illustrative:

[There are] a myriad of choices which lead to confusion.... [In one instance] I looked over a lot of ads, looked over a lot of brochures and relatively hastily I made a decision, and I felt okay about it. And I continued every single day to get more and more things and just all of this bombardment was starting to make me feel doubtful. "Did I make the best choice?" "Was [the other offering] the best choice?" (Informant #12).

You see commercials for Reebok, then you see Nike, then you see LA Gear, then you see Converse, then you see Keds ... you see all these different kinds of sneakers. And they are all claiming to be the best, the best for your feet, the best for basketball, the best for this, and you get confused because you see so many different kinds of ads for the same kind of thing (Informant #8).

Advertising as the Nosy Neighbor. Prior studies of consumers' attitudes toward advertising have asked about advertising's intrusiveness, and several of our informants viewed advertising as a rude visitor that intrudes on daily life. We refer to this second aspect of the deep metaphor force as the nosy neighbor. The nosy neighbor appears to be associated with the omnipresent being, because often the information and entertainment that result from advertising come unsolicited. Our informants used vivid metaphors to communicate their distaste for advertising that seems to encroach on their lives. For example, one infor-

mant made reference to advertising sticking its nose in his business; another talked about how loud television advertising invades her serenity. Both of these informants commented that their view of advertising as a nosy neighbor made them "tune out" rather than "tune in" the advertiser's message. The following comments are illustrative:

This [picture] is a horse sticking his nose through a fence. He's sticking his nose where he's not supposed to be sticking his nose. And this is the same idea, but another angle. This is a miner with his light on. I've got my private tunnel and some jerk with a light on his head is in there nosing around.... I absolutely hate [advertising intruding on my privacy] (Informant #11).

When the volume goes up on ads, especially television or the radio, I usually turn the radio or TV off or I turn to another station. At any rate I don't listen, the exact opposite of what they want to happen happens.... It's not only painful physically, it's annoying to my nervous system.... They never took into consideration the fact that people don't like to be yelled at.... Probably turns you away, you don't even find out what's being advertised (Informant #3).

Advertising as the Broken Record. Our research indicates that consumers are very sensitive to the repetitiveness of advertising; we use the conceptual metaphor broken record to reflect this aspect of the deep metaphor force. To cut through the advertising clutter, media planners often develop schedules that are based on a maximum number of exposures, the expectation being that repetitive advertising will help achieve the communications objectives to create, reinforce, and change consumer attitudes and to develop brand images (Belch 1982; Cacioppo and Petty 1979; Pechmann and Stewart 1989). Our findings highlight the problem with this practice; our informants' narratives indicate that, if exposure occurs too frequently, the repetitive nature of advertising, which is designed to keep the company or brand name "top of mind," can often have a boomerang effect. Our informants' comments suggest that repetition can engender a range of agitated states from bothersome to torturous. As illustrated in our verbatims, one informant likened repetitive advertising to having "guns at your head," while another reported that it was "driving [me] nuts." A third informant, after listening to the same ad again and again, reported tuning it out. The verbatims include:

They had this same ad ... on tonight and tomorrow night ... every twenty minutes that ad was on again, and again, and again. I finally just turned it off and I went, "I'm not going to listen to that ad

again." It's just like give me a break!... So that's what it feels like sometimes, it's overkill. You've got all these guns at your head (Informant #11).

Like a couple of those insurance ads ... they used to put that commercial on every twenty minutes and then you'd see signs.... It was driving [me] nuts!... Why do they have to overkill? (Informant #7).

Well that's one thing with advertising, the repetitiveness of it. Pretty soon you tend to tune out (Informant #9).

Advertising as the Con-Man. Using items such as "In general, advertisements present a true picture of the product advertised" and "In general, advertising is misleading," attitude toward advertising studies have often found that consumers perceive advertising as being untruthful (Andrews 1989; Haller 1974; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Reid and Soley 1982). Furthermore, Hyman, Tansey, and Clark (1994) report that *Journal of Advertising* reviewers deemed the "use of deception" in ads as the most important topic for study of advertising ethics. Under the rubric of the deep metaphor force, we use the conceptual metaphor con-man to communicate consumers' impressions of advertising as engaged in lying or deceitful practices to sell wares. In general, our informants were very tuned in to the "dark side" of advertising associated with manipulation and deception. The focus of their comments was on products that did not perform as promised and the absence of important information in the advertisement. Our informants' words, such as "they've set a trap for you," serve as vivid examples of consumers' reactions to deception and manipulation. The following three comments clearly reveal the anger and frustration they feel as targets of deceptive and manipulative advertising:

Advertising often really will lie about a product. It will say ... in ten days if you eat ground up ginkgo nuts ... after I bought the product and ten days later nothing has happened, my body is still the same shape, I've wasted money, I've wasted time.... I feel angry and I feel frustrated because there is nothing that I can do about it (Informant #2).

[The people in the ad are] happy looking, you know they're really enjoying themselves. They look like they're full of energy and they just put a cigarette in their hand like it's a healthy thing to do.... And then down in the corner they'll tell you that ... [smoking] may result in fetal injury, in very small print. And there's no mention of cancer (Informant #1).

It certainly feels like people trying to tap into you and get you to do what they want. That's what it is, really. People thinking that they can take over your own mental reasoning and get you to do what they want by manipulating you.... It's like being

caught in a trap. Like they've set a trap for you (Informant #11).

Advertising as the Seducer. Prior attitude toward advertising research has employed items such as "Advertising persuades people to buy things they should not buy," "Because of advertising, people buy a lot of things they do not really need," and "Advertising is making us a more materialistic society, overly interested in buying and owning things" and found that many consumers are concerned that advertising is causally related to people making unneeded purchases (Haller 1974; Pollay and Mittal 1993). Research has also considered compulsive buying and materialism as they relate to advertising (Belk 1985; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Richins 1996).

Consistent with this research, many of our informants saw advertising as a negative force, as a seducer that causes consumers to engage in excessive buying and/or compulsive shopping. These informants believed that advertising causes people to buy things they may not need. Some were concerned about the materialistic values associated with this excessive purchasing. The following three verbatims offer examples of how our informants perceived that advertising may result in the acquisition and consumption of unnecessary goods. The next quote is particularly interesting, in that Informant #2 states that "*they [i.e., advertisers] fill up my house with clutter, they fill up my time..., they spend money in my pocketbook*" (italics added), thereby attributing responsibility for her purchases to the advertiser:

Advertising encourages me to buy more things than I really need. It can be just useless things, it can be ridiculous things, it can be stuff I already have. They fill up my house with clutter, they fill up my time with going out and buying things, they spend money in my pocketbook for things I don't need (Informant #2).

The following two narratives reveal our informants' impressions about "consumer society." Their comments (as well as another informant's discussion about "keeping up with the Joneses") reflect the pressures to buy:

The feeling of being encouraged to buy things that you don't really need ... in a larger sense, you're encouraged [by advertisers] to be part of this consumer culture.... I find that totally insulting and I think a lot of people do. And yet there are clear pressures [to conform] (Informant #9).

[Advertising] produces a consumer society that places tremendous emphasis on acquisition of material possessions, our ability and perceived freedom of choice, that we are free to purchase whatever we want becomes a surrogate for the real political

choice, buying, shopping and consumption is the opiate for the masses (Informant #4).

Advertising as an Engine. Previous attitude toward advertising research, using items such as "Advertising helps raise our standard of living," "In general, advertising helps our nation's economy," and "In general, advertising results in lower prices," has indicated mixed consumer reactions regarding the economic value of advertising (Muehling 1987; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Reid and Soley 1982). We use the conceptual metaphor engine to refer to advertising as a favorable force in the marketplace. Some of our informants acknowledged the value of advertising in helping feed and fuel the economy. For example, informants discussed the ability of advertising to help manufacturers, retailers, and service providers meet their sales objectives. One informant also raised the possibility that advertising helps keep prices in check and may lead to lower prices. Furthermore, several informants talked about the economic benefits of advertising to society at large, which result in an increased standard of living. The following two verbatims are illustrative:

[Advertising] helps people sell goods, which helps wages go up, which increases the standard of living, which in some sense increases my standard of living (Informant #9).

[Advertising] creates or fosters competition, which can lead to lower prices. If Continental comes out with a \$399 to Europe, other carriers on the same route are going to match that, because it's been publicized. Everybody knows Continental's offering it for \$399, so if I called Delta and they tell me our price is \$599, well, I already know from what I've heard from Continental that theirs is lower, so I'll go for the lowest price for basically the same product (Informant #12).

The Essence of Advertising

The essence, our third deep metaphor, pertains to the "core being" of an entity. Our informants viewed the essence of advertising as providing idealized images of people and products. We offer the conceptual metaphor evil therapist to capture this informant sentiment. As the evil therapist, advertising offers idealistic, unrealistic images of people and their bodies, homes, and lives (Ewen 1988; Gulas and McKeage 2000; Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Jones, Stanaland, and Gelb 1998; Pollay 1986; Richins 1995). Previous attitude toward advertising research has reported, in general, that neither students nor adults believe that advertising presents a "true picture" (Anderson, Engeldow, and Becker 1978; Andrews

1989; Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Haller 1974; Kanter 1988/1989). There is also some support for the notion that advertising tends to make people live in a fantasy world (Pollay and Mittal 1993).

Our data suggest that consumers often perceive the evil therapist as working in conjunction with the con-man and/or seducer to encourage people to buy products that will (supposedly) help them achieve these idealized images. Our informants had a very dim view of advertising's use of these glamorous images. They commented on how advertising's "beautiful" images create unrealistic expectations (e.g., if I buy the shampoo, my hair can be as shiny and manageable as the woman's in the ad). Our results further suggest that consumers believe that the use of idealized images can negatively affect self-esteem and self-confidence and contribute to feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, and anger. Three quotes are illustrative:

[Advertising] creates unreal expectations. Buy this product, your teeth are going to be blinding white. Get it, use it, use it, use it, and really don't see any difference.... Come to our store, buy this dress. You're going to look beautiful. The model is there and you get that dress and think, if I get this, or if I get this suit, I'm just going to really look really great. And you put it on and it just doesn't fulfill what you expected it might (Informant #12).

[Advertising] manufactures images of identity and glamour with the purchase of the product or service becoming an avenue of self-transformation for the consumer ... a lot of the images we see out in the world are manufactured.... And a lot of it speaks to identity and glamour. As we move through the world, we continue to age and get older and change, but images don't. They're always young, forever young, they're suspended in time.... I think it has a negative effect, because we end up striving to be that, when in reality it's impossible to stop time.... [These images] create within the individual feelings of anxiety, need, longing, desire, hunger, loss, helplessness, and anger that can only be relieved through the consumption of the product or service (Informant #4).

Marketers try to prey on people's insecurities, insecurities about their looks, they try to convince them that they need a product.... I see this a lot in the cosmetic industry, somehow you're not right unless you use our product. I think a lot of people pick up on that because they have a poor self-image and they'll look at it, "Oh, if I buy this, I'll be okay" (Informant #14).

Some of our informants also worried that advertising may take advantage of impressionable, lower-income, less educated audiences. They suggested that advertising may make the less fortunate feel even more inferior and unworthy. Two verbatims illustrate informants' concerns:

And then there are these commercials out there for liquor, where these people are having a wonderful time, and they are drinking vodka and brandy, and there's romance and exciting things are happening.... I think it gives very impressionable people the [wrong] ideas (Informant #6).

I think it can be unrealistic to create false expectations for people who have limited income. I think it sort of leaves out a whole part of the population that will probably never have that kind of money or those kinds of opportunities (Informant #8).

Moreover, some informants believed that these feelings of inferiority potentially could drive the less fortunate to misbehavior to acquire goods:

[Advertising] tantalizes customers with unattainable products.... [It] creates demands or desires which can lead to criminal temptations.... The people who live in this [dilapidated] house, they're seeing ads for Mercedes and Rolexes ... it's tantalizing them, it's making them think, "Oh geez, I really want that." And, it's not something that is within their means at the current time (Informant #12).

In a lot of underprivileged neighborhoods, a lot of the young kids have really nice basketball shoes, when their families are kind of destitute.... I don't think it is a good thing. Maybe it leads to priorities kind of getting a little screwed up (Informant #6).

Our informants' narratives provide an interesting elaboration on previous attitude toward advertising research regarding idealized images. Specifically, informants talked at length about two specific idealized images that they believed were very prevalent in advertising: the traditional family and the beautiful woman. With regard to the former, they suggested that advertisers typically employ stereotypical traditional family members (i.e., a Caucasian husband, wife, children, and [sometimes] dog) as protagonists in their ads (Wills and Ryans 1982). These responses seem to contradict studies that indicate that more targeting of minority groups is occurring (Grier and Brumbaugh 1999; Kates 1999; Stern 1999) and that increased attention is being paid to multicultural issues in advertising (see, for example, *Journal of Advertising*, 28 [Spring], 1999). Nonetheless, our informants reported rarely seeing African Americans, Hispanics, gays and lesbians, and/or single parents in advertisements. Furthermore, our informants were bothered by the exclusion of these groups, commenting that advertising has failed to represent the ethnic diversity of U.S. society. Two narratives illustrate:

You barely ever see ethnic diversity in pictures. They always portrayed white people as being the upper class, homeowners. You never see a black family or a Spanish family in this home setting

doing their own home improvements. It's saying that the everyday person owns a home, does their own home improvements, is upper class—which is very negative, it's untrue. I think it creates stereotypes.... There are people out there that live like that, but the majority of people don't (Informant #1).

It seems like there are a lot of stereotypes that are perpetuated and different prejudices.... [The advertisements] were all of a family, and the family consists of a mother and a father and two children ... it just looks like a kind of traditional group (Informant #10).

Consistent with their reactions to the presentation of idealized images in general, informants' comments about traditional family images in particular include the impression that these images may negatively influence the self-concept and/or self-esteem of nontraditional family members. As is evident in the following quote, our informants did not always view advertising's focus on "happy" people and events favorably:

They show the families, mom, dad and the kids, and everybody's really happy and beautiful smiles and heaven forbid anyone have acne. And they're beautiful houses and everything is just bright and sunny.... They're sharply dressed ... nice cars.... Seeing that might start to make people think that there's something wrong with me because I live in a studio or I'm a single mother, my kid is fat.... I would say it lowers self-esteem, lowers confidence (Informant #12).

Although the attitude toward advertising literature has not addressed consumer reactions to images of "beautiful women" in advertising, other research has examined the issue (Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999; Martin and Gentry 1997). Our informants noted the use of beautiful women in provocative situations, postures, and roles in advertising and commented that these portrayals could lead to problematic effects for both women in general and less secure women in particular. Just as has been suggested by Schouten (1991) and Thompson and Hirschman (1995), our informants expressed concern that advertising's exploitation of beautiful women could adversely affect women's self-esteem, precipitate eating disorders, and instill a need to recreate themselves. These words from our informants are illustrative:

[The ad isn't] realistic. I mean, everybody's not gorgeous. Everybody doesn't have a professional put on their makeup every day and do their hair.... If you're not gorgeous, you're not accepted.... [Advertising these images is] causing women to starve themselves, it's causing a lot of women to have unnecessary surgeries, to try look like this.... And it's causing a lot of young girls to become bulimic, starve themselves (Informant #1).

First of all, I see myself as not thin enough, that I could be this beautiful thin person if I try hard enough to eat all these weight reducing pills. So, it leads me to actions that are futile or even harmful.... They lead to sort of inferiority feelings, to frustration feelings (Informant #2).

Summary

In our metaphor analysis, we both reaffirm findings from previous studies and elicit the deeper meanings that our informants associate with the various aspects of advertising. These deeper meanings are captured in the three deep metaphors (resource, force, and essence), thematic categories, and conceptual metaphors used to characterize informants' thoughts and feelings about advertising derived from in-depth interviews with our fourteen informants (see Table 1).

The informants in our study regarded the information and entertainment provided by advertising as assets. We used the deep metaphor resource, whereas previous research has labeled these facets of advertising personal uses. Our findings illustrate that advertising may serve as the hostess to introduce new offerings, the teacher to educate the public about product and service attributes and benefits, the counselor to provide comparative information useful in decision making, the enabler to offer prepurchase and postpurchase reassurances, and the magician to stimulate creativity and thinking. In addition, our informants viewed advertising as a performer that can provide laughter and enjoyment. Similar to the affect transfer literature, several informants commented that feeling good about an advertisement made them feel good about the advertised offering. Our analysis also revealed a benefit heretofore not discussed in the literature, namely, that the entertainment aspect of advertising can lead to increased trust in advertisers, manufacturers, and retailers.

Our informants also addressed the economic benefits of advertising, which we discussed as a positive force, using the conceptual metaphor engine. Indeed, some informants believed that advertising facilitated the purchase of goods and services, which in turn helped stimulate a healthy economy. Moreover, several informants suggested that advertising has a positive impact on standard of living.

Our data also revealed that advertising may be perceived as a powerful negative force. Whereas previous attitude toward advertising research has not typically assessed the omnipresence and intrusive nature of advertising, our informants felt "bombarded" by ads on television, radio, billboards, print, and

people's shirts. Our data indicated that, because of its prevalent, intrusive, and repetitive nature, advertising was viewed as an omnipresent being, a nosy neighbor, and a broken record. Consistent with the attitude toward advertising literature focused on societal effects, some informants perceived advertising as a con-man, manipulative and deceptive, not telling the truth about products or not concerned about customers, but rather focused on making money. Our data also suggested that advertising as the seducer encourages excessive or compulsive shopping, often for products that are not really needed. Our informants' reactions to these negative forces included anger, frustration, and product boycotting.

Finally, the aspect of societal effects of advertising pertaining to falsity and unrealistic images is captured by our third deep metaphor, the essence. Many informants saw advertising as an evil therapist presenting idealistic, unrealistic images of people, their bodies, and lives and encouraging people to buy products that (supposedly) would help them achieve these idealistic images. They reported that a preponderance of traditional family images and beautiful women images were likely to affect impressionable, lower-income, less educated, and/or low self-esteem audiences adversely.

Cross-Case Analysis: General Impressions About Advertising

Our data revealed the interrelatedness of the conceptual metaphors. For example, some informants' verbatims illustrated that they believed advertising served not only as hostess, but also as teacher and counselor. Similarly, we noted the con-man and seducer often working with the evil therapist to encourage purchase. Therefore, to obtain a more holistic perspective of informants' overall impression of advertising, we completed two additional analyses. First, the first author and two research assistants engaged in (1) a text-based analysis of informants' transcripts to ascertain the tone (favorable or unfavorable) with regard to an overall impression of advertising and (2) an analysis of the presence of the conceptual metaphors in their transcripts. Second, the three authors engaged in a text-based and image analysis of the informants' summary images (created in Step 6 of the interview). We engaged in both analyses in an attempt to triangulate the findings from Steps 1 through 5 and Step 6, as well as across researchers.

As we noted previously, our metaphor analysis findings suggest that advertising has positive value, in that it relates information (hostess, teacher, counselor, enabler, and magician), provides entertainment

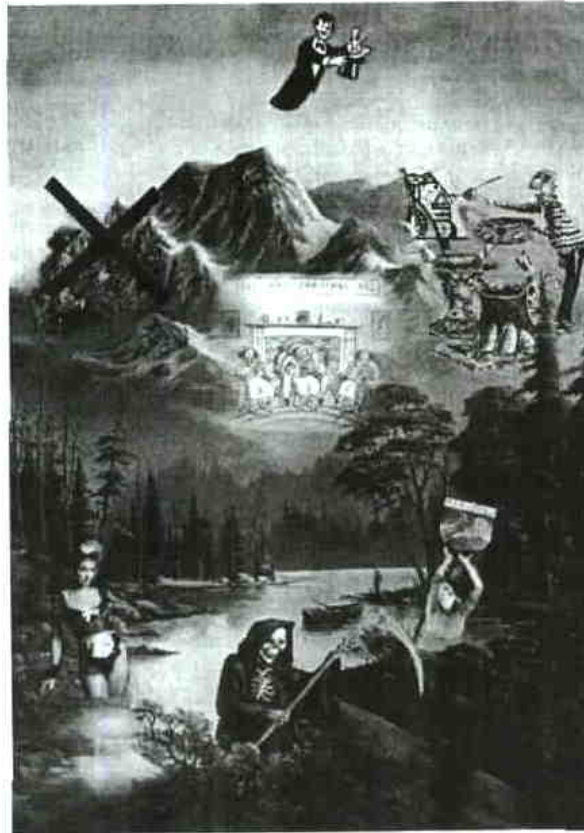
(performer), and stimulates growth in the economy (engine). However, the goodwill derived from these aspects of advertising is countered by several liabilities (omnipresent being, nosy neighbor, con-man, seducer, and evil therapist). The cross-case analysis more clearly reveals the extent to which these metaphors occur together and thereby gives an indication of the extent to which an individual informant had a more or less favorable impression of advertising.

Our analyses yielded three groups: the ambivalents, the skeptics, and the hostiles. The ambivalents had both favorable and unfavorable impressions of advertising. They focused on the informational value of advertising, how advertising assisted their decision making, and its role as a catalyst in stimulating both product- and non-product-related thoughts. In addition, these informants found entertainment value in advertising. In general, the ambivalents reported that the informational and entertainment values of advertising gave them a good feeling about advertising. However, they were bothered by advertising's use of idealized images and its misrepresentation of reality. Thus, ambivalents' transcripts tended to include examples of the conceptual metaphors hostess, teacher, counselor, enabler, magician, performer, and evil therapist. Exhibit 1 shows the summary image of Informant #11, an ambivalent, and her impressions of advertising.

The second group of informants had transcripts that included mostly negative (but with some positive) impressions of advertising; we refer to these informants as the skeptics. The third group had very negative impressions about advertising; we refer to them as the hostiles. Whereas the skeptics found value in the information provided by advertising, the hostiles were hard pressed to see a positive side. Both the skeptics' and the hostiles' thoughts and feelings focused on the omnipresent and intrusive nature of advertising, as well as its manipulative, deceitful, and idealized content. Informants in both groups were annoyed and angered by these aspects of advertising and believed they could result in a lowering of peoples' self-confidence and a corruption of society's values. Therefore, the transcripts of these informants tended to include examples of the conceptual metaphors: the omnipresent being, nosy neighbor, seducer, con-man, and evil therapist. Exhibits 2 and 3 show the summary images for Informant #2 of the skeptics and Informant #4 of the hostiles, respectively, as well as their impressions of advertising.

Our three groups are somewhat similar to those identified in a cluster analysis by Pollay and Mittal (1993). For example, our ambivalent and skeptic groups are analogous to their compromised concerned

Exhibit 1
Summary Image for Informant #11



On the up side ... it's all about us and our connection with the world and our relationship with each other. These images, to me, say that. You have the invitation, you have the helping hand, someone's helping you along. You have the image of your dreams. You have satisfaction, harvest, and abundance. It's all a circle. The danger always, is the danger of getting sucked under. I can't say that I believe in the devil per se but I think there is a presence of evil or bad intentions. So, you've got to watch out for that. The things that can happen underneath is people intruding on your mind, trying to force you into things, people who don't care about you and do not have your best interest in mind. It's like a heaven/hell image. There are elements to our life that are uplifting and there are those that will drag us down. That's true of marketing just like anything else. It's up to the individual to be responsible to sort it out. That's why the person's in the middle. The person who's really responsible is you.

and degeneracy wary segments, respectively, and our hostile group is similar to their critical cynics. However, whereas Pollay and Mittal (1993, p. 109) reported on a segment that was "supportive of advertising with few reservations" (the contented consumers), we failed to find such a group. Consistent with the findings of Mittal (1994), our informants were more negative than positive about advertising.

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Research

In conclusion, the ZMET interviews elicited vivid metaphors of consumers' impressions of advertising. As a consequence, we have a broader understanding of our informants' cognitive and emotional reactions to this form of persuasive communication. For example, we find that advertising is a multifaceted information

Exhibit 2
Summary Image for Informant #2



The background is the original, unsullied environment—very beautiful and very natural. The most critical idea to me is in the center where advertising tries to convince me to spend my time buying things rather than spending my time in any other way. I feel other ways would be far better, like doing good for the human race and doing art and things like that. Above the center are positive values and below are negative values. There will be three positives and three negatives. On each side and above the Magi [center image] are two positive ones. One is that I can get what I need for survival in an easy way. The other is the variety and selection of goods can do more than just help my survival. It can even inspire me. They also entertain me. They can really enhance my quality of life. At the top is the inspiration that is in advertising and how I feel that will affect me partly through pleasure but partly that it gives me ideas too.

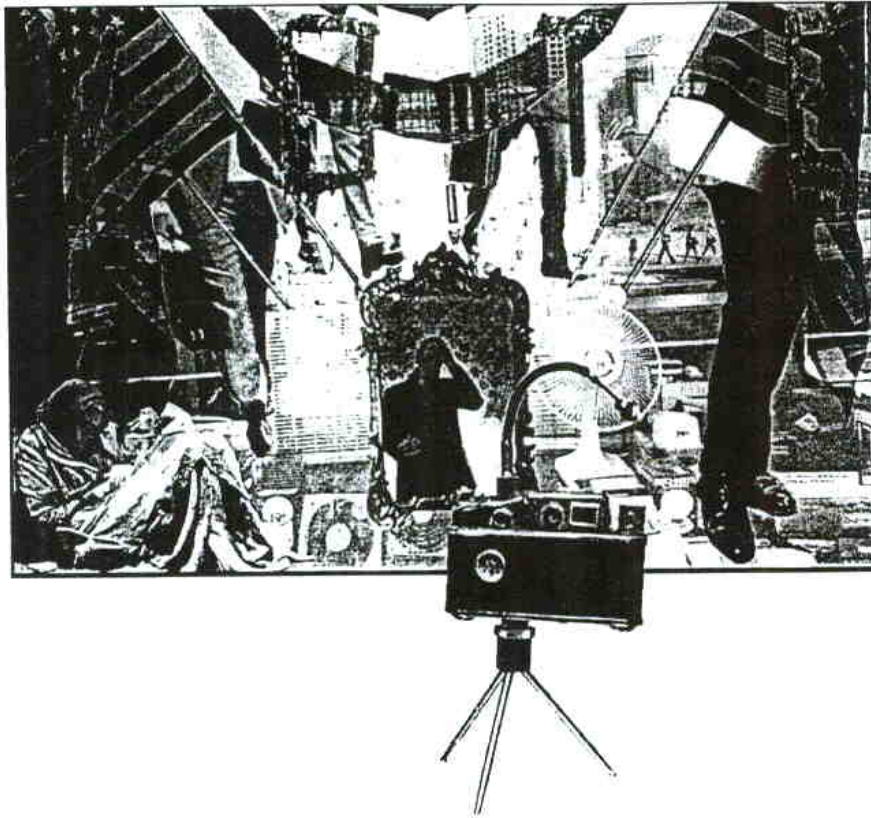
On the other hand, this is balanced by three negative aspects. One is that advertising misleads me by creating an image of what I might be. This image might be pleasurable, but it is misleading and I may incorporate it into what I might think about myself. The other side—it may mislead me into thinking that a product can do more for me than it can, when actually it is doing things to harm me. The skeleton is a symbol about how advertising suppresses information. Really what I wanted to show is that advertising affects politics. Our overall views of everything to have profit as the basis of life, rather than the good of others—so that it may do direct and disastrous harm. The woman is being led astray by a product that is really harmful for her.

source and that the prevalence and intrusiveness of advertising are forces with which many consumers are coping. Our cross-case analysis reaffirms that consumers can concurrently hold positive and negative opinions about various aspects of advertising. We have examined our findings in the context of several diverse streams of extant research to offer a more broad-based presentation of the literature on attitude toward advertising to date.

We believe our observations, coupled with findings from extant research, offer guidance for both practitioners and academicians. From a practical standpoint, companies and advertisers alike must be

cognizant of their advertising presence in the marketplace. Although individual advertisements provide companies with excellent opportunities to educate and entertain audiences, overexposure and unsolicited exposure can be very counterproductive. Consistent with other studies, we find that information and entertainment are advertising's greatest assets. Collectively, these findings suggest that advertising firms may need to pay particular attention to creating advertisements that have both informational content and entertainment value, so as to allay some of the negativity associated with the preponderance and in-

Exhibit 3
Summary Image for Informant #4



This image is set up as a stage. In the center foreground is a camera that is looking into the stage, as it might be photographed. The stage refers to a construction. This image, as well as all marketing images, are constructions of some sort, whether it be personal or political. The American flag and banner are the border around the stage. Within the stage set there are products. On the lower left, there is a street person, she is huddled over in her rags. Out of the banners, there are four businessmen marching to work with their briefcases. Across the image is the word, "Vote." In the center of the stage is a mirror, and reflected in the mirror is a man with his hand to his head and an expression of possibly anxiety and frustration at seeing the entire scene. The overall feel that I am constructing is this society of materialism. It is "The American Way," that's why I used the American flag, as a symbol of our country, but also of our mentality. This power to buy and purchase is a surrogate for real political power, and that is why I'm mixing these images and icons of politics and symbols of consumerism. The person in the mirror is frustrated with himself. The person on the street is a symbol for the futility of the system—whether or not you participate, the fact is there is little control and choice and the only choice we have is these placebos we call products.

vasiveness of advertising. Furthermore, our findings suggest that consumers believe that images of beautiful people and exotic settings are far removed from who they are or could hope to be. A key concern is that these images may create despair among those with low self-esteem and low income, with criminal behavior as a possible outcome. Evidently, the moral fabric of U.S. society is reflected in its advertising. Thus, consumers may call into question the social consciousness of advertisers on the basis of the content of their ads. In addition, our findings indicate that it may be appropriate for advertisers to provide better representations of the

present-day family unit by including single parents, African Americans, Hispanics, gays, and lesbians.

Our study offers a multitude of research opportunities. First, our ZMET interview required that informants spend time thinking about and collecting pictures for up to two weeks prior to the interview; thus, they were very "involved" with the topic at the time of the interview. Although this provided the ability to obtain a broad understanding of consumer issues, additional research might want to compare these issues in a more top-of-mind context. Second, our findings hint at various linkages among consumer-generated cognitions (e.g.,

idealized images), emotions (e.g., anger and frustration), and behaviors (e.g., boycotting). Additional research, perhaps a quantitative study, might investigate the presence and strength of such relationships in an attitude toward advertising context. Third, many of our informants can be classified as lower-middle class, which might have had an effect on their ability to aspire to the types of lifestyles shown in advertising and, consequently, on the metaphors that they elicited. Therefore, additional studies might consider whether metaphors vary depending on racial, economic, and educational characteristics of consumers. Furthermore, whereas researchers have examined consumers' attitudes toward advertising with regard to individual media (e.g., Mittal 1994), a cross-media study examining these relationships could offer useful insights to marketing communications specialists and media planners. Moreover, a cross-media quantitative investigation that enables comparisons of subgroups (on the basis of demographic and psychographic variables) could provide instructive segmenting and targeting information. Our findings, as well as those reported in other studies, offer a strong reminder that consumers associate advertising with a broad array of harmful societal effects, including materialism, crime, health-related issues, and racism. Research with an agenda of studying the linkages among specific advertising content and these harmful social effects, as well as the concomitant public policy implications, would be extremely valuable.

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**Appendix
Informant Demographics**

<i>Id. #</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Personal Income</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
1	21-30	Female	<\$ 20k	Secretary
2	46-55	Female	\$20k-\$29k	Computer programmer
3	46-55	Female	<\$20k	Unemployed
4	31-45	Male	<\$20k	Photographer
5	31-45	Male	\$20k-\$29k	Bartender
6	21-30	Male	\$40k-\$49k	Financial services
7	31-45	Female	\$40k-\$49k	Waitress
8	NR	Female	NR	NR
9	21-30	Male	\$30k-\$39k	Librarian/writer
10	21-30	Female	<20k	Teacher
11	31-45	Female	\$30k-\$39k	Book editor
12	21-30	Male	\$20k-\$29k	Teacher
13	31-45	Male	\$30k-\$39k	Facility manager
14	21-30	Female	<20k	Photographer

Notes: NR=not reported.