

# **The Application of Sense-Making Theory to Advertising**

## ***An Exploratory Case Study***

**James Alexander Watson**

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Supervisor: Professor J Kinghorn

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## **“Declaration**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: ..... Date: .....”.



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# SUMMARY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the controlled transfer of meaning that could be facilitated by the application of knowledge of sense-making theory. An object of communication, an advertisement, was consciously constructed on the basis of sense-making principles. An application of knowledge of sense making was then employed to assess the reception of the advertisement by a selected sample of respondents.

The decision to select advertising as the choice of medium for the study stemmed from the increasing levels of criticism directed at this form of communication as a result of its frequent failure to deliver intended benefits for its sponsors. The intended benefits relate to the transfer of meaning that would prompt recipients of advertising messages to take an action that would be of value to the advertiser.

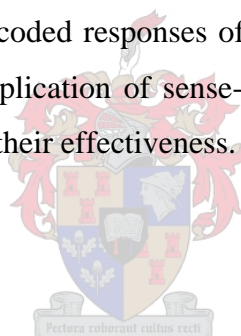
More specific criticisms have centred on the failure of a growing number of advertising messages to deliver meaningful benefits as a result of their lack of relevance for the intended recipients of these communications. A call for a shift in mind-set away from traditional linear models currently employed to facilitate the design of advertising messages has prompted a growing recognition of the need to employ a more empathetic approach that would facilitate a positive interaction between an advertiser and a target audience.

The emergence of what has been termed experiential marketing communications has advocated a view that advertising communications can promote stronger allegiances between organisations and their customers by the inclusion of meaningful sensory associations for recipients. This view, together with the insights revealed by those working in the field of sense making, suggested that the incorporation of sense-making theory could well accommodate the paradigm shift that has been called for in the design of advertising communications.

The views and insights outlined above prompted the development of an advertisement that sought to incorporate sense-making theory into its construction. The requirement to allow for the transfer of intended meaning in the advertisement was facilitated by incorporating frames and cues, the design of which sought to assist in the resolution of equivocality and enable respondents to bridge cognitive gaps.

The investigation took the form of an exploratory case study. The advertisement, constructed on the basis of sense-making theory, represented the control element of the study. In-depth interviews were conducted amongst grade 12 learners selected on the basis of their matching the target audience for which the advertisement had been designed. The semi-structured nature of the interviews followed a format that allowed for a comparison to be made between the intended input of meaning and the decoding of responses relating to the advertisement.

Results indicated that there was a transfer of intended meanings incorporated into the advertisement as indicated in the decoded responses of respondents. These positive findings tend to indicate that a conscious application of sense-making theory to the construction of advertising messages could enhance their effectiveness.



# OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die beheerde oordrag van betekenis, gefassiliteer deur die bepassing van kennis van die “sense-making” teorie, te ondersoek. ‘n Voorwerp van kommunikasie, ‘n advertensie, is doelbewus geskep op grond van die beginsels van die “sense-making” teorie. ‘n Toepassing van kennis van dié teorie is aangewend om die impak van die advertensie op ‘n steekproef van reagente te assesser.

Weens die voortdurende mislukking van die advertensie medium om beplande voordele aan die borge te lewer, styg vlakke van kritiek gerig tot hierdie medium. Juis hierdie statistiek het die besluit om die advertensie medium as voorwerp van studie te gebruik, laat ontwikkel. Die beplande voordele vir die borge hou direk verband met die oordrag van die betekenis wat die ontvanger van die advertensie boodskap sal aanpar om op te tree, en sodoende tot voordeel van die adverteerder sal strek.

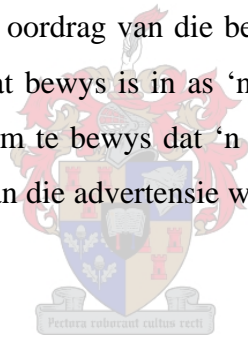
Kritiek is spesifiek gerig op die mislukking van al hoe meer advertensies wat nie betekenisvolle voordele lewer nie as gevolg van die irrelevansie van die vorm van kommunikasie vir die ontvanger. Die herkenning van die groeiende behoefte het ‘n beroep gemaak om ‘n paradigma skuif te maak, weg van die huidige, tradisionele, linêre model wat die ontwerp van advertensie boodskappe fassiliteer. Hierdie behoefte is om ‘n meer empatiese benadering in te stel, wat ‘n positiewe interaksie tussen die adverteerder en teiken gehoor sal fassiliteer.

Die ontstaan van die sogenaamde “experiential marketing communications” het voorgestel dat die advertensie medium sterker getrouheid tussen organisasies en hul klante kan adverteer. Hierdie oogpunt, saam met die insig van dié gene wat in die veld van “sense making” werk, stel voor dat die inkorporasie van die “sense-making” teorie, wel die paradigma skuif, beroep op die ontwerp van die advertensie, kan akkommodeer.

Dit het die ontwikkeling van 'n advertensie met die “sense-making” teorie in sy konstruksie geïnkorporeer, aangewaldeer. Die vereiste om die oordrag van die beplande betekenis van 'n advertensie te bewerkstellig, is gefassiliteer deur sketse en aanwysings te inkorporeer. Hierdie sketse en aanwysings is ontwerp om die voorkoming/oplossing van dubbelsinnigheid te ondersteun en om reagente te help om kognitiewe gapings te oorbrug.

Die ondersoek het die vorm van 'n ontdekkings gevallestudie aangeneem. Die advertensie, gebaseer op die “sense-making” teorie, het die kontrole element van die studie verteenwoordig. Onderhoude is indiepte gevoer met graad 12 leerders wat gekeur is op grond van die feit dat hulle in die teikengroep van die ontwerpte advertensie val. Die semi-gestruktureerde aard van die onderhoude het toegelaat dat die voorafbeplande blootstelling aan die betekenis vergelyk word met die dekodering van die terugvoering in verband met die advertensie.

Resultate het gewys dat daar wel 'n oordrag van die beplande, geïnkorporeerde betekenis in die advertensie plaas gevind het, wat bewys is in as 'n dekodeerde reaksie van die reagent. Hierdie positiewe bevindings neig om te bewys dat 'n bewuste aanwending van die “sense-making” teorie tot die konstruksie van die advertensie wese die effektiwiteit van boodskappe verbeter.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was directed towards the application of knowledge of sense-making theory. The application of knowledge of sense-making, in this instance, was related to the construction of a vehicle of communication, an advertisement, and the application of knowledge of sense-making when assessing the reception of the communication by a designated target audience.

### 1.2 Nature of the Study

In order to assess whether an understanding and application of sense-making theory would enable the communication and reception of meaning, an exploratory case study was undertaken.

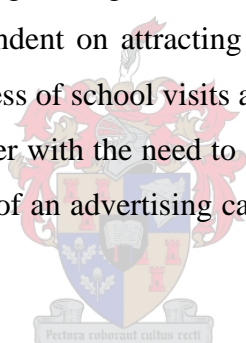
The study centred on both the construction and the reception of meaning that was consciously incorporated into an advertisement. The advertisement constructed was designed to embody an intended input of meaning, that was, to portray Technikon Natal as a tertiary institution that offered an enjoyable life experience and a quality education in the field of marketing. A sample made up of grade 12 learners who had indicated their intention to pursue a career in marketing were then exposed to the advertisement in an interview situation. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out and assess whether the intended input of meaning built into the advertisement allowed these respondents to make sense-making constructions that reflected a reception of meaning that was intended.

### 1.3 Motivation for the Study

The choice of advertising communication, as the instrument of investigation, stemmed from the researcher, an academic specialising in the field of marketing communications, being

exposed to literature and practical examples that reflected the declining effectiveness of advertising as a communication tool. Authors and academics working in the field have attributed the failures and shortcomings of advertising to the advertisers and advertising agencies involved in the construction of advertising messages not taking cognisance of prevailing changes effecting the social and cultural make-up of contemporary target audiences. These shortcomings are reflected, in many instances, by the failure of advertising messages to be relevant to recipients of the communication and therefore not 'engaging' with these audiences. The failure to engage was assessed by the researcher, to be largely due to the inability of many advertising messages to facilitate the transfer of meaning between the advertiser and targeted recipients of the communication.

A further motivation behind the selection of advertising as the instrument for investigation was based on the researcher's involvement in the management of a marketing programme, affiliated to the Institute of Marketing Management (IMM), taught at Technikon Natal. The viability of this programme is dependent on attracting a minimum of three hundred school leavers per annum. The limited success of school visits and other promotional efforts to entice enrolments in previous years, together with the need to address a wider audience, prompted a decision to initiate the development of an advertising campaign to support the drive to attract prospective students.



The researcher's exposure to, and interest in, sense-making theory together with his involvement in marketing communication, presented an opportunity to incorporate a knowledge of sense-making into the design of the planned advertising communication. This exposure to and interest in sense-making theory lead to the commissioning of an advertising agency and the drafting of an advertising brief that called for the incorporation of sense-making theory into the construction of the advertisement.

The brief written included a requirement to incorporate a 'framed' experience and cues that would be understandable and relevant to the target audience. The intention was to assure the selection of the frame provided in the advertisement by recipients of the communication. This selection, it was envisaged, would enable them to make use of this frame to filter and interpret the cues provided in the copy elements of the advertisement. The frame requested was not given any finite specification other than it should reflect a lifestyle component that the target audience could relate to. This relatively 'loose' specification took into account the fact that

since sense making is a continuous process, the purpose of the frame would be to narrow down but not inhibit the construction of additional mental frames that could emanate from the respondent's exposure to the advertisement.

The brief, in addition, called for cues to be incorporated into the advertisement. The purpose and design of these cues was to allow for them to be filtered, interpreted and matched to the frames constructed. These constructions, it was envisaged, would enable the development of mental pictures amongst the target audience that would, in turn, enable an action and hence facilitate the transfer of intended meaning.

Taking into account that the advertising agency personnel commissioned to develop the advertisement had limited insights into sense-making theory, the brief was written in colloquial client / agency terms. A major consideration built into the brief was an attempt by the researcher to provide guidance to the creative personnel commissioned to construct the advertisement. This guidance attempted to direct the development of an advertisement that would facilitate the reduction of equivocality and assist recipients of the communication to construct mental frames that would facilitate the transfer of meaning that was to be consciously incorporated into the advertisement.

A copy of the advertising brief is given in Appendix 1.

Based on the brief, an advertisement was constructed to incorporate sense-making elements. A photographic 'frame' that sought to capture a selected moment in time, formed the main visual component of the advertisement. Its purpose was to allow for an easy identification of the situation depicted by recipients and serve as a prompt that would enable them to construct their own mental frames. Copy elements incorporated into the advertisement were designed to provide cues that could easily be filtered out, used as references, and interpreted to facilitate the construction of recipient's mental frames. The meaning that was consciously built into the frame and cues was intended to portray Technikon Natal as a tertiary institution that offered both an enjoyable life experience and a quality education in the field of marketing.

A detailed discussion of the advertising brief, the rationale behind the construction of the advertisement together with a copy of the advertisement designed to incorporate knowledge of sense making is given in Chapter 3.

## 1.4 Research Format

In order to investigate whether sense-making theory could be employed to facilitate the communication and reception of meaning, an exploratory case study was undertaken.

An advertisement constructed on the conscious basis of sense-making theory provided the control element of the study. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted amongst a selected sample of respondents. The interviews were 'decoded' using the same sense-making concepts on which the construction of the advertisement was based.

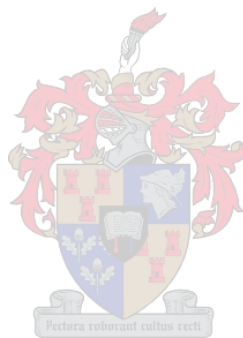
The selected sample, made up of five grade 12 learners was chosen based on their fitting the profile of the target audience specified for the advertisement. The profile in this instance was grade 12 learners who had indicated their intention to pursue a career in the field of marketing.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to tease out and decode the extent to which the meaning, incorporated into the advertisement by means of sense-making elements, was able facilitate the construction of frames and hence facilitate the transfer of this intended meaning. All respondents were asked a common introductory question in order to elicit their thoughts and feelings, which reflected their constructions, on initial exposure to the advertisement. An interview guide was employed to allow for each respondent to be subjected to similar but not identical follow up questions. In order to ensure that the respondent's construction of frames was not interfered with or compromised, follow up questions were not formally structured nor did they get presented in an orderly sequence. The questions did however take cognisance of the need to tease out what the respondents constructed, how they made these constructions, why these constructions were made and as the effect of these constructions, in order to assess whether the intended transfer of meaning had materialised.

## 1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis developed for this study was that intended meaning could be consciously built into a vehicle of communication by the application of sense-making theory. The application

of sense-making theory to this constructed communication could, in turn, provide ‘direction’ for recipient’s sense making and thereby facilitate the transfer of meaning.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 The Changing Environment

The extent and dynamic of changes taking place in the environment, form the focus of reports and studies by a range of authors working in the fields of sociology, organisational theory, information management, knowledge management and leadership. A common theme emerging from the insights provided by Senge (1990), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Bolman and Deal (1997), Morgan (1997), Stewart (1997), Choo (1998b) and Castells (2000) is that ongoing change exerts an influence on a wide range of individual pursuits and organisational activity. Successful adaptation to the changes reported on by these authors requires that individuals and organisations of all persuasions adopt what Senge (1990) refers to as “metanoia” “... a shift of mind” (Senge, 1990: 13). The ability of individuals and organisations to engage in paradigm shifts and review conventional strategies and methodologies employed, if appropriate, could enhance their levels of success, and in many instances, their ability to survive in an increasingly competitive environment.

#### 2.2 Mind Shifts in Advertising Communications

In a world inundated with many new and varied manifestations of marketing communications, authors and commentators on advertising and the advertising industry, including Jewler (1989), Hartley (1995), Bovey et al. (1995), Fill (1995) and more recently Kotler and Armstrong (2001), have called for a shift in the thinking applicable to this form of communication. The shift advocated, suggests that consideration be given to a reassessment of the linear models of mass communication pioneered by Schramm (1955).

Lord Leverhulme, founder of the multinational Anglo Dutch company Unilever, clearly acknowledged that in spite of his company’s multi million pound investment in advertising, a large proportion of this expenditure was ineffective. Sinclair a practitioner and academic in

the field of advertising in South Africa, indicates full acceptance of the dilemma faced by advertisers by quoting Lord Leverhulme “Probably half of every advertising appropriation is wasted, but nobody knows which half” (Sinclair 1997: title page verso).

Keynesian economic principles that prescribed the idea that advertising is an entity that allows large companies to manage markets and influence demand by creating predictable consumer spending, came under scrutiny in the 1980s. Toffler (1981) describes how and why the mass society created by the industrial revolution is splintering into what he termed the “demassified” society. “The mass market is split into ever-multiplying, ever changing sets of mini- markets that demand a continually expanding range of options, models, types, sizes, colours and customizations” (Toffler, 1981: 248). Capra (1982) commenting on the inapplicability of Keynesian economics makes the case that markets, made up of consumers, are far too complex for a single factor such as advertising to produce predictable effects. The demise of mass marketing has been identified by Kotler (1997) as being a function of the proliferation of advertising media and distribution channels that makes it difficult to practice this form of marketing. “Not surprisingly, many companies are retreating from mass marketing and turning to micromarketing” (Kotler 1997: 250).

The realisation that not all customers and consumers have similar needs led to the concept of segmentation. A market segment is described as “... a (relatively) homogeneous group of customers who will respond to a marketing mix in a similar way” (Perreault and McCarthy, 1999: 73). A marketing mix is made up of four elements, product offering, price charged for the offering, distribution of the offering and the methods employed to promote the offering, i.e. the communications employed to make the offering visible, beneficial and ideally, desirable.

Key to the success of segmentation is the correct identification of those making up the market segment to be targeted by the advertising communication. This is an area that has come under increasing scrutiny and comment. Discussing the role of print advertising, Rapp and Collins (1988) address the shortcoming of advertising to address and relate to the target audience for which it is intended. “Failure to visualize who the advertising is attempting to reach and to *call out* to prime prospects as they turn the page is the single greatest and most wasteful fault in print advertising today” (Rapp and Collins, 1988: 34). Farquar (2002) a respected commentator on the South African marketing communications industry has addressed the

inability of many advertisements to be relevant to chosen target audiences. Referring to those charged with the instigation and development of advertising, he proclaims, "... they have no clear idea of who their customers are and how they like to be addressed" (Farquar, 2002: 70).

A second aspect vital to the success of any marketing communications developed under the auspices of segmentation is the correct identification of product benefits that will be seen by the selected target audience to be both relevant and able to satisfy a need. Inherent in this aspect is the concept of building brand value. "A brand is a name, symbol, design or mark that enhances the value of the product, thus providing functional benefits plus *added* values that some consumers value sufficiently to buy" (Bradley, 1995: 517). Williams (1994) argues that advertising is no longer effective in building brands. His contention is that advertising is expensive, that media are highly fragmented and that the opportunities for consumers to see advertising are no longer predictable. This he concludes, "results in advertising simply announcing the availability of brands rather than building lasting values" (Williams 1994: 20 –21).

Farquar (2002) has also suggested that advertising frequently fails to offer the target audience some form of benefit, be that an emotional, or a tangible, benefit. In an attempt to isolate the problem experienced with many advertising communications, Farquar (2002) offers the following advice, "Advertising communication is basically problem-solving. By offering value solutions in terms of needs, advertising simplifies consumer decisions. Good advertising recognises the consumer and engages them by making a proposition encouraging them to react positively" (Farquar, 2002: 70).

Comments made by Williams (1994) concerning the building of values and more recently those of Farquar (2002) concerning the need to simplify consumer decisions, offer benefits and encourage positive reaction towards brands, imply a growing recognition of the need for advertising communications to take cognisance of consumer satisfaction. If advertising is to have a positive influence it is essential that the benefits offered do not give rise to what Sheth, et al. (1999) refer to as an exaggerated "expected performance". They explain that, "... if the prepurchase expectations are not met, dissatisfaction results" (Sheth, et al., 1999: 549) The phenomenon described above is described by Bradley (1995) as giving rise to anxiety. "This anxiety is referred to as cognitive dissonance and occurs because, before purchasing each alternative considered by the buyer was judged to have its good and bad points. After

purchasing, the negative aspects of the alternative selected and the positive aspects of the products rejected create cognitive dissonance” (Bradley 1995: 280).

Advertising communication has also been criticised for its inability to be noticed or remembered by the target audience. Moerdyk (2002) comments on the lack of perceptual screening and the resultant waste of advertising expenditure on television during exciting sporting events comments, “... doesn’t the mind boggle at the insanity of anyone wanting to spend thousands of rands on a message that could not possibly be noticed, let alone remembered in the heat of the final stages of a game” (Moerdyk 2002: 14).

Many commentaries on the demise of advertising communication have suggested that the shortcomings that can be attributed to this form of marketing communications are largely a result of the failure of advertisers and their advertising agencies to adhere to ‘established’ communication principles. These communication principles tend to follow fairly formal and linear models. The traditional view is that advertising can be modelled along the lines of those employed to explain purchasing processes. Smith (1993) and more recently De Pelsmacker et al. (2001) outline a range of models employed to explain the purchasing and communication process. Referred to as ‘response hierarchy models’ these models assume that consumers go through three different stages that equate to cognitive, affective and behavioural phases when responding to advertising communication. The cognitive stage, giving rise to the creation of a mental or thinking process, is thought to lead to an awareness and knowledge of the brand. Emotional and feeling responses are thought to be aroused in the affective stage. These in turn give rise to attitudes being formed towards the brand. The behavioural stage refers to the range of actions that could be undertaken with respect to the advertised brand.

Researchers have increasingly addressed the validity of these cognitive-affective-behavioural response hierarchy models. Questioning the sequence of the different stages, the view that not all consumers go through the three stages, and the incidence of impulse purchasing are cited by De Pelsmacker et al (2001) as being the stimulus for researches to develop modifications to existing models or alternative models. These modifications or alternatives all however assume a hierarchical sequence. After reviewing these, the conclusion reached by these authors is that “A major critique is that empirical support for the fact that consumers go through each stage is still lacking” (De Pelsmacker et al, 2001: 63). They add, “...hierarchy

models do not allow interactions between the different stages, which is very unlikely” (De Pelsmaker et al, 2001: 63).

A particularly negative assessment of traditional advertising is provided by Schmitt (1999) who comments: “Traditional ad campaigns are a kind of trial-and-error approach to marketing and branding – run one campaign after the other until one sticks” (Schmitt, 1999: 20).

Parente et al. (1996) commenting on the state of flux facing the field of advertising that has emerged as a result of heightened competition and budget constraints call for a transition between new and older ways of thinking about advertising. They stress that success in the new era in advertising will be more a function of new attitudes and new ways of looking at advertising rather than the result of new hardware, emerging technology or new media.

Faced with mounting demands from management and shareholders to provide more immediate and tangible results, marketing practitioners have increasingly sought out and implemented alternative marketing communication methods. Many practitioners therefore adopted ‘quick-fix’ solutions for their marketing communication insufficiencies. “In the mid - 1990s, advertisers have become increasingly aware that they have a whole range of promotional tools from which they can choose, anything from advertising and public relations to sales promotion, infomercials, and event marketing” (Parente et al, 1996:1). These methods however tended to focus on providing relatively short-term sales results that were largely price based rather than long-term image based.

The drain on profits that has arisen as a result of the implementation of these short term marketing communications has forced marketers to reinvest their efforts and business energies towards the investigation and development of a more profitable and a longer term involvement with the consumer. The strategies that have resulted from these searches are based on the total marketing effort being focused on giving the consumer a meaningful experience with the brands products and services that they are exposed to.

## **2.3 The Reassessment of Advertising Communications**

Commentary by authors and researchers stresses the need to reassess the advertising communication paradigm. The growing body of critics of contemporary advertising has

advocated a rethink of classical advertising theory. The main thrust of this new thinking is towards the employment of ‘two-way’ communications that allow for more participation and involvement by the consumer.

A recent innovation that has emerged from the reassessment of advertising communication has been the introduction of a concept termed ‘relationship marketing’. Making the case for relationship marketing where the marketer enters into a ‘dialog’ with the consumer, Gordon (1998) is emphatic that one-way communication “... must be replaced with two-way communications to involve the customer in all matters which effect their purchase behaviours” (Gordon, 1998: 7). The two-way communication that follows enables both parties to come to a mutually beneficial transaction. “Relationship marketing is the ongoing process of identifying and *creating new value* with individual customers and then *sharing the benefits* from this over a lifetime of association” (Gordon, 1998: 9). This concept, however, can only be effectively employed in instances where direct dialogue between consumer and marketer is possible. This is an unlikely scenario if the marketer is engaged in communicating to a sizeable audiences. The limitation outlined above has meant that relationship marketing’s value is more suited to business-to-business interactions.

A more applicable innovation for communication to larger audiences is the growing phenomenon referred to as experiential marketing. In an article titled “Let’s think out of the box” Hollis (2002) comments on the highly competitive marketing environment that is currently prevalent. She calls for the need for “...more lateral thinking in the development of marketing communication strategy in order to assist organisations to meet their sales and profit objectives” (Hollis, 2002: 86). Describing the mass of advertising exposure on and in a growing array of media Hollis (2002) cites the phenomenon of selection adopted by consumers to screen out the frenzied clutter of advertising communications that they are constantly subjected to. She calls for advertising planners to “... adopt a new communications tool, experiential marketing, where the target market becomes involved in the communication” (Hollis, 2002: 86).

The main thrust of experiential marketing is the adoption of an empathetic approach that appeals to customer experiences. Schmitt (1999) describes experiences as being private events that occur in response to some stimulation. They often result from direct observation and/or participation in events – whether they are real, dreamlike, or virtual. Experiential marketing

communications employs what are referred to as ‘experience providers’ to engage with target audiences. By providing experiences, it strives to engage more directly with the target audience and thereby overcome aspects of cognitive dissonance and equivocality that might arise from the high level of clutter and the ‘non-participatory’ nature of many advertising messages.

Reouveni (2002) suggests that consumers no longer purchase for utilitarian reasons but that needs such as desire, emotional response and preference are now prevalent. His view is that consumers will respond positively to an empathetic communications approach rather than one that talks about factuality. Reouveni (2002) also suggests that the newly emerging communications approach, experiential marketing, be adopted to elicit a positive mind set in target audiences that he calls a “feel good” factor. He provides a definition for experiential marketing communications as being “... a persuasive modern tool that strives to elicit a strong sensory, emotive or cognitive response, thereby reinforcing and differentiating the brand in the consumers mind.” (Reouveni, 2002: 8).

Referring to the growing phenomenon of experiential marketing, Schmitt (1999) explains that consumers currently take traditional branding aspects such as functionality, benefits, quality and positive image for granted. “What they want is products, communications, and marketing campaigns that dazzle their senses, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds” (Schmitt, 1999: 22).

The above comments indicate that there is a growing realisation of the need to reassess the traditional models that have been employed to design advertising communications in order to assist in limiting the relatively high incidence of advertising communications failure. Of particular relevance is the emergence of what is termed experiential marketing communications. This communications approach, according to the definitions and descriptions provided by Schmitt (1999) and Reouveni (2002), implies that cognisance must be taken of the consumer’s need to be understood. It, in addition, recognises the value of an empathetic approach which strives to engage more directly with the target audience and thereby overcome aspects of cognitive dissonance and equivocality that might, as a result, arise from the high level of clutter, and the ‘non-participative’ nature of many advertising messages.

Whilst accepting that an experiential approach could offer an incentive for recipients to become more involved in an advertising message, its ability to facilitate the transfer of meaning that would assist in overcoming cognitive dissonance and equivocality has not been addressed. The relatively recent focus on sense-making theory by Dervin (1983), Weick (1995) and (Choo 1998a) suggests that a conscious application of this theory could provide the paradigm shift called for in the field of marketing communication. Sense making's relevance to the resolution of equivocality and the bridging of cognitive gaps suggests that it could facilitate a transfer of meaning and thereby enhance the effectiveness of advertising messages.

## 2.4 Sense Making

In her model of sense making, Dervin (1983) portrays people as moving through space and time constantly making sense of their actions and the external world. They are however stopped from time to time as a result of the manifestation of a cognitive gap. In other words the person is prevented from making sense and needs to make new sense. The person then seeks out and selects strategies that will help bridge the cognitive gap. The cognitive bridges thus constructed help them to move on. Dervin's approach regards information seeking and use as being core components of sense making. In her sense-making model "...information seeking and use are posited as "constructing" activities - as personal creating of sense" (Dervin, 1983: 5).

Savolainen (1999) regards the metaphor of gap-bridging to be a helpful way to understand the characteristics of information use. "...gap-bridging stands for the constructive process where an individual draws on cognitive and affective resources in order to cross the gap being faced in a problematic situation" (Savolainen, 1999: 1).

The complexity of information use in the context of sense making is addressed by Choo (1998a). During sense making, one's information needs lack clarity. This lack of clarity is the result of the flood of signals indicating change in the environment, which in turn gives rise to the information being ambivalent. Ambiguity in this instance "...refers to the equivocality of the information available, where the same information can support multiple and sometimes, conflicting interpretations" (Choo, 1998a: 90). The lack of clarity in the information has to be

met by. "...constructing the most reasonable interpretation that makes sense of the available information" (Choo, 1998a: 90). To summarise "During sensemaking, information is processed to reduce situational ambiguity" (Choo 1998a: 98). Choo (1998a) explains further that this reduction in ambiguity enables people to act.

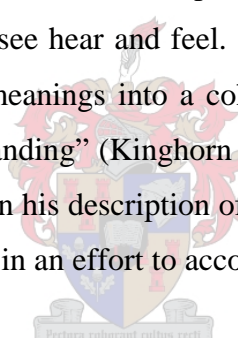
Starbuck and Milliken (1988) make use of a metaphor that presents sense making as being a process that "...involves placing stimuli into some kind of framework" (cited in Weick 1995: 4). Expanding on the view presented by these authors, Weick (1995) explains that when stimuli are placed in frameworks this enables people "to comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate and predict" (Starbuck and Milliken 1988) (cited in Weick 1995: 4). Weick (1995) gives additional substance to this definition and argues that "...sensemaking is about such things as placement of items into frameworks, comprehending, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding, and patterning" (Weick, 1995: 6). Glynn (1997) regards sense making as an approach for dealing with ambiguity and presents the view that. "Sensemaking is a method of understanding how developers create meaning and build context for reducing the ambiguity inherent in complex projects (Glynn, 1997:1). Choo (1998a) provides a more comprehensive description "...one may say that sense making is a continuous social process in which individuals look at elapsed events, bracket packets of experience and select particular points of reference to weave webs of meaning. The result of sense making is an enacted or meaningful environment, which is a reasonable and socially credible rendering of what is taking place. The central problem in sense making is how to reduce or resolve ambiguity" (Choo 1998a: 70).

The theme emerging from these views is that sense making is concerned with creating an environment that allows people to make use of available information to comprehend, manage, and reduce or resolve ambiguity. Kinghorn (2002) provides a humanised concept that captures the essence of sense making as being, "...that human activity in which we convert the flow of meanings that we continuously encounter into coherent pictures of the world, thus creating mind maps, which we use to steer our individual and collective lives" (Kinghorn, 2002: 315).

The definitions and views outlined above tend to give substance and support to the idea that sense making could assist in providing insights for designing advertisements that will enable recipients to engage more directly with the communication. Sensitive and relevant inclusion of sense-making concepts could, in addition, help overcome aspects of cognitive dissonance

and equivocality that might arise as a result of the high level of clutter and the ‘non-participative’ nature that is a characteristic of many advertising messages. Of particular interest is the apparent convergence in the thinking of those concerned with sense making and those advocating experiential marketing communications. The latter groups recognition of the value of an empathetic approach and the need to engage directly with target audiences provide support for the idea that the experiential approach and sense-making theory are both relevant concepts that can be employed to assist in facilitating the transfer of meaning. In respect of and an experiential approach can be used to facilitate a transfer of meaning.

An insight into how direct engagement can be incorporated into advertising messages is provided in the view that sense making is concerned with the construction of meaning. “Through the construction of meaning, clarity increases and confusion decreases” (Glynn 1997: 1). It is important to note, however, that there is a fundamental difference between meaning and sense. Kinghorn provides a clear explanation of this difference. “We derive meaning from interpreting what we see hear and feel. Sense is a holistic construction of our own making as we weld different meanings into a coherent understanding of their purpose and base our actions on this understanding” (Kinghorn 2002: 318). Ifvarsson (2001) provides a further insight into this difference in his description of sense making as being, “... a process in which something is made sensible in an effort to accomplish meaning” (Ifvarsson 2001: 3).



With respect to sense, Kinghorn (2002) describes three essential features that clarify what sense is or is not. In the first instance sense is not inherent in meaning but forms the attributed value of a set of meanings. “Meanings are inferred, but sense is made” (Kinghorn, 2002: 318). Secondly, one can make many senses or no sense from any set of meanings. “There is no one universal true sense” (Kinghorn, 2002: 318). Thirdly, sense is related to purpose and can be regarded as a synonym for direction and movement “There may be mountains of meaning, but if no sense prevails, the effect is paralysis” (Kinghorn, 2002: 318).

The ‘generating’ of meaning in the context of sense making is explained by Weick (1995) as comprising “...three elements: a frame, a cue and a connection” (Weick, 1995: 110). Frames are cognitive constructions that are employed to serve as references and filters that enable cues gleaned from the environment to be interpreted. Weick (1995) makes it clear that meaning is relational. “A cue in a frame is what makes sense, not the cue alone or the frame alone (Weick, 1995: 110). Kinghorn (2002) provides a further insight when describing this

metaphor “If we succeed in matching cues with a frame, we have a mental picture that enables action” (Kinghorn, 2002: 318).

The concepts outlined above provide an insight into the types of elements that could be incorporated into the design of an advertisement to make it more ‘involving’ and ‘facilitating’. The involving and facilitating, in turn, could assist in a transfer of meaning that would enable the target market to whom it is addressed to make sense of the communication. Those involved in the design and construction of an advertisement would however be well advised to take cognisance of additional characteristics that facilitate sense making. Weick (1995) drawing on sense making literature identifies these as follows.

- Sense making is grounded in identity construction. Weick (1995) explains that this subjective and unconscious aspect of sense making is a process whereby individuals make identity constructions of themselves and the environment. The frames that are constructed are never finite and are constantly in a process of being reconstructed. The identities constructed of ‘self’ and ‘the world out there’ allow for the adoption of ‘identity frames’ that assist individuals to cope with ‘external’ events. This ongoing reconstruction provides people with numerous frames that they can draw upon to react to the dynamic environment. If they do not have access to an appropriate frame, they create a new one.
- Sense making is retrospective. Weick (1995) describes this as being a distinguishing characteristic of sense making. It is the process by which individuals attend to events that have already taken place. This attention to a specific aspect at a point in time influences what the individual is likely to ‘select’ from past events. Since this is reliant on memory, the problem confronting the individual is to select a plausible meaning from several alternate meanings in order to make sense of past events. Weick (1995), commenting on the aspect of people being overwhelmed by too many meanings and the resulting equivocality suggests that “...they need values, priorities, and clarity about preferences to help them be clear about which projects matter” (Weick, 1995: 27).
- Sense making is enactive. Weick’s (1995) use of the word enactment suggests that action is a precondition for sense making “...when the action of saying makes it possible for people to then see what they think” (Weick, 1995: 30). People enact by breaking up streams of experience into packets or groupings, which are then categorised. By

categorising experience individuals endow objects and events with cognitive values that they then employ in their sense making.

- Sense making is social. Weick (1995) explains that sense making is never solitary. It takes into account the reactions of others whether they are physically present or not. Weick (1995) points out that to forget that sense making is a social process will result in one missing a constant substrate that shapes interpretations and meanings. “Conduct is contingent on the conduct of others, whether those others are imagined or physically present” (Weick, 1995: 39).
- Sense making is ongoing. Weick (1995) describes sense making as being a process that never starts or stops. It is manifest as a continuous flow from which people isolate packets of information for labelling and reflection. “To understand sensemaking is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from these moments” (Weick, 1995: 43).
- Sense making is focussed on and by extracted cues. Weick (1995) describes extracted cues as being “...simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring” (Weick, 1995: 50). These cues provide points of reference that allow for ideas to be linked and connected into networks of meaning.
- Sense making is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. This represents the pragmatic aspect of the sense making process. “...sensemaking is about plausibility, coherence, and reasonableness. Sensemaking is about accounts that are socially acceptable and credible” (Weick, 1995: 61).

To summarise, sense making is a continuous process in which individuals bracket packets of past experience and select points of reference to weave webs of meaning. “The result of sense making is an enacted or meaningful environment which is a reasonable and socially credible rendering of what is taking place” (Choo, 1998a: 70).

Based on the above, the study was designed to investigate whether the inclusion of sense making theory could be employed to enhance and shape the communication and reception of meaning consciously incorporated into an advertisement.

An analogy employed by Kinghorn (2002) to clarify the concept of framing provided the insights that led to the development of the print advertisement employed in this study. His description of the cinematographer who captures selected moments of the flow of the endless and comprehensive stream of reality ‘out there’ provided the inspiration to capture a single moment in the life of a group of students as a photographic visual. The creation of a ‘new reality’ described by Kinghorn (2002) as rearranging the moment into a new sequence, came about by introducing a verbal statement into the advertisement ‘Get an education, get a life. Learn more, play more, pay less’.

The choice of this ‘frame’, it was hoped, would be relevant to those that the advertisement was designed to appeal to, grade 12 learners, in that it provided a moment in time that that they could easily select, interact and identify with.

With respect to selection and filtering, Kinghorn (2002) explains “This filtering process starts with the individual construction of the frames to be used – how wide or how confined a view one wants to take. The filtering proceeds in the selection of moments to be preserved and converted into mind pictures ‘out there’. And, finally, the filtering consists of the rearrangement of the individual frames into a comprehensive mind picture” (Kinghorn 2002, 318). The verbal copy elements incorporated in the advertisement were designed to assist in the filtering process. It was hoped that they would allow for recipients to interact with the cues inherent in these copy elements and thereby facilitate a ‘rearrangement’ of the frame. The outcome of this rearrangement was to allow for the transfer of intended meaning by providing recipients with a positive mind picture of a tertiary experience offered at Technikon Natal.

A detailed discussion of the rationale behind the construction of the advertisement together with a copy of the advertisement designed to incorporate knowledge of sense making is given in Chapter 3.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Insights gleaned from the literature review revealed the exponential nature of change prevalent in all facets of life. The study undertaken addresses the recognition that advertising is not immune to this change, and that, in order to remain relevant, change needs to be incorporated into the design of this form of communication. As is the case with many human endeavours, current advertising practice no longer appears to be fulfilling its commercial role in supporting business and marketing efforts. Criticisms of this form of communication have focused on its apparent inability to identify target audiences, its lack of relevance and its failure to transfer meaningful benefits. The call for new thinking or mind shifts that would make advertising more effective has centred on the need for advertising to be more interactive with its target audiences.

The emergence of what has been termed experiential marketing communications calls for an empathetic approach that engages more directly with the target audience. This it is believed would facilitate a reduction in levels of cognitive dissonance and equivocality that can arise from high levels of clutter as well as the conflicting and non-participative nature of many advertising messages. The focus on an empathetic approach that would take cognisance of the need to reduce ambiguity, provided the insight to consider the incorporation of sense-making principles into the design of an advertisement. Sense making is a concept that attempts to explain how human beings seek to make sense of, or make coherent, the complexity and changing of events and meanings that make up their worlds in order to facilitate some form of purpose or action. The purposeful nature of sense making that implies action was, for the researcher, a compelling reason to consider the inclusion of sense-making principles into the design of an advertisement.

Based on the above, the study was designed to investigate whether the inclusion of sense-making theory could be employed to enhance and shape the communication and reception of meaning consciously incorporated into the construction of an advertisement.

## CHAPTER 3

# CONSTRUCTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

### 3.1 Introduction

The literature review provided in Chapter 2 indicated that the viability of traditional linear models employed in the design of advertising communications is increasingly being subjected to critical scrutiny. The shortcomings identified relate in many instances to the advertising communications devised not being relevant nor accommodating nor aiding an interaction between the advertiser and the identified target audience. The lack of relevance and interaction indicate that the messages that advertisers intend to transmit are not ‘getting through’ to recipients of these communications.

The paradigm shift called for by critics of current advertising practice has been partially addressed by those advocating the adoption of an experiential approach to advertising communication. This approach calls for a more direct and empathetic engagement between advertiser and target audience. The purpose is to reduce communication clutter and to diminish levels of cognitive dissonance and equivocality that frequently render advertising messages ineffective.

The experiential approach with its focus on a requirement to design advertising that would be more involving and facilitating provided the insight to consider the applicability of employing sense-making theory in the construction of advertising communications. Sense-making’s relevance in this context is the contribution that this theory has made towards providing insights into the resolution of equivocality of information, the bridging of cognitive gaps as well as the insights it has provided concerning the transfer of meaning.

Based on this insight, it was decided to construct an advertisement making use of sense-making theory to aid in the communication and reception of meaning. The meaning that was intended be communicated was that a particular tertiary institution, Technikon Natal, would

be the preferred tertiary institution to select to study for a qualification in the field of marketing.

The advertisement that was designed attempted to incorporate a frame and cues into its construction that would be relevant to the target audience: grade 12 learners. The purpose of the frame and cues was to promote the selection of new frames, allow for the recipients to interact with, filter out and match cues to their 'new' frames in order to facilitate their sense-making and hence their reception of the intended meaning. The cues and frames incorporated into the communication were, in addition, designed to provide a 'direction' for what could be constructed, how this would be constructed, why it would be constructed and ultimately provide an effect or action component to their constructions.

### 3.2 The Advertising Brief

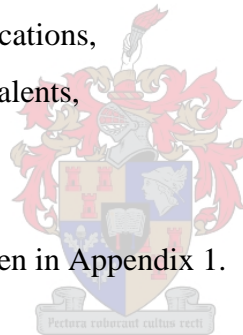
The advertising brief comprises a succinct or summarised instruction that is written by the client or advertiser. It is directed at the advertising agency that has been commissioned to produce advertising material. The brief serves as an instruction to the agency and the benchmark against which resulting creative work is appraised and accepted by the client. In this instance the client who wrote the advertising brief was the researcher. The advertising brief did not make use of sense-making terminology (in deference to the advertising agency personnel who had no exposure to sense-making theory). Its construction nevertheless took into account the need to ensure that the frames and cues required to be built into the resulting advertisement were clearly spelt out in conventional marketing / advertising vocabulary employed by advertising agency personnel.

In sense-making terms the brief called for the construction of an advertisement that would facilitate selection by grade 12 learners who were planning to study for a career in the field of marketing. The brief spelt out a mandatory requirement that the advertisement incorporated a lifestyle component that would serve as a 'frame of reference' for these learners. The purpose of this 'frame of reference' was to enable learners to select, interact with, and focus on the communication in order to facilitate the construction of their own frames.

In an attempt to influence the construction of recipient frames, the brief, in addition, called for specific cues to be incorporated into the advertisement. These cues, it was envisaged, would be such that they could be readily interacted with, filtered out and interpreted in a manner that would facilitate their matching to frames. The matching of cues to frames, it was anticipated, would allow the target audience to construct mental pictures that would enable action. The action and hence their sense making, in this instance, was to select Technikon Natal as their choice of institution to pursue their tertiary education for a career in marketing.

The cues requested, were incorporated in the sub-sections of the advertising brief and were included to facilitate respondents forming ‘intended’ constructions that would relate to Technikon Natal offering:

- a full and enjoyable life experience,
- an enriching learning experience,
- internationally recognised qualifications,
- an opportunity to develop one’s talents,
- a competitive fee structure.



A copy of the advertising brief is given in Appendix 1.

### 3.3 The Advertisement

Based on the advertising brief, the advertisement constructed, (see page 25) incorporated a visual frame depicting a ‘slice of life’ or ‘frozen moment’. The moment portrayed a group of students enjoying a pleasant but undefined moment of interaction in ‘their world’. This particular frame was chosen since it was believed that grade 12 learners, the target audience, could readily identify and interact with the situation depicted and hence be able to select, ‘freeze’ and convert the depicted moment into a mental picture that they could easily relate to.

In order to enhance the photographic element’s relevance to the target audience, its construction allowed for it to be presented in an informal manner that was in keeping with the intended benefits outlined in the advertising brief. The depiction of casual attire, smiling interaction and involvement with a mobile telephone was specifically constructed to provide a

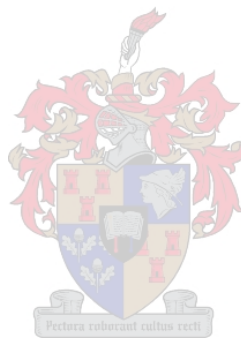
mind picture that recipients could interact with. The off centre and angled presentation of the full colour visual was designed to further accentuate its potential to be attractive and appealing to grade 12 learners and thereby facilitate selection of this frame.

The cue components incorporated into the advertisement were built into the copy or verbal elements of the advertisement and focussed on the requirement to enable recipients to form the intended constructions called for in the Advertising brief. A conscious effort was made to present the cues in a language structure and style that would provide the target audience with an intimate and personal communication framework that they could readily interact with. The purpose behind the adoption of this copy format was to facilitate easy reading, comprehension and ultimately to enable grade 12 learners to relate to the communication in a manner that would facilitate their selection of the cues presented to develop their sense-making constructions.

The construction of the advertisement in both visual and copy terms also took cognisance of the requirement to assist the sense making of those making up the target audience by incorporating characteristics designed to facilitate the following.

- Identity construction. The visual and copy components making up the advertisement were incorporated in a manner intended to make it relatively simple for recipients of the communication to identify with and ‘project’ themselves into the ‘world’ presented in the advertisement.
- Enacting. The copy components relating to life experience, meeting others and offering membership were designed to allow for the categorisation of elements that would provide structures that would facilitate the integration of target audience members’ tacit cognition’s into a collective mind picture.
- Focussing on and by extracted cues. The incorporation of simple and familiar structures such as affordability, international recognition, meeting new friends and self development were included to facilitate the construction of sense making by respondents.

- Plausibility. Cognisance was taken of the characteristic that sense making is driven by plausibility rather than by accuracy. This aspect was accommodated by ensuring that the nature of copy claims made, required that they be directional but relatively non-specific. Examples of this included the copy statements, “get a life”, “explore your talents”, “offers real benefits” and “get the best value”.





# Get an education, get a life...

## Learn more, play more, pay less!

Technikon Natal offers more than education – it offers life experience. Enrol now for an affordable, internationally recognised marketing qualification! You will meet different people and make new friends, explore your talents, express your individuality and become the person you want to be...

The Institute of Marketing Management (IMM) Certificate or Diploma in Marketing and Advertising offers real benefits for students who are determined to enter this exciting field.

**Get the best value for just R7500.00 fixed.** If you pay your fees in full on registration you will receive 5 FREE textbooks, and FREE IMM Membership for a year. Achieve an A symbol in your matric exam results and receive R800.00 discount on course fees.



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Department of Marketing  
Tel: (031) 204 2587  
E-mail: [marketing@ntech.ac.za](mailto:marketing@ntech.ac.za)  
[www.ntech.ac.za](http://www.ntech.ac.za)

EDUCATING PEOPLE FOR THE REAL WORLD

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The study was directed at investigating the controlled transfer of meaning that could be facilitated by the application of knowledge of sense-making theory.

An advertisement designed to appeal to grade 12 learners was constructed on the basis of sense-making principles. The inclusion of sense-making theory, it was anticipated, would assist the sense-making constructions of those targeted by the advertisement, thereby facilitating the transfer of meaning and promoting the desired communication outcome, to select Technikon Natal as the choice of tertiary institution to study for an Institute of Marketing Management diploma.

The research was exploratory in nature, its purpose being to tease out the sense-making elements elicited by exposure to the advertisement by a sample of respondents from the defined target audience, grade 12 learners. Since the advertisement in question attempted to embody sense-making theory in its design, a key aspect of the research was to assess the extent to which the incorporated sense-making concepts were able to facilitate the transfer of intended meaning by recipients of the communication. The assumption, in this instance, was that by aiding the target market's sense-making capability, the advertisement's ability to communicate effectively would be enhanced.

#### **4.2 Research Design**

Sense making is a concept that is not restricted to any particular form or method of research. Commenting on the characteristics shared by researchers in the field, Weick (1995) points out that the commonalties inherent in these characteristics provide an insight into the mindset for methodology that tends to be associated with investigations of sense making. Key characteristics identified include the findings that "Observers rely less on researcher-specified measures and more on what participants say and do in response to minimal prodding and prestructuring" (Weick, 1955: 173). Support for the view that methodology for sense-making

research is not prescriptive is provided by Dervin (1999b) “Sense-Making only provides a theory of the interview and not a recipe, actual implementation can take on myriad forms depending on the study purpose (e.g. needs assessment, evaluation, audience reception, etc.)” (Dervin 1999b: 39).

Inherent in the above views is the notion that sense-making research is largely conducted by means of qualitative methodologies. The view provided by Duffy (1995) provides a clear insight about the qualitative nature of sense-making research. “Sensemaking research, by virtue of its focus, asks people to generate not just “answers” or responses to questions that researchers pose, but also to articulate the questions they must pose to themselves in order to answer the researcher’s questions” (Duffy, 1995: 2). Glynn (1997) assessing sense-making research methods provides support for this perspective by commenting that there is a common assertion that, “...sensemaking represents the union between thought and action” (Glynn, 1997: 1). Dervin (1999a) giving her views of the questions asked gives further substance to the qualitative nature of sense-making research. “Sense-making mandates asking not what questions but what if questions – under what conditions does something ensue with what consequences” (Dervin, 1999a: 732).

The above insights indicated the adoption of a qualitative methodology. The decision was affirmed by taking cognisance of the description given by Maxwell (1996) that the strength of qualitative research is derived, “...primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (Maxwell, 1996, 17). In addition, the outline provided by Maxwell (1996) of five research purposes for which qualitative studies are suited, all support the selection of this methodology as being appropriate for sense-making research and hence this study.

- Understanding meaning, where meaning includes cognition, affect, intentions and anything that can be referred to as the “participants’ perspective.” “In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behaviour that is taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of this and how their understandings influence their behaviour” (Maxwell, 1996: 17). The focus on meaning is supported by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) who state that “Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meanings people attach to things in their lives” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 8).

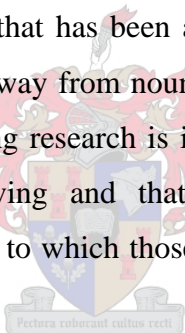
- Understanding the context within which the participants act. Maxwell (1996) explains that qualitative researchers tend to study a relatively small number of individuals and preserve the individuality of these in their analysis rather than collect data from large samples and aggregating this data. “Thus, they are to understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur” (Maxwell, 1996: 19). The selection of a small number of cases fits with the earlier observation made by Weick (1995) that sense-making investigations “...tend to be intensive examination of a small number of cases rather than selective examination of a large number of cases” (Weick, 1995: 173).
- Identifying unanticipated influences. This aspect relates to the strength of qualitative research in the exploratory context. “Although qualitative research is not restricted to this exploratory role, it is still an important strength of qualitative methods” (Maxwell, 1996: 19). Since the purpose of the study was to tease out sense-making processes that can not be foreseen or predicted, it is clear that it would fall under the category of an exploratory study.
- Understanding the process by which events and actions take place. “...although this does not mean that qualitative research is unconcerned with outcomes, it does emphasise that a major strength of qualitative research is in getting at the processes that lead to these outcomes” (Maxwell, 1996: 20). This sentiment is echoed by Dervin (1999a) who explains that sense making “... opens up to examination the ways in which information helps rather than assuming, as most studies have, that help is inherent in information” (Dervin, 1999a: 745).
- Developing causal explanations. “Quantitative researchers tend to be interested in whether and to what extent variance in x causes variance in y. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, tend to ask how x plays a role in causing y” (Maxwell, 1996: 20).

The outline of the suitability of a qualitative methodology and its affinity to sense-making research confirms the adoption of a qualitative format for the study. Taking into account that the purpose of the study was to identify the sense-making processes adopted by grade 12 learners on exposure to an advertisement that incorporated sense-making principles, the

qualitative format that focused on a case study approach was deemed appropriate. Since the sense-making processes that the study was intended to tease out cannot be foreseen or predicted, the study could be regarded as being exploratory.

Support for the adoption of a qualitative, exploratory case study approach was provided by Yin (1994) who outlines the conditions that are applicable for selecting case studies. These conditions are, firstly, the type of research questions that will be employed, secondly, whether the researcher has control over events and thirdly, the degree to which the focus is on contemporary as opposed to historical events.

With respect to the first condition, Yin (1994) suggests that certain types of ‘what’ questions can be regarded as exploratory. Where these ‘what’ questions are of a ‘verbing’ nature such as: “What are the ways of making schools effective?” “This type of question is a justifiable rationale for conducting an exploratory study” (Yin, 1994: 5). Of particular relevance here is the ‘verbing’ nature of sense making that has been addressed by Weick (1995) and Dervin (1999a). Both advocate a movement away from nouns to verbs to understand sense making. The exploratory nature of sense-making research is inherent in the ‘verbing’ concept that is not finite. “Verbs keep things moving and that includes the structures involved in sensemaking and the shifting demands to which those structures are trying to accommodate” (Weick, 1995: 188).



The second condition outlined by Yin (1994) relates to the amount of control that the researcher has over behavioural events. The relatively unknown outcome or lack of predictability inherent in sense making, that relates to the individualistic and subjective nature of the process, underlines a relative lack of control that is afforded to those embarking on sense-making studies. Weick (1995), commenting on the characteristics of sense-making research observes, “Participants rather than observers, define the work environment” (Weick, 1995: 173) This characteristic points to sense-making studies being in many respects exploratory. The third condition outlined by Yin (1994) relates to the degree to which the focus is on contemporary as opposed to historical events. Since the study is concerned with a contemporary event, it fulfils the condition for it to be regarded as a case study.

The research purposes outlined by Maxwell (1996) for which qualitative studies are suited, together with the conditions outlined by Yin (1994) to aid in the identification of a case study

approach, provided support for the selection of qualitative methodology that employs an exploratory case study approach.

### 4.3 Sampling

Non-probability, purposeful, homogeneous sampling was the basis of selection of respondents for this research.

In a discussion of the logic of sampling, Babbie and Mouton (2001), point out that social research is often conducted in instances where probability samples cannot be selected. This occurs in situations where there are no existing lists and where the likelihood of drawing up lists is remote as a result of a lack of finite information. They suggest that where lists are not in existence, non-probability sampling be employed. In this instance, since no list of grade 12 learners who plan to study for a career in marketing exists, the sample was selected on a non-probability basis.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe four types of non-probability sampling, "...reliance on available subjects, purposive or judgemental sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 166). They describe purposive sampling as being suitable in instances where '...it's appropriate for you to select your sample on the basis of your own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research' (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 166). Taking into account that the purpose and exploratory nature of the research, which was to flesh out and gain an understanding of the sense-making processes adopted by grade 12 learners on being exposed to an advertisement, the non-probability sample selected was purposive.

Since this was an exploratory study of a phenomenon, sense making, that is distinctly individualistic in nature, the sample was selected on a relatively homogeneous basis. This requirement was introduced in order to limit any extraneous influences such as cultural differences that would inhibit interviewer-respondent communication. The decision to select a homogeneous sample followed the observation of Weick (1995): "There tends to be intensive examination of a small number of cases rather than selective examination of a large number of

cases, under the assumption that person-situation interactions tend to be similar across classes of people and situations” (Weick, 1995: 173).

The first step in selecting a homogeneous sample was to identify a school that would facilitate this requirement. A school located in the greater Durban area, Hillcrest High School was chosen as being the source for the selection of the sample. This school was singled out on the basis that it fulfilled the following criteria.

- It is a fully integrated school that caters for all ethnic groups in the greater Durban metropolitan area.
- Scholars in the school are drawn from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Broadly defined, this socio-economic group extends from lower middle class to lower upper class. (This categorisation was provided by the school careers councillor.)
- The school has a formal career guidance program in place. This allowed for an identification of grade 12 learners who had indicated an intention to pursue a commercial career in marketing.
- All scholars interviewed had experienced a similar academic ethos having attended the school for the past five years.
- It allowed for respondents to be interviewed under similar conditions including:
  - a common physical location and surround (a school office) that provided a consistent environment for all respondent interviews;
  - formal and uninterrupted school time (a career counselling session) that ensured the optimum mental focus necessary to conduct interviews (very little distraction).

Having identified the school from which the sample was to be drawn, the next step was to select the sample on the basis of an appropriate career choice. The school career guidance

councillor was requested to identify grade 12 learners on the basis of their having indicated their intention to pursue commercially orientated careers in the field of marketing. This sampling prerequisite was necessary to ensure that the sample of grade 12 learners identified would fall into the target market that the advertisement was designed to appeal to

Based on the above selection requirement, a relatively small sample of five grade 12 learners was selected as the sample for this research. The sample was made up of four white males and one white female. All were from the English speaking white population group.

The sample size was deemed appropriate and fitted a characteristic identified by Weick (1995), as being suitable for research undertaken in the field of sense making. “There tends to be intensive examination of a small number of cases rather than selective examination of a large number of cases” (Weick, 1995: 173).

## 4.4 Data Collection

The collection of data was verbal and followed a semi-structured, open-ended interviewing format.

The selection of this data collection format was based on the exploratory nature of the investigation, the purpose of which, was to investigate the transfer of meaning that could be facilitated by the application of sense-making theory. It attempted to seek out and identify the sense-making constructions made by grade 12 learners subsequent to their being exposed to the advertisement.

Weick (1995), who identified common characteristics pertaining to sense-making research, provided support for the selection of this data collection format. “Observers rely less on researcher-specified measures and more on what participants say and do in response to minimal prodding and prestructuring. Participants’ texts are central ” (Weick,1955: 173).

Further support for this format of data collection is provided by Taylor and Bogdan (1998), “... in qualitative interviewing, researchers model their interviews after a normal conversation rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 8). These

authors, in addition, advocate a less formal structure for qualitative interviews. “...qualitative interviewing calls for a flexible research design” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998: 9).

Five interviews were completed, one interview per respondent. Respondents were interviewed under similar conditions that included:

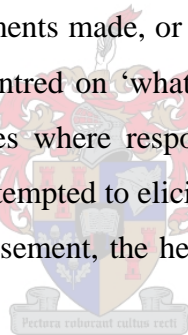
- All interviews were conducted during formal school hours. Each interview commenced at 07h30. This time period was specified and requested for by the researcher and allocated by the school career councillor in order to facilitate limited interruption of the interviews. The time selected was also specified in an attempt to facilitate optimum mental focus on the part of both the interviewer and respondents.
- All interviews were conducted in a common physical location and surround, a school interviewing office. This ensured that the interviews were conducted in an environment that was consistent for each respondent. This location, in addition, ensured that the interviews would be uninterrupted.
- All interviews were recorded on a tape recorder, with the permission of the school career councillor and the participating respondents.
- Interviews all commenced with the interviewer opening the interview by introducing himself, explaining the purpose of the study. The respondents were then addressed in accordance with the interview guide given in Appendix 2.
- The advertisement was then placed in front of them.
- Following the introduction and explanation, all interviews commenced with the question. “Can you tell me what thoughts and feelings you have from looking at and reading the advertisement?”

#### 4.4.1 Interview Design

Interviews were conducted following a semi-structured format.

The exploratory nature of the research together with the requirement to be flexible called for the adoption of an interview guide that would cover similar aspects with each respondent. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) provide support for the use of a flexible interview guide. “The interview guide is not a structured schedule or protocol. Rather it is a list of general areas to be covered with each informant. In the interview situation the researcher decides how to phrase questions and when to ask them. The interview guide serves solely to remind the interviewer to ask about certain things” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 105). A copy of the interview guide used in the research is given in Appendix 2.

The central focus of the interview was to get respondents to concentrate on and comment on the advertisement. Following the question. “Can you tell me what thoughts and feelings you have from looking at and reading the advertisement?” The interview was directed at probing and questioning respondents in order to elicit their sense making. Questions posed to the respondents were in response to statements made, or lack of statements made by them, about the advertisement. These questions centred on ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘with what effect’ queries by the researcher. In instances where respondents appeared to ‘dry up’ and have nothing further to say the researcher attempted to elicit responses by focusing questions on the elements making up the of the advertisement, the headline, visual, copy, baseline as well as the Technikon and IMM logos.



Taylor and Bogdan (1998) describe the use of probing questions as being an essential part of the data collection process in qualitative interviews. “During the interview, you should continue to probe for clarification until you are sure what exactly the informant means. Rephrase what the person said and ask for confirmation; ask the person to provide examples of what he or she means; and tell the person when something is not clear to you” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 107).

The semi-structured aspect of the interviews was deemed appropriate in order to flesh out what Weick (1995) describes as being the concept of sense making. Referring to the questioning approach adopted by those involved in investigating the construction of sense making, Weick (1995) outlines the type of questions that are pertinent. “How they [i.e., active agents] construct what they construct, why and with what effect are the central questions for people interested in sensemaking” (Weick, 1995: 4).

#### 4.4.2 Field Procedure

Yin (1994), describing case study protocol and procedures advocates that “...the investigator must learn to integrate real-world events with the needs of the data collection plan; in this sense, the interviewer does not control the data collection environment as one might using other research strategies” (Yin, 1994: 68). Taking cognisance of the fact that the research was to be conducted in an environment that was not under control of the researcher, the necessity to ensure co-operation from the school principal and career guidance councillor was paramount. The procedure adopted to gain this co-operation followed the following format.

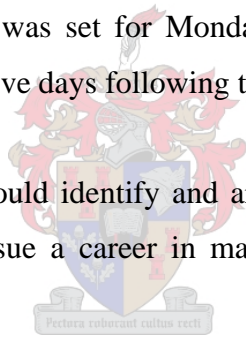
- Initially, telephonic contact was made with the school career guidance councillor. The objective of this contact being, to set up a mutually convenient time and location to meet and discuss the research project and secure the co-operation of the councillor and school principal.
- A meeting was set up to take place at the school with the career guidance councillor.
- A letter was drafted to the school principal outlining the researcher’s status, the format of the research, the requirement for a sample of grade 12 learners and a request for permission to conduct the research at Hillcrest High School. A copy of the letter is given in Appendix 3.
- At the meeting set up with the school career guidance councillor, the letter requesting permission to conduct the research was delivered. The purpose of the research and the specific sample requirements (grade 12 learners who intended pursuing a career in the field of marketing) was outlined.
- Once permission to conduct the research at Hillcrest High School was granted, a timing schedule that would both maximise participant interaction and limit disruption of learners’ school schedules, as well as a location for the interviews was agreed upon. Other matters discussed and agreed upon were the details regarding recording

confidentiality and the selection of respondents to participate in the research. The specifics of this agreement included the following.

- Interviews would take place on school days.
- The time that the interviews would take place was set for 07h30.
- Time span for the interviews, whilst not specific, allowed for each interview to be approximately 60 minutes.
- All interviews were to be conducted in a school interviewing room.
- All interviews would be recorded on a tape recorder.

The date of the first interview was set for Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2003. The rest of the interviews were set for consecutive days following the initial interview.

The school career councillor would identify and arrange for form 12 learners who had indicated their intention to pursue a career in marketing to be available on the dates agreed upon for interviews.



## 4.5 Analysis

Rudestam and Newton (1992) describe qualitative data as representing words and ideas rather than numbers and statistics and that the primary issue in presenting results is making sense of the data. These authors state further that "...each qualitative analysis requires the researcher to devise his or her own method of presenting the results" (Rudestam and Newton, 1992: 113). Yin (1994) commenting on analytic strategies states. "The analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (Yin, 1994: 102). Yin (1994) nevertheless outlines several possible analytic techniques for consideration including a technique referred to as the analysis of embedded units.

Selection of the embedded unit analysis technique was thought to be appropriate and followed from the semi-structured format of the interviews that were designed to tease out and identify the constructions made by respondents: what they constructed, how they constructed, why they constructed and the effect of their construction in response to an advertisement. The how, what, why and with what effect elements were the units that were analysed in order to identify the sense-making processes undertaken by respondents subsequent to their exposure to the advertisement.

## 4.6 Validity and Reliability

Mouton and Marais (1990) have identified ways in which respondents tend to modify their behaviour in instances where they are aware that they are being studied. Behaviour modification can take the form of attempting to ‘look good’ and provide responses that are socially desirable. They can also take the form of deliberate mis-informing. Cognisance was taken of these and other threats to validity identified by these authors. The way in which these threats were addressed is outlined below.

- The motivation of participants. Mouton and Marais (1990) believe that the motivation of respondents is influenced by their interest in a study and the extent to which they perceive the study to be threatening to them. The researcher addressed this aspect by setting out a relatively informal mood for the interviews and inviting respondents to outline their future career plans. Since all respondents had expressed an interest in a career in marketing in order to be selected, the researcher stressed the importance of their participation in this particular research project. The researcher, in addition, outlined the purpose and nature of the study and stressed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that would be put to them.
- Invasion of privacy. Mouton and Marais (1990) warn that this is a perception that ought to be avoided if valid data is to be gleaned. They add that if respondents believe that their privacy is being invaded, they are less likely to give valid responses. This was addressed by assuring respondents that their name and any particulars that could be used to identify them would not be mentioned in the research report. It was stressed that their identities would not be revealed in any way.

- Association of the researcher with a respected body. Mouton and Marais (1990) suggest that respondents tend to regard research in a more serious light if the researcher is associated with a respected body. The researcher addressed this by asking respondents if they had heard of the University of Stellenbosch. Without exception all had heard of the university and indicated that they regarded it in a favourable light. The researcher then explained that the research project he was engaged in was to secure a degree from Stellenbosch University
- Researcher as an 'outsider'. Mouton and Marais (1990) identify this as giving rise to a lower level of co-operation from respondents. The researcher attempted to overcome the disadvantage of being an 'outsider' by lowering the 'social' barriers that might exist between him and the respondents. This included introducing himself by his Christian name, explaining that he was a student and that he was involved in teaching marketing and advertising, the field that was of interest to the respondents.

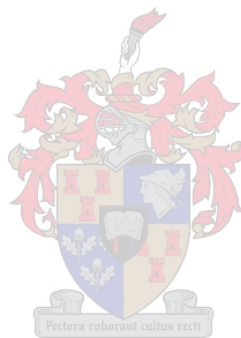
With respect to reliability, the exploratory nature of the research and the relative uniqueness of the investigation (sense making in the context of advertising) were aspects taken into account to ensure the integrity of the data collected. The steps taken to ensure validity outlined above were supplemented by each interview being tape recorded to preserve both the content and accuracy of the data.

The requirement to tape record interviews was, in addition prompted by observations made by Weick (1995) concerning sense-making investigations. "Observers work in close rather than from the armchair" (Weick, 1995: 173), and that "Observers rely less on researcher – specified measures and more on what participants say and do in response to minimal prodding and prestructuring. Participants' texts are central" (Weick, 1995: 173).

Tape recording of interviews enabled the researcher to become fully immersed in the interviews and to concentrate on the verbalisation of respondents. Tape recording of the interviews also allowed for a free flow of respondent verbalisation and limited the potential for disruption that could inhibit or interfere with respondents' cognition. Typing of transcripts commenced as soon as possible after each interview took place (approximately one hour after

each interview). The typing of transcripts was undertaken by the researcher in an attempt to preserve the integrity of the data collected.

All typescripts were reviewed and revised where necessary to facilitate a written record that reflected as high a level of accuracy, authenticity, nuance and detail as possible for each interview conducted. Reviewing and correcting of typed transcripts was conducted over a period of three weeks. This allowed for time laps that assisted the researcher to overcome a relatively high incidence of mental fatigue and perceptual distortion that could influence the accuracy of the material in the interviews.



## CHAPTER 5

# ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### 5.1 Introduction

A sample of five respondents, selected on the basis of them being grade 12 learners who had indicated their intention to pursue a career in marketing, was interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to expose these respondents to an advertisement and subsequently tease out their constructions of the meanings consciously built into the advertisement using sense-making theory. The design of the advertisement in question incorporated frames and cues, the purpose of which, was to direct the sense-making capabilities of the audience that it was intended to influence, grade 12 learners.

### 5.2 The Sample

The sample was drawn from the grade 12 class at Hillcrest High School. Five grade 12 learners who had indicated their intention to pursue a career in the field of marketing formed the sample.

The make up of the sample was as follows.

- Four males.
- One female.
- All were English speakers.
- All were from the white population group.

## 5.3 Analysis of the Data

### 5.3.1 Coding

In order to humanise the presentation and maintain a more intimate feel to the findings, the five respondents have been given fictitious names, Abel, Beth, Chris, Dave and Eric.

Extracts from respondent's interviews, quoted in this chapter and in the appendices are referenced in terms of a system made up of three elements. The first element is the first letter of the coded name given to the relevant respondent, the second refers to the page number of the transcript for that particular interview and the third refers to the numbered statement made by the respondent within that page. For example, (A: 2: 4) refers to the fourth statement of the second page of respondent Abel's transcript.

### 5.3.2 Arrangement of the Data

Taking into account the unique and subjective nature of sense making, each respondent's interview was analysed separately. This, it was envisaged, would allow for a richer description of the construction of respondent's sense making brought about by their exposure to a common stimulus, the constructed advertisement.

The data is presented in a format that attempts to provide a framework that conforms to Weick's (1995) concept of what is involved in the study of sense making.

- What the respondents constructed. This reflects the subjective nature of the selection process involved in the construction of mental frames.
- How did the respondents construct their frames? This outlines the processes employed to use the frames selected to interact with and filter out cues.
- Why did the respondent construct their frames? This outlines the process whereby the cues selected were interacted with and interpreted.

- What effect did the construction create? This outlines the process whereby cues are matched to the frames to provide mental pictures that enable action.

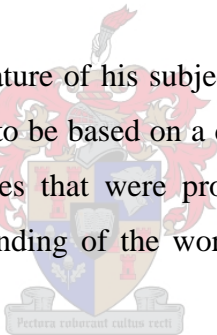
### 5.3.3 Analysis of the Interviews

The analysis presented below represents an overview of the respondent constructions gleaned from their interviews. A more detailed analysis of each respondent's interview and the researcher's identification of their sense making constructions is provided in the Appendices 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

#### 5.3.3.1 Respondent Abel's Constructions

##### What Abel Constructed:

What Abel constructed revealed the nature of his subjective selection of mental frames. The construction of these frames appeared to be based on a combination of the selection of visual and copy elements that served as cues that were provided in the advertisement, his pre existing frames and his tacit understanding of the world. These constructions included the following.



- Interesting information that one can relate to. This construction reflected an existing frame that was related to his desire to enter into a career in marketing. It, in turn, prompted him to select and filter out cues that provided him with the cost element and necessary insights relating to the academic programmes on offer. His verbalisations about people who know what they want to do provide an insight into his construction. "...they can see how much they have to pay and the information they need on what they want to become, very interesting" (A: 1: 1).
- The affordable cost of the programme. This construction related to his existing frame that held an expectation that the cost of a tertiary education would be high. This frame was re-framed following his selection of pricing cues provided in the copy elements of the advertisement that outlined the cost structure and the potential savings available, "...you don't have to pay like a substantial amount" (A: 1: 5).

- Ethnically mixed student body. Acceptance of other racial groups formed the essence of an existing frame. This construction was reinforced by the selection of visual cues depicting a range of people from different ethnic groups, "...you can see that it's all multi-racial, you can mix together..." (A: 1: 3).
- An environment where people enjoy themselves. His existing construction of an expectation that life would be serious was re-framed by the selection of both visual and copy cues that assisted in displacing his 'past' frame with a new one that incorporated elements of fun. "Um, they look happy, they look like they are enjoying themselves, look like they are having a good time..." (A: 1: 4).
- Combination of fun and learning. This frame revealed an existing construction that regarded education as being a relatively serious pursuit. The visual and copy cues depicting elements of smiling people and references to fun provided in the advertisement were selected to assist in the re-framing of his earlier construct, "...you gonna have fun there , you're gonna learn more..." (A: 1: 5).
- Education enabling one to make a life for oneself. His mental frame before his exposure to the communication in this instance was related to an awareness that he would not be able to get ahead in life without an education. The copy cues provided in the headline and first paragraph of the communication that referred to 'getting a life' and becoming '... the person you want to be' were selected to support this construction, "...if you don't have an education, you don't have a life..." (A: 2: 7).
- International recognition equating to the quality of the course. His frame prior to his exposure to the advertisement equated 'overseas' aspects to be superior. He appeared to employ this frame to filter out copy cues provided in the first paragraph, that apart from offering a qualification that was internationally recognised also offered something that was "more than an education". These cues appeared to enable Able to construct this 'new' frame, "...it's all over the world then obviously it works ... it's good..." (A: 3: 4).

## How Abel Made His Constructions:

Probing of Abel's 'what was constructed' frames outlined above provided an insight as to how Able made use of these frames to interact with and filter out visual and verbal cues provided in the pictorial and copy elements of the advertisement.

- Interesting information that one can relate to. This construction, relating to an existing frame, a desire to enter into a career in marketing, appeared to provide the filtering process used by him. "I've always wanted to do marketing management..." (A: 2: 2). The filtering in this instance was how the informational cues provided in the copy were used by him with to gain an insight of the type of educational programme required that would enable him to realise this ambition, "...they've given all the details here..." (A: 6: 6).
- The affordable cost of the programme. His existing frame was that a tertiary education would be expensive. "I thought it would cost a lot more than this..." (A: 3: 9). His filtering out of the pricing cues provided him with an insight as to how affordable the courses on offer would be, "...it's very affordable for the average person" (A: 5: 3).
- Ethnically mixed student body. His existing frame appeared to be one of total acceptance of other ethnic groups. How this construction was re-framed in the context of the Technikon environment appeared to be due to the visual cues provided in the advertisement that provided a reference that revealed the integrated nature of the student body at Technikon Natal, " ...its nice to see that they're all, ah, interact together, its not like they're separate..." (A: 4: 7).
- An environment where people enjoy themselves. Abel's construction was based on an existing frame that held an expectation of life as being serious. His filtering of visual cues of smiling students revealed how he reconstructed his existing frame to form this construction, "...you can see that they actually enjoying themselves" (A: 2: 5).
- Combination of fun and learning. His construction was again based on a 'past' frame that regarded life and work to be serious. "I always think about work, it's always serious and you never have time to play" (A: 1: 6). This 'past' frame appeared to provide the filtering

mechanism that allowed him to select cues from the visual and headline copy elements and provided an insight as to how he re framed his earlier construction, "...you're having fun learning..." (A: 5: 3).

- Education enabling one to make a life for oneself. His mental frame in this instance was related to his being aware that he would not be able to get ahead in life without an education. This provided him with the filtering mechanism to select the cues provided in the headline and body copy to come to this construction, "...really you need to go for an education ... that stands out for me..." (A: 2: 7).
- International recognition equating to the quality of the course. How he constructed this frame appeared to be based on an existing frame that equated 'overseas' with being superior. This provided the filter that allowed him to interpret the copy cues that the qualifications were 'internationally recognised' to arrive at the construction that the course was imbued with a degree of quality, "...everyone's willing to buy it ... you've got the qualification that's recognised, ah, internationally" (A: 3: 5).

### **Why Abel Made His Constructions:**

Questions posed during the interview in response to his expressed thoughts and feelings about the advertisement revealed why he was able to interact with and interpret the cues that he had filtered to support the mental frames he had constructed.

- Interesting information that one can relate to. His desire to enter into a career in marketing revealed that his frame was constructed as a result of his involvement in the subject matter of the communication. His career aspirations and a need to embark on a study programme that would help him to fulfil his ambition revealed why he interacted with and interpreted the information cues relating to this frame in a positive manner, "...this is like the career I've wanted to do all my life" (A: 2: 2).
- The affordable cost of the programme. His 'past' frame that provided him with the expectation that a tertiary education would cost an exorbitant amount provides an insight

as to why he interpreted the pricing cues provided in the headline and copy to rationalise this construction. “I thought it would cost a lot more than this” (A: 3: 9).

- Ethnically mixed student body. A stated desire to interact with people from all ethnic backgrounds revealed that this was why he interpreted the cues provided in the pictorial element of the advertisement. “It’s nice to have like an equal number of each race” (A: 4: 6), and “I’d love, I’d like to interact with everyone” (A: 5:1).
- An environment where people enjoy themselves. His expectation that life was a serious matter was subjected to being re-framed on his exposure to the visual and copy cues. This re-framing facilitated his interpretation of the ‘fun’ cues and provides an insight as to why he made this construction, “...they look like they’re happy, they’re enjoying themselves...” (A: 8: 1).
- Combination of fun and learning. His construction was based on a ‘past’ frame that related to the serious nature of life and work. This previous construction appeared to be re-framed by his exposure to the cues provided in the visual and headline copy. The re-framing brought about by his filtering and interpreting of these cues revealed why he made this construction, “...when you’re having fun you get absorbed into the lesson” (A: 7: 6).
- Education enabling one to make a life for oneself. Based on an existing mental frame that related to an awareness that he would not be able to get ahead in life without an education, his re-framing involved interpreting the education and life related cues provided and revealed why he came to this construction. “I’d say, with the education, you, ... it opens up a lot of opportunities for you ... then you’ve got your life set out for you” (A: 3: 2).
- International recognition equating to the quality of the course. His existing frame that regarded ‘overseas’ as being superior formed the basis on which he interpreted the cues provided in the first paragraph of copy to assist him in developing this construction, “...everyone’s willing to buy it ... you’ve got the qualification that’s recognised, ah, internationally...” (A: 3: 5).

## The Effect Created by Abel's Constructions:

The findings outlined above of the 'what', 'how' and 'why' Abel made the constructions he did on being exposed to the advertising message, provided an insight into the 'what effect' element emanating from these constructions. The 'what effect' component revealed how Abel matched cues to the frames he had constructed. This matching provided the mental picture that enabled an action and consequently the sense that he was able to make of the advertising communication. The effect created, in addition, appeared to reveal that the intended meaning built into the construction of the advertisement was transferred to Abel.

- Interesting information that one can relate to. The action component in this construction was that his selection of information cues provided in the advertisement and subsequent matching these to the frame constructed would enable him to take the next step towards pursuing his career goal. "It's nice that you can look for further information, you can phone them, go on the internet" (A: 9: 1).
- The affordable cost of the programme. In this instance, his selection of the price cues provided in the communication appeared to give rise to the matching and resultant action aspect of his frame; that being that he could consider enrolling for one of the courses on offer because of the relatively low price. "I have to pay a lot less, so, I think my parents will also be pleased with this, so I, I'll probably go to this" (A: 4: 4).
- Ethnically mixed student body. His acceptance of other ethnic groups and his matching of selected visual cues in the advertisement to his frame provided an insight into the action component of this construction; that being that by enrolling at the Technikon, he would be part of a mixed student body. "Its nice that they can have, like, you can see that it's all multi-racial, you can mix together, it's not just either black or white" (A: 1: 3).
- An environment where people enjoy themselves. The mental picture emanating from visual 'fun' cues that he selected and matched to this frame was one that held a distinct appeal for him. The action in this instance related to his being able to enter a fun environment by enrolling at the Technikon. "I understand that the people are having fun, so it's become very interesting to me, I'd like to try it" (A: 9: 3).

- Combination of fun and learning. The visual and headline elements that linked fun and learning provided the matching cues that enabled the action component of this mental picture; that being that the learning process at Technikon Natal would be enhanced in an atmosphere of fun that would enable one to absorb more knowledge, “...while you’re learning, you’re learning more, but, you’re having fun learning, so you absorb more” (A: 5: 3).
- Education enabling one to make a life for oneself. Education and life related cues provided in the advertisement that he selected and matched to this frame provided the mental picture that enabled action. In this instance the action was that enrolling for the study programme offered at Technikon Natal would ensure a future career in the field of marketing. His answer to a direct question about what his life would be clearly revealed this action component of his sense making. “Definitely in marketing management, definitely” (A: 7: 8).
- International recognition equating to the quality of the course. His matching of selected cues to this frame provided the mental picture that international recognition equated to a quality programme, one worth considering enrolling for since it would provide one with universal acceptance, “...you can go overseas and you can go anywhere in the world where you know ... that everyone’s willing to buy it” (A: 3: 6).

### 5.3.3.2 Respondent Beth’s Constructions

#### What Beth Constructed:

Beth’s ‘what’ constructions revealed the subjective nature that was prevalent in her selection of mental frames. Her selection of visual and copy elements provided in the advertisement together with her pre-existing frames and tacit understanding of the world provided the catalytic elements that prompted her constructions.

- Attractive communication. Beth’s desire to enter into a career where she could make use of her creative talents provides an insight into her selection of this frame. Her selection

was facilitated by the design element of a slanted visual that featured cues relating to smiling teenagers dressed in casual attire that she found to be attractive, "...the way the layout's done and everything is very, very nice, also with the picture, 'cause it gives an effect of it not being, you know, straight up, being slanted on one side gives it an effect" (B: 1: 6).

- Interesting communication. This construction again related to her career aspiration and emerged as a result of her selection of cues relating to her wanting to find out more about the courses on offer. "The words and that, you want to know more about it, it's very interesting" (B: 1: 1), "...especially if it's a field you want to go into (B: 1: 4).
- International recognition ensured registration of foreign students. Beth's awareness of the cost of a tertiary education together with her selection of verbal cues relating to cost and the visual cues of the friendly interaction between the different ethnic individuals portrayed provided the impetus for her construction of this frame. "It's affordable for like a lot of people, and its internationally recognised ... people that you've never met in your life before, come here..." (B: 3: 5).
- Affordable price for all. This frame related to an expectation that the cost of a tertiary education would be high. Her selection of pricing cues from the communication together with those relating to international recognition allowed for the re-framing required to form this construction Her construction was that the course would be affordable and attract foreign students. "It requires you to pay less so its affordable for most people..." (B: 3: 1).
- Qualification would ensure material success. Construction of this frame related to her existing frame that encompassed the notion that without a qualification one would experience difficulties in life. Her selection of copy cues that referred to success was employed in her re-framed construction. This frame embraced the concept of success as being related to making money, "...get an education ...you can actually make quite a lot of money..." (B: 2: 8).
- Technikon offered a fun filled learning experience. Beth's gregarious nature together with her selection visual and verbal cues relating to the education, learning and friendly

interaction between the individuals portrayed in the advertisement provided the impetus for her construction of this frame, "...it looks like a lot of fun..." (B: 2: 2).

- Provided an opportunity to exploit creative talents / be self-employed. This construction related to her desire to be able to embark on a career in a creative field where one could be free to pursue one's own agenda. Her selection of the graphic design cues together with her career aspirations outlined above formed the basis of this construction, "...you can actually come up and start your own practice and design your own products..." (B: 4:1).

## How Beth Made Her Constructions:

How Beth made her constructions was revealed by her use of both existing and selected frames and her subsequent employment of these frames to filter out and interact with cues she had selected from the visual and copy elements that were presented in the advertising communication.

- Attractive communication. Beth's existing frame, a desire to enter into a career where she could exploit her creative talents, together with her filtering out of visual design cues that she felt to be attractive elements, provide an insight into how she constructed this frame. "I think it really looks good" (B: 2: 2), "...being able to wear normal clothes" (B: 5: 6) and "...come out with strange ideas and look so nice..." (B: 6: 1).
- Interesting communication. Her existing frame, related a desire to embark on a creative career, appeared to be the catalyst employed to filter out cues relating to this construction. The selection and filtering out of these cues appeared to assist her to find out more about the study programme on offer and revealed how she made this construction, "...it sounds good you know, just want to like try it or something, and lets you have a look to see what it's like, you know, just find more about it" (B: 1: 4).
- International recognition ensured registration of foreign students. An existing frame that recognised that a tertiary education was expensive appeared to be employed by Beth to filter out visual cues, that 'foreign students' would find the cost of the course affordable. These combined with verbal copy cues provided in the first paragraph relating to the

courses being internationally recognised provide an insight into how she made this construction. “It’s affordable ... and it’s recognised overseas ... people that you’ve never met come here” (B: 3: 5).

- Affordable price for all. Her frame in this instance was based on an expectation that the cost of a tertiary education would be high. Her filtering out of pricing cues from the headline, first and third paragraphs of copy together with the cues relating to international recognition given in the first paragraph provide an explanation as to how she came to this construction. “It requires you to pay less, so it’s affordable for most people...” (B: 3: 1).
- Qualification would ensure material success. Beth’s existing construction was that life would be enhanced by an education. How she arrived at her re-framing of this construction was by filtering out copy cues in the second paragraph of the advertisement that stated that the qualifications offered ‘real benefits’. She regarded these benefits as being related to a high earning capacity, “...you can actually make quite a lot of money” (B: 2: 8).
- Technikon offered a fun filled learning experience. This involved the construction of a new frame. How she constructed this frame appeared to be a function of her friendly outgoing nature that appeared to facilitate her filtering of visual and verbal cues from the headline and first paragraph of copy that related to fun and education. “It looks like a lot of fun...” (B: 2: 2), “...it sounds really cool to go and study there...” (B: 5: 3).
- Provided an opportunity to exploit creative talents / be self-employed. Her existing frame that centred on a desire to pursue a free-lance creative career provides an explanation of how she came to this construction. She made use of this existing frame to filter out graphic design cues employed in the layout of the advertisement as well as verbal cues in the second paragraph of copy that made mention of marketing being an exciting field to come to this construction. “If I went into this field I’d definitely use my creativity, into, you know layouts, everything, you make sure everything’s just, right...” (B: 3: 6).

## Why Beth Made Her Constructions:

Beth revealed why she came to her constructions in her answers to questions posed by the interviewer. These answers revealed that she made use of the mental frames that she had constructed to interact with and interpret the visual and verbal cues provided in the advertisement.

- Attractive communication. Beth's creative nature provided the frame that prompted her to select and interact with the visual design cues incorporated in the layout of the advertisement. Her interpretation of these cues was revealed by why she made this construction. "They've got their, you know, normal clothes on ... everyone is just like smiling ... it just comes up, like smiling" (B: 1: 3).
- Interesting communication. Why she constructed this frame can be explained by the existence of a frame that related to her desire for a creative career. This existing frame appeared to prompt her to select and interpret copy cues in the first and second paragraphs that presented information about the courses on offer and provided an insight as to why she made this construction, "...just find out more about it ... especially if it's a field you want to go into" (B: 1: 4).
- International recognition and affordable pricing would attract foreign students. Her existing frame that tertiary institutions were expensive, "...it requires you to pay less..." (B: 3:1) appeared to prompt her to filter out and interpret the visual and copy cues presented in the first paragraph of the advertisement, "...people you've never met..." (B: 3: 5), (different ethnic groups and foreign students). Her interpretation of the copy cues relating to international recognition and affordable pricing given in the first paragraph of body copy provide an insight as to why she made this construction. "It's affordable for like, a lot of people, and its internationally recognised overseas..." (B: 3: 5).
- Affordable price for all. Her frame that a tertiary education would be expensive, "...they like, ask for a lot of money, you know really a lot of money..." (B: 5: 5), gave rise to her filtering out and interpreting the pricing cues provided in the headline, first and third paragraph of the body copy. These interpretations appeared to prompt her to make this

construction and provide an insight as to why it was made, “...it requires you to pay less so its affordable for most people...” (B: 3: 1).

- Qualification would ensure material success. Beth’s existing construction that life would be enhanced by an education, “...if you get an education, you’ve got a life...” (B: 2: 6), appeared to serve as the filter to identify copy cues in the first and second paragraph of the advertisement. Why she made this construction appeared to be a function of her interpreting these cues to mean that making money would result in one being able to have “...quite a comfortable life” (B: 2: 7).
- Technikon offered a fun filled learning experience. Her vivacious demeanour appeared to be a determining element in providing an insight as to why she made this construction. Her existing frame that related to a sparkling outlook on life appeared to facilitate her filtering and interpreting the visual and verbal cues presented in the first and second paragraphs of copy. These interpretations providing an insight as to why she made this construction. “It looks like a lot of fun, especially, and yeah it sounds like a lot of fun ... it looks really good” (B: 2: 2).
- Provided an opportunity to exploit creative talents / be self-employed. Why she formed this construction related to her desire to pursue a creative career. Her interpreting of cues provided in the first paragraph of copy revealed that she saw this as relating to creativity, “...become the person you want to be, with your creativity” (B: 3: 5). Her interpretation of the benefits mentioned in the second paragraph revealed that she saw this to mean that one could “...start your own practice” (B: 4: 1).

### **The Effect Created by Beth’s Constructions:**

The effect created by Beth’s new constructions, based on visual and verbal design elements provided in the advertisement, revealed that she was able to match the cues that she had filtered out from the communication to her new frames. Her matching of cues to the frames she had constructed provided the action component that, in turn, revealed that the sense-making concepts incorporated into the advertisement appeared to play a direct role in facilitating the transfer of meaning and hence provided a ‘direction’ for her sense making.

- **Attractive communication.** Beth's creative nature prompted her to become fairly involved with the design elements incorporated in the layout of the advertisement. This in turn appeared to induce her to interact with and match the visual cues "...the people in the picture have got to know each other..." (B: 5: 3), "...being able to wear normal clothes, (*giggle*), not uniform" (B: 5: 6). Her spontaneous "Yeah I can" (B: 1: 7) response to a question as to whether she could see herself in that attractive setting reveals the action component of this construction and the sense that she made of it.
- **Interesting communication.** Her existing frame that related to a desire for a career in the creative sphere prompted her to select and match visual cues to this construction. "The way the layout's done and everything is very, very nice, also with the picture, cause it gives an effect of it not being, you know straight up, being slanted on one side, gives it an effect" (B: 1: 6). Her matching of verbal copy cues presented in the second paragraph of copy in the advertisement also indicated the action component of this construction. "It sounds good you know, just want to like try it or something and let's have a look and see what it's like, you know, just find more about it" (B: 1: 4).
- **International recognition and affordable pricing** would attract foreign students. Her existing frame that tertiary institutions were expensive appeared to prompt her to filter out, interpret and match visual cues "...people you've never met in your life before" (B: 3: 5), and copy cues relating to international recognition, "internationally recognised marketing qualification..." (B: 2: 1) and affordable pricing, "...affordable rates..." (B: 2: 1). Matching these visual and verbal copy cues to the new frame she had constructed provided both an action component and an insight into the sense she was able to make of her construction, "...its affordable ... and its internationally recognised ... obviously people you've never met in your life before, come here" (B: 3: 5).
- **Affordable price for all.** Her existing frame that a tertiary education would be expensive gave rise to her filtering out and matching pricing cues provided in the headline, first and third paragraphs of body copy that reflected the relatively low price structure of the courses to this construction. Matching of these cues to the frame she had constructed revealed the action component and the sense she made of this construction. The action

component in this instance was that it offered, "...value for money ... so it gives more opportunity for people who can't afford it, to go and study there" (B: 5: 5).

- Qualification would ensure material success. Her existing construction that life would be enhanced by an education was employed by her to filter out copy cues from the headline and first paragraph of the advertisement that related to getting 'a life'. She was able to interpret this cue and give it a meaning that equated to "...an education..." (B: 2: 6) and a "...comfortable lifestyle..." (B: 2: 8). These cues when matched to her frame provided her construction with an action component that enabled her to make sense of the construction. "You can actually make quite a lot of money and you could live a really comfortable lifestyle" (B: 2: 8).
- Technikon offered a fun filled learning experience. Her existing frame relating to an effervescent approach to life appeared to facilitate her filtering and interpreting the visual and verbal cues provided in the headline and body copy that related to the study programmes on offer at the Technikon as being enjoyable and enabling one to meet others. This enabled her to match the cues to her frame and develop a mental action picture that if she chose to embark on a marketing career she would want to go to Technikon Natal, " ...everything is great..." (B: 6: 2), "...if I'm like, you know, really concentrate on taking this field, to study, I would want to go there, I really, I would" (B: 6: 3).
- Provided an opportunity to exploit creative talents / be self-employed. This construction related to her desire to be involved in a creative context where she could pursue her own ideas. This resulted in her selecting, filtering and interacting with visual and verbal cues relating to the benefits accruing from the course outlined in the first and second paragraphs. She appeared to be able to match these cues to her frame to provide an action component that, "...you can actually come up and start your own practice and design your own products" (B: 4: 1). The action component and hence her sense making was underlined by her statement. " ...I'd find what I'm looking for, because, it seems like they offer what everyone wants to do, start business in marketing and advertising" (B: 6: 6).

### 5.3.3.3 Respondent Chris's Constructions

#### What Chris Constructed:

Chris's selection of mental frames, on being exposed to the advertisement, revealed that what he constructed was based on his tacit understanding of the world and on his pre-existing mental frames. The existence of these frames, together with his understandings of these, revealed the subjective nature of his selection of 'new' frames.

- Refreshing that price was clearly visible. His immediate selection of and focus on a pricing frame revealed that this was an important consideration for him. What caused him to select this frame appeared to be the pricing cue provided in the highlighted copy line in the third paragraph. His construction that it was refreshing was also based on an existing construction that advertising did not normally reveal the price, "...usually in advertising's they don't give you the price straight away" (C: 1: 1).
- Offered a fun environment. His dour demeanour provided an insight that his existing frame relating to his outlook on life tended to be somewhat conservative. His exposure to the visual cues provided in the advertisement that featured smiling students appeared to provide an insight as to what caused him to select this frame. His insight in this instance being that the people featured in the advertisement "...look very happy" (C: 1: 1), and that it looked like it would be "...fun to go there" (C: 1: 1).
- Qualifications would provide material success. His conservative outlook appeared to form the basis of his existing frame. Exposure to the headline cues 'Get an education, get a life' and copy cues 'become the person you want to be' appeared to provide him with the filters that enabled him to select and form this construction out of his past frame. His interpretation of the body copy cue 'become the person you want to be' related to the material success incorporated into his construction. "Being wealthy is very much part of being successful" (C: 2: 6).
- Learning would take place in a fun environment. What was constructed in this instance appeared to be the result of a reconstruction of an existing frame that was fairly

conservative, “...don’t usually associate learning with play” (C: 5: 3). This construction appeared to be re-framed as a result of his selection of and inclusion of learning and education cues from the headline and sub-headline copy, “...you can come and learn, can come and play...” (C: 2: 2).

## How Chris Made His Constructions:

His employing past frames to filter out and interact with the cues that he selected from both the photographic visual and verbal copy elements present in the advertising communication revealed how Chris constructed his frames.

- Refreshing that price was clearly visible. Pricing appeared to be an area of concern for Chris. His immediate focus on and filtering out of pricing cues given in the third paragraph revealed just how important an aspect this was for him. The filtering in this instance centred on the highlighted pricing cues given in the third paragraph of copy that provided him with a clear statement of the cost involved and prompted his construction that this was refreshing, “...that they told you the price straight away” (C: 3: 3).
- Offered a fun environment. His existing frame that seemed to reflect a relatively conservative outlook on life appeared to provide the filtering element that explained how he came to this construction. His filtering out of cues present in the visual component of the advertisement that related to the happy countenances displayed on the faces of the students provided an insight as to how he came to this construction, “...the people look very happy ... they look as if it would be fun to go there” (C: 1: 1).
- Qualifications would provide material success. How he came to this construction appeared to be based on an existing frame that related monetary earnings to success. This frame served as the filter that enabled him to select the cues provided in the first paragraph that related to qualifications offering ‘more than an education’ and allowing one to ‘become the person you want to be’. His statement, “... in today’s society you’re judged very much on how much money you have...” (C: 2: 6), tended to reveal how the filtering of cues was facilitated to enable him to make this construction, “...it could help you earn lots of money...” (C: 2: 6).

- Learning would take place in a fun environment. This construction appeared to be formed out of his earlier construction that the Technikon offered a fun environment. His filtering out of cues present in the visual and headline copy revealed how he made this construction. “The picture of the people ... Technikon Natal students ... they look very happy ... and there’s get an education involved which reinforces that you will be getting an education” (C: 5: 6).

### **Why Chris Made His Constructions:**

Chris’s revelations of why he made his constructions were revealed by his answers to questions posed by the researcher. His answers provided an insight into why he had made use of the mental frames he had constructed to interact with and interpret the cues that he had selected and filtered from the advertisement’s visual and copy components.

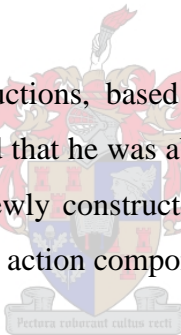
- Refreshing that price was clearly visible. His concern with and focus on pricing provided the frame that prompted him to interpret the pricing cues incorporated in the copy provided in the third paragraph of the advertisement. When asked to comment on this paragraph, he provided an insight as to why he made this construction. His interpretation of the pricing cues provided was that exposure of the price provided, “...a rough idea of what you’ll be paying ... you’ll know straight away if you can afford it” (C: 3: 3).
- Offered a fun environment. His construction of this frame was a result of his filtering and interpreting of visual cues that reflected smiling students interacting with one another. Why he made this construction was revealed by his interaction with the scenario depicted in the visual element and his answer to a question relating to his thoughts about the students shown in this visual. His answer that included a comment that they “ ...all look very happy ... looks like um, perfect scene in the new South Africa ...intermingling and having fun” (C: 1: 7), provided the insight as to why he made this construction.
- Qualifications would provide material success. Why he made this construction was revealed by his selection and filtering out of with cues provided in copy elements making up the first paragraph of the advertisement. These cues included the idea that Technikon

Natal offered one ‘more than an education’ and that it would allow one to become ‘the person you want to be’. His interpretation of these cues was revealed by his answer to a question asking what he understood by being the person he wanted to be, “...very successful” (C: 2: 5). Probing of this answer revealed that he saw success as being the ability to make money, “...the more money you have the more successful you are” (C: 2: 6).

- Learning would take place in a fun environment. His rationalisation in answer to questions pertaining to his thoughts and feelings about the headline and sub-headline revealed how he had interpreted these cues. “ I think the advertising immediately tells you that if you come here, if you come to Technikon Natal that you’re gonna have fun while you’re learning” (C: 5: 5).

### **The Effect Created by Chris’s Constructions:**

The effect created by Chris’s constructions, based on visual and verbal design elements provided in the advertisement, revealed that he was able to match the cues that he had filtered out from the communication to his newly constructed frames. His matching of cues to the frames he had constructed provided the action component and revealed the sense that he made from the advertising communication.



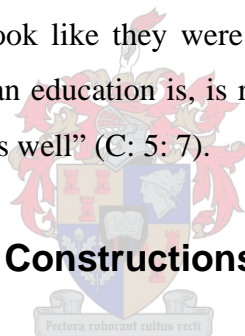
His sense making revealed further that the sense-making concepts incorporated into the advertisement played a direct role in facilitating his constructions and subsequently his ability to make ‘intended’ sense of the communication.

- Refreshing that price was clearly visible. The effect that this construction created revealed an action component that enabled him to match cues to this frame. The action component in this instance was that it was good to, “...show you the price straight off, so you’ll have a rough idea of what you’ll be paying” (C: 6: 1).
- Offered a fun environment. His construction of this frame was a result of his filtering and interpreting of visual cues that reflected smiling students interacting with one another. The effect created by this frame was clearly revealed by his matching of cues to the frame, “...

you're seeing happy people ... it's a good environment at the Technikon" (C; 4: 2). The matching of these cues to this frame revealed the action component and the sensemaking that emanated from this construction. This was given added impetus by his comment that it was enticing, "...when you look at it, you're enticed" (C: 4: 2).

- Qualifications would provide material success. The effect of this construction was that it enabled Chris to match the cues relating to the offering at Technikon Natal being 'more than an education' and enabling one to become 'the person you want to be' to the frame. This matching resulted in his being able to make sense of the frame as a result of his action component that the qualification, "...could help you earn lots of money" (C: 2: 6)..
- Learning would take place in a fun environment. His matching of cues to this frame revealed the effect that was created by this construction. This included an action component that clearly reflected his sense making. His statement that the students depicted in the visual did not look like they were under any stress and that it looked, "...like the way they're getting an education is, is relaxed and though, even though they are getting an education, its fun as well" (C: 5: 7).

#### 5.3.3.4 Respondent Dave's Constructions



##### What Dave Constructed:

Dave's constructions on being exposed to the advertisement revealed that his subjective selections of frames was to a large extent influenced by his pedantic, 'action driven' nature that emerged during the course of the interview.

- Attractive communication with excessive information His existing frame in this context appeared to be related to his need for simplicity. What he constructed reflected his requirement for simplistic uninvolved communication. His selection of cues in the coloured visual reflected the uncomplicated aspect of his construction, "...its very catchy cos it's like full colour" (D: 2: 1). His selection of copy cues mirrored his concern that there was an excess of information. "I don't know, a bit long winded" (D: 2: 9).

- Not concerned with price details. This frame also reflected his predisposition for simple uncluttered communications. What he constructed was based on his selection of cues relating to the third paragraph in the advertisement outlining the benefits accruing on payment of fees in full. His frame again reflected a concern that there was, “...just information here that you don’t really need to know” (D: 1: 9). He construction called for a simple statement, “...it should just say like, maybe just the price” (D: 1: 9).
- Fun environment. His selection of cues from the coloured visual again revealed his somewhat pedantic nature. What he constructed was based on his selection of cues from the coloured visual “...everyone’s having fun, they’re smiling” (D: 2: 1).
- Superior education provided would enable one to get ahead of others. What Dave constructed mirrored his competitive make-up. His selection of cues from the headline and second paragraph revealed the subjective nature of these selections. What he constructed amounted to the superior education enabling one to get ahead of others in the field of marketing, “...you’ll be one step ahead” (D: 3: 3).
- Technikon enabled one to play sport whilst learning. Dave’s interest in sporting activities was revealed by his selection of cues from the sub-headline. He related the ‘play more’ element in the headline to playing sport. This revealed his subjective selection of cues relating to being able to play sport whilst learning. “It’s saying to me I can play sport while learning...” (D: 2: 7).

## How Dave Made His Constructions:

His selection of frames and use of these to interact with and filter out cues selected from the advertising communication revealed how Dave made his constructions.

- Attractive communication with excessive information. His need for simplicity appeared to provide the filtering element in his construction. How he came to construct this frame was a result of his filtering out cues from the coloured visual that he saw as being, “...very catchy” (D: 2: 1). The filtering out of cues that he employed in respect of there being an excessive amount of information appeared to be based on a requirement to concentrate on

essential elements and not be concerned with detail. "...it shouldn't say all that, like you can phone in to find that out" (D: 3: 5).

- Not concerned with price details. His predisposition for focussed communication was again revealed by how he used this frame to filter out cues that he had selected from the third paragraph to support this frame. "This is just telling you ... how much it costs ... how you can get off, like some money off ...it should just say it costs seven and a half thousand Rand" (D: 3: 5).
- Fun environment. His filtering out of cues provided in the visual that related to the smiling casually dressed students indicated how he made this construction. "...they very free dressed ... just dressed the way they want to be ... yeah ...they're having fun" (D: 2: 2).
- Superior education provided would enable one to get ahead of others. How he made this construction revealed the filtering he employed to select cues from the copy elements of the second paragraph of the advertisement. His 'how' construction in this instance appeared to be based on his interpretation that the education would enable one to, "...get you, above the rest" (D: 3: 3).
- Technikon enabled one to play sport whilst learning. His interest in sport revealed how he made this construction. His filtering out of cues relating to being able to play more presented in the sub-headline enabled him to employ these as references in a way that would support his construction. "It's saying to me I can play sport while learning" (D: 2: 7).

### **Why Dave Made His Constructions:**

Dave's answers to questions posed by the interviewer provided an insight into how he interacted with and interpreted the cues he had selected and filtered from the visual and copy elements that made up the advertising communication. The interpretations revealed why he came to his constructions.

- Attractive communication with excessive information. Why he constructed this frame was again based on his need to focus and keep things simple. This requirement was reflected in his interpretation of the cues he had filtered from the visual and second paragraph of the advertisement. He explained that the visual looked good, "...the photo looks good..." (D: 1: 2). His interpretation of the copy cues present in the second paragraph revealed why he came to his construction that there was excessive information in the communication. This particular paragraph he explained was, "... short, quick, straight to the point" (D: 3: 2).
- Not concerned with price details. Why he constructed this frame again exposed his need for focussed information. His interpretation of cues provided in the sub-headline provide an insight into why he made this construction, "...you get more time on your hands for less money" (D: 1: 7). His interpretation of cues in the third paragraph detailing the financial benefits that could accrue on full payment of fees also revealed why he made this construction, "...this is just telling you, um how much it costs" (D: 3: 5).
- Fun environment. Dave's interpretation of the cues inherent in the picture provides an insight into why he made this construction. His response to a question about how he felt about the picture revealed that his interpretation of the cues conveyed in the picture of a group of smiling, casually dressed students was, "...everyone's having fun, they're smiling. (D: 2: 1).
- Superior education provided would enable one to get ahead of others. Why Dave made this construction was revealed in his interpretation of cues he had selected from copy elements making up the second paragraph of the advertisement. This paragraph outlined the range of courses on offer. His interpretation of these cues revealed why he made this construction. The action in this instance revealing a rationalisation that the education would, "...get you above the rest, of whoever's going for that field" (D: 3: 3).
- Technikon enabled one to play sport whilst learning. Dave's interest in sport revealed the nature of his interpreting of the cues he had filtered from headline and sub-headline copy. This interpretation enabled him to 'read' a sporting connotation into the 'play more' element of the sub-headline and provided an insight into why he made this construction "I enjoy sport and stuff ... its like saying ... I can play sport while learning" (D: 2: 7).

## The Effect Created by Dave's Constructions:

The effect created by Dave's constructions was based on his matching of visual and verbal cues selected from the advertisement to the frames that had constructed. His matching of cues to these frames revealed the action component that, in turn, enabled him to make sense of his constructions. The effect of his constructions, in addition, tended to reveal that the meaning built into the advertisement was 'transferred' to Dave.

- Attractive communication with excessive information Dave revealed that the cues he had selected were matched to his frames thereby evoking the action component of his construction. His matching of visual cues to the attractive component of his frame revealed an action element in that "...the photo looks good ... it pulls you toward the highlighted writing" (D: 1: 2). He matched his cues relating to excessive information to this frame to give it an action component that centred on not needing to give lengthy explanations because "...you can just call and find that out" (D: 1: 9).
- Not concerned with price details. Dave revealed the action component that was evoked by matching cues to his pricing frame in his statement that it was not necessary to provide all the benefits accruing from paying in full, "...it shouldn't say all that, like you can phone in to find that out" (D: 3: 5).
- Fun environment. Dave's matching of visual cues that he had selected to construct this frame revealed that his ability to make sense of this construction was centred on a sense of freedom provoked by the picture, "...you can see they just dressed the way they want to be ... they're having fun" (D: 2: 2). The action aspect of this construction was underlined by his spontaneous comment, "Yeah" (D: 2: 3), on being asked if he would like to be part of the group depicted in the advertisement.
- Superior education provided would enable one to get ahead of others. The effect created by this construction revealed an action component that was created by his matching selected cues to this frame. "Its saying that you'll get a qualification, marketing qualification" (D: 3: 1). He added, " its going to get you above the rest of whoever's going for that field, it's like you ... you'll be one step ahead" (D: 3: 3).

- Technikon enabled one to play sport whilst learning His matching of cues relating to ‘learn more, play more’ from the sub-headline to this frame clearly revealed the action component of his construction. The sense he made was clearly revealed by his statement, “...it’s like saying to me I can play sport while learning” (D: 2: 7).

### 5.3.3.5 Respondent Eric’s Constructions

#### What Eric Constructed:

Eric’s selection of mental frames on being exposed to the advertisement revealed that what he constructed was based on his tacit understanding of the world and on pre-existing mental frames that tended to reflect a somewhat insecure and retiring nature. These existing frames that revealed a lack of confidence provided an insight into the subjective nature of his selection of ‘new’ frames.

- A feeling that the Technikon was a welcoming and safe environment. This construction clearly reflected that this subjective selection was based on his insecure and retiring nature. He selected cues from visual and copy elements that reflected his re-construction, “...you get a feeling of safety if you go here...” (E: 1: 1), “...you’re like welcome to come” (E: 1: 2).
- Education in a less formal context. His existing construction appeared to be related to educational institutions being formal and ‘stuffy’. His selection of cues from the headline and sub-headline allowed him to reconstruct his frame to one that reflected that this institution, Technikon Natal, was not a “...strict place to learn” (E: 1: 7), and that it gave one a sense of freedom, “ ...it gives you like freedom (E: 2: 1).
- Opportunity for self-development. What Eric constructed revealed a desire to ‘move on’ and become independent. His selection of cues from the first paragraph of copy provides an insight to this construction, “...come out of your shell, be your own person” (E: 2: 5).
- Clear statement of price would prevent embarrassment. What Eric constructed clearly reflects his introverted and retiring nature. His construction was based on his revealing

that he would be embarrassed to have to phone in to enquire about the cost of the course. His frame was constructed from his selection of clearly presented pricing cues in the third paragraph, “...they showing you the price so you not like embarrassed to phone and find out” (E: 3: 1).

- Education provided would prepare one to cope with life. Eric’s introverted and insecure nature provided him with a construction that the world was “harsh” (E: 3: 5). His selection of cues provided in the baseline of the advertisement enabled him to form this construction. “...its like they’re preparing you” (E: 3: 5).

### **How Eric Made His Constructions:**

How Eric made his constructions was again revealed by his introverted and conservative nature. These elements of his make-up provide an insight into how he interacted with and constructed his mental frames and used these to filter cues from the advertising communication that he was exposed to.

- A feeling that the Technikon was a welcoming and safe environment. His past frame appeared to be related to an insight that tertiary institutions provided an austere environment. How he came to his reconstruction is explained by his filtering out of cues from the visual and copy elements in the advertisement that refuted his earlier frame “...you get a feeling of safety ... you feel assured that it’s a good place to go to” (E: 1:1).
- Education in a less formal context. His existing frame relating to educational institutions being strict was reconstructed subsequent to his filtering out of cues present in the visual and copy components of the advertisement. These cues prompted his comment. “Well it doesn’t look like a army camp” (E: 2: 1).
- Opportunity for self-development. How he constructed this frame was revealed by his filtering of cues provided in the first paragraph of copy that the Technikon, “...lets you choose what you want to become” (E: 2: 5) had no intention of, “...moulding you to what they want you to be” (E: 2: 5).

- Clear statement of price would prevent embarrassment. His filtering of cues that were provided in the third paragraph of copy revealed how he had made this construction, "...they showing the price" (E: 3: 1), "...and the price, its fixed so you know, its like, doesn't fluctuate" (E: 3: 3).
- Education provided would prepare one to cope with life. An existing frame that regarded life as being harsh provided an insight into how he filtered cues from the baseline copy to develop this construction. "The real world sees you just as a person, just they don't care about you, where here they're preparing you to meet [the real world]" (E: 3: 6).

### **Why Eric Made His Constructions:**

Eric's answers to questions posed by the interviewer provided an insight into how he interacted with and interpreted the cues that he had filtered out from the advertisement. His interpretations were revealed by his answers to questions that required him to provide rationalisations to support his selection of cues.

- A feeling that that the Technikon was a welcoming and safe environment. His interpretation of the visual and verbal cues that he had selected from the communication revealed why he made this construction. He reported that the students depicted in the visual gave one a feeling that they were, "...close together, they're friends and they're different races, so you know there's no discrimination at the place" (E: 1: 4).
- Education in a less formal context. His construction in this instance was largely due to his interpretation of cues he filtered out from the visual, headline and sub-headline that he felt made the Technikon look like an institution that gave one, "...like freedom in a way..." (E: 2: 1). Why he made this construction was also a result of his interpretation that at the Technikon one would not be, "...told what to do..." (E: 2: 2).
- Opportunity for self-development. His construction in this instance appeared to be based on his filtering of cues from the first paragraph. His interpretation of these cues, particularly the copy line, 'become the person you want to be' revealed why he made this

construction. "...it lets you choose, what you want to become and not, like moulding you, in what they want you to be" (E: 2: 5).

- Clear statement of price would prevent embarrassment. Eric's construction was based on cues provided in the third paragraph of copy. Why he made this construction was based on his interpreting cues that he filtered from the highlighted pricing statement to mean that, as a result of the clear unequivocal price statement, one would not be required to make further embarrassing pricing enquiries. "They showing the price so you not embarrassed to phone to find out" (E: 3: 1).
- Education provided would prepare one to cope with life. Why Eric made this construction was revealed by his interpretation of cues that he had filtered from the baseline of the advertisement. His interpretation was that the Technikon would prepare one to cope with the, "...harsh real world" (E: 3: 5), "...shows how they preparing you for the real world" (E: 3: 4).

### **The Effect Created by Eric's Constructions:**

The effect created by Eric's constructions, based on visual and verbal design elements provided in the advertisement, revealed that he was able to match the cues that he had filtered out from the communication to his newly constructed frames. His matching of cues to the frames he had constructed provided the action component that revealed that the sense-making concepts incorporated into the advertisement appeared to be instrumental in facilitating a transfer of meaning and hence providing a 'direction' for Eric's sense-making.

- A feeling that that the Technikon was a welcoming and safe environment. Eric's matching of cues relating to 'safety' and 'welcoming' to his reconstructed frame enabled him to develop a mental picture with an action component revealing that he was able to make sense of the construction, "...you get a feeling of safety if you go there, ... you feel assured that it's a good place to go" (E: 1: 1), "...you feel like welcome as a person". (E: 2: 6).

- Education in a less formal context. He was able to make sense of his construction by matching cues that he had filtered from the visual, headline and sub-headline relating to ‘freedom’, ‘fun’ and not being told ‘what to do’. The action aspect is revealed by his statement, “...you don’t want to have to be like told what to do ... you want to be able to do your own thing” (E: 2: 2).
- Opportunity for self-development. His matching of cues that he had filtered out and interpreted from the first paragraph to this frame provides an insight into the action component that enabled him to make sense of this construction, “...well it lets you choose what you want to become ... you come out of your shell, be your own person” (E: 2: 5).
- Clear statement of price would prevent embarrassment. The action that emerged from the mind picture that emerged as a result of his filtering out and interpreting of cues that he matched to this frame revealed that he was able to make sense of this construction. The sense in this instance was that one would not be embarrassed to phone in to enquire about the cost of the course since it was clearly specified in the advertising communication. “They showing the price so you not like embarrassed to phone to find out” (E: 3: 1).
- Education provided would prepare one to cope with life. His filtering out and interpreting of cues that he matched to this frame provided an insight into the action component of this construction. The action that enabled him to make sense of this construction was revealed by his comment that the Technikon was, “...preparing you to meet...” (E: 3: 6), with the harsh realities of life. His explanation of this comment provided a further insight to the action and hence the sense that he made of this construction that the communication, “...shows that they can prepare you that, educate you for it” (E: 3: 6).

## 5.4 Conclusion

The results outlined above revealed the relatively unique and subjective nature of the constructions made by each of the respondents subsequent to their exposure to a common object of communication, the advertisement. Of particular significance was the finding that, in spite of the unique nature of each respondent’s construction of their mental frames, the action

component and sense making that emanated from their constructions appeared to reflect the meaning that was consciously incorporated into the design of the advertisement.

The meaning consciously built into the advertisement centred on a requirement to incorporate frames and cues that would facilitate the construction of specified mental frames by recipients of the communication. In this instance the mental frames that were intended in the advertising brief included:

- a full and enjoyable life enhancing experience,
- an enriching learning experience,
- internationally recognised qualifications,
- an opportunity to develop one's talents,
- a competitive fee structure.

Based on the above frames the holistic meaning that was intended to be communicated was that Technikon Natal would be the tertiary institution to choose to study for a qualification in the field of marketing.

Whilst the constructions of each respondent did not reflect an absolute replication of those intended, their construction of mental frames clearly reflected a close affinity with these consciously devised frames that were based on sense-making theory. The similarities of respondent constructions, relative to the frames intended, are summarised below.

***Intended Construction:*** A full and enjoyable life experience.

- Abel's Constructions:  
Education enabling one to make a life for oneself.  
An environment where people enjoy themselves.
- Beth's Construction:  
It is enjoyable and enables one to meet others.
- Chris's Construction:  
Offered a fun environment.
- Dave's Constructions:  
Offered a fun environment.

Enabled you to play sport and learn.

- Eric's Construction:

A feeling that that the Technikon was a welcoming and safe environment.

***Intended Construction:*** An enriching learning experience.

- Abel's Constructions:

Education enabling one to make a life for oneself.

Combination of fun and learning.

- Beth's Construction:

Offered a fun filled learning experience.

- Chris's Construction:

Learning would take place in a fun environment.

- Eric's Construction:

Education in a less formal context.

***Intended Construction:*** Internationally recognised qualifications.

- Abel's Construction:

International recognition equating to the quality of the course.

- Beth's Construction:

International recognition and affordable pricing would attract foreign students.

***Intended Construction:*** A competitive fee structure.

- Abel's Construction:

The affordable cost of the programme.

- Beth's Construction:

An affordable price for all.

- Chris's Construction:

Refreshing that price was clearly visible.

- Dave's Construction:

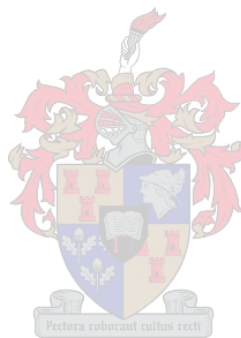
Not concerned with price details.

- Eric's Construction:

Clear statement of price would prevent embarrassment.

***Intended Construction:*** An opportunity to develop ones talents.

- Abel's Construction:  
Education enabling one to make a life for oneself.
- Beth's Constructions:  
Qualification would ensure material success.  
Provided an opportunity to exploit creative talents / be self-employed.
- Chris's construction:  
Qualifications would provide material success.
- Dave's Construction:  
Superior education provided would enable one to get ahead of others.
- Eric's construction:  
Education provided would prepare one to cope with life.



***Intended ‘Holistic’ Construction:*** Choose Technikon Natal as the tertiary institution to study marketing.

Respondent comments made during the course of the interviews indicated that the ‘holistic’ meaning, on which the construction of the advertisement was based, revealed that the conscious application of knowledge about sense making that was built into the communication appeared to enhance its effectiveness.

- Abel. “I want to find out more about it so I can speak to my parents about it, because I’d like to go there ... it looks very exciting” (A: 6: 7).
- Beth. “I would want to go there, I, really I would...” (B: 6: 3).
- Chris. “I think its good advertising ... I think its effective overall” (C: 6: 1).
- Dave. “ I’d definitely phone in to find out more information” (D: 4: 2).
- Eric. “ ...you feel assured that it’s a good place to go” (E: 1: 1).

Based on these results the study did appear to support the hypothesis presented in Chapter 1, the hypothesis being, that intended meaning could be consciously built into a vehicle of communication by the application of sense-making theory. The application of sense-making theory to this constructed communication could, in turn, provide ‘direction’ for recipient’s sense making and thereby facilitate the transfer of meaning.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the controlled transfer of meaning that could be facilitated by the application of knowledge of sense-making theory. An object of communication, an advertisement, was consciously constructed on the basis of sense-making principles. An application of knowledge of sense making was then employed to assess the reception of the advertisement by a selected sample of respondents.

The metaphor employed by Weick (1995) to explain the process of sense-making together with the analogy drawn by Kinghorn (2002) who made use of the world of cinema to explain the capturing of selected 'frames' provided the insights employed to design the advertisement. The metaphor used by Weick (1995) can be broken down into separate discernible but fully interactive components. These components are: that the act of sense making comes about when human beings construct mental frames; these frames are then used as filters and references to interpret cues gleaned from events and objects; successful matching of cues to a frame provides a mental picture that enables action.

The sense-making concepts incorporated into the advertisement included a visual frame depicting a socially orientated moment in the life of a group of students that were portrayed as walking together and happily interacting with one another. The purpose of this visual frame was to facilitate easy interaction and identification with and hence selection of the 'frozen moment' by the target audience, form 12 learners. Cues built into the visual and copy of the advertisement, based on the advertising brief, included elements relating to a full and enjoyable life experience, an enriching learning experience, international recognition, an opportunity to develop one's talents and a competitive fee structure. The purpose of these elements was to provide a source of cues that respondents could select and interpret in the context of the 'frozen moment' frame. The provision of the specific frame and cues in the advertisement, it was envisaged, would facilitate the transfer of meaning consciously built

into the advertisement and enable respondents to match cues to the frames constructed and thereby provide the mental pictures that would enable action. The action in this instance was to regard Technikon Natal in a positive light and give positive consideration to choosing it as a tertiary institution at which to study for a career in marketing.

The 'what was constructed', 'how was it constructed', 'why was it constructed' and 'what effect did the constructions create' aspects of framing teased out in this study relate to the components of the metaphor devised by Weick (1995). These 'what', 'how', 'why' and 'what effect' elements formed the building blocks of the study and provided the insights used to identify whether or not the intended meaning built into the advertisement was transferred to the respondents, thereby enabling them to make the intended sense of the communication. The 'what was' constructions were teased out to reveal the selective nature of process employed by respondents to form their construction of mental frames. The 'how was it' aspects were sought out to give an indication of how their subjectively selected frames were employed as filters and references to pick up cues that respondents' had selected from the communication. The 'why was it' facets identified provided an insight into the interpretative nature of the process and revealed the respondents' rationalisations as to why their frames were constructed from the cues they had selected from the advertisement. The 'what effect did the constructions create' elements were sought out to identify whether the respondents were able to match the cues they had selected to the frames they had constructed and thereby create mental pictures that enabled action. The action component was the core issue as to whether they were able to make sense of the advertising communication and hence whether a transfer of meaning had been facilitated.

## 6.2 Assessment of Respondent Constructions

The analysis of results detailed in Chapter 5 provides an insight into the sense-making elements that facilitated a transfer of meaning from the advertisement to the respondents. The transfer of meaning was revealed by the sense that was made by respondents through their constructions of frames. These constructions were made subsequent to their exposure to the advertisement that was specifically designed to facilitate this transfer of meaning.

The interviews conducted and subsequent analysis centred on teasing out what the respondents constructed, how they constructed it, why they had made the construction and the effect that was created by their constructions. The purpose was to identify whether or not the sense-making elements built into the advertisement had facilitated the transfer of meaning intended by the advertiser to the respondents.

What they constructed revealed their subjective drawing on previously accumulated frames and tacit understandings of issues. These were brought to consciousness as a result of their exposure to the advertisement. The re-construction of their frames, as revealed by their responses to questions posed in the interview situation, appeared to be based on their selecting 'moments' initiated by exposure to the advertisement. Their subjective selection of visual and copy elements in the advertisement appeared to provide the cues that in turn provided the references employed to make their constructions.

Taking into account that all respondents were exposed to the advertisement, with its built in frame and cues, in exactly the same way, their personal make up, and the sequence in which they revealed what they constructed provided an insight into the subjective and selective nature of this process.

How respondents made their constructions was revealed by their selection of frames and their ability to employ these frames to interact with and filter out cues selected from the advertising communication that they had been exposed to. These cues were then employed as references to assist them in their construction of new frames.

Respondent's interaction with interpretation of the cues they had selected and filtered from the advertisement served to reveal why they had come to their constructions. These revelations came to light following from their explanatory and rationalised answers to questions posed by the interviewer.

The effect created by respondents' constructions, based on visual and verbal design elements provided in the advertisement, revealed that they were able to match the cues that they had interacted with, filtered out, employed as references and interpreted to construct their mental frames. Their matching of cues to the frames they had constructed, indicated the presence of an action component that revealed that the sense-making concepts incorporated into the

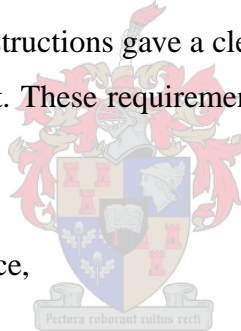
advertisement had appeared to facilitate the transfer of meaning that had been consciously built into the advertisement.

### 6.3 Conclusion of Assessment of Findings

The analysis of the sense-making components outlined above provided compelling insights to support the hypothesis presented in Chapter 1 that a controlled transfer of meaning could be facilitated by the application of knowledge of sense making. Responses made by all respondents revealed that they had been assisted in making the ‘intended’ constructions that they did as a result of the photographic frame and copy cues built into the advertisement.

Of particular significance was the finding that the sense-making activity undertaken by all respondents, as revealed in the action component of their constructions, indicated that their mental frames reflected a positive mind set towards the Technikon. The positive nature of the mental pictures evoked by these constructions gave a clear indication that the requirements set out in the advertising brief were met. These requirements included the need to communicate that Technikon Natal offered:

- a full and enjoyable life experience,
- an enriching learning experience,
- internationally recognised qualifications,
- an opportunity to develop one’s talents,
- a competitive fee structure.



Since the responses of the respondents indicate that these requirements were met, it can be concluded that there was a positive transfer of meaning consciously built into the advertisement and the meaning constructed by respondents subsequent to their exposure to the advertisement. Support for the conclusion that sense-making elements incorporated into the design of the advertisement enabled the respondents to make sense of the communication and hence facilitate the transfer of meaning is provided by a brief review of the characteristics that facilitated the sense-making process outlined in chapter 2.

These characteristics included the following.

- Sense making is grounded in identity construction. Respondents drew on their tacit understandings of themselves and the world and made use of these understandings to make new constructions of their mental frames. These understandings included elements of their own make-ups including the intense, outgoing, conservative, pedantic and insecure aspects of their respective personalities. Their understanding of these elements was then reflected in the subjective nature of their existing constructions. Their exposure to the cues in the visual and copy elements of the advertisement facilitated the reconstruction of their respective frames. This was particularly evident in their constructions relating to education being enhanced by a fun element. All respondents were able to project themselves into the scene depicted in the photograph and associate with the verbal cues given in the headline and sub-headline to arrive at a construction that the Technikon offered a full and enjoyable life experience.
- Sense making is retrospective. This was illustrated by their drawing on past constructions to make sense. The affordable pricing construction made by respondents serves as an example to illustrate this characteristic. Respondents all had previous construction that a tertiary education was expensive. Exposure to the pricing elements of the advertisement brought this previous construction to consciousness and facilitated a reconstruction that an education at Technikon Natal was affordable.
- Sense making is enactive. The construction of frames by respondents revealed the categorisation aspect that is the mark of this characteristic. The use of the second person to describe the various aspects of their constructions illustrated their tacit acknowledgement of their integration into some collective mind picture (Kinghorn, 2002: 319). Examples of this are reflected in the following statements. "...they don't have to pay like a lot you know" (A: 3: 8), "...you can actually come up and start your own practice and design your own products" (B: 4: 1), "...it will help you become more of an individual, the person you want to be" (C: 2: 3).
- Sense making is social. Elements drawn from the interviews conducted served to illustrate that sense making is not a singular activity and that respondents took into account the reactions of others, "...because not many people can afford it" (E: 4: 8), "...in today's

society you're judged very much on how much money you have..." (D: 2: 6). "I sort of know how other people feel" (A: 4: 8), "...everyone likes to see free stuff" (C: 3: 4).

- Sense making is ongoing. Their use of past frames to construct new frames provided an insight into this characteristic.
- Sense making is focussed on and by extracted cues. This formed the basis of the design of the advertisement. The results revealed that respondents made use of cues provided in the advertisement to make their constructions. This finding was of particular significance to the purpose of this study. That was to investigate the controlled transfer of meaning that could be facilitated by the application of knowledge of sense making.

## 6.4 Conclusion about the Study

This study was limited by choices made by the researcher. The results and implications of the study are therefore constrained by the research method employed, the analysis conducted and the sample procedure adopted in the study. The following limitations were identified.

- The qualitative case study approach is intrinsically subjective. There is an inherent possibility that another or more experienced researcher could have teased out different or additional in-depth constructions from the respondents.
- The skills of the researcher are paramount in case study research. The limited interviewing skills of the researcher could well have had an influence on the outcome.
- Bias on the part of the researcher. Since the researcher played a significant part in the development and final acceptance of the advertisement employed, it is conceivable that the choice and directional aspect of questions posed could have influenced the outcomes of the research.
- The relatively nebulous and continuous nature of the subject under investigation highlights the inherent potential for alternative assessments of the data.

- Whilst every effort was made to ensure accurate transcriptions of the interviews, the encroachment of subjective ‘bias’ and the limited experience of the researcher are additional factors that need to be taken into account when assessing the findings.
- The small sample size and possible bias that could have emerged in an attempt to select the sample on a homogenous basis suggest that caution should be exercised in respect to generalising the findings.

With respect to sample size, the design of the study took into account the explanation of the characteristics that are indicative of what sense-making research entails provided by Weick (1995). His assertion is that there “...tends to be intensive examination of a small number of cases rather than selective examination of a large number of cases, under the assumption that person-situation interactions tend to be similar across classes of people and situations” (Weick, 1995: 173).

## 6.5 Relevance of the Study

The literature review in Chapter 2 indicated a growing realisation of the need to reassess the traditional models that have been employed in the design of advertising communication. This realisation has come about as a result of the relatively high incidence of the failure of these communications to allow recipients to become involved in the communication. These concerns prompted Schmitt (1999) and Reouveni (2002) to advocate a more empathetic approach towards the design of advertising communication, experiential marketing. This approach advocates a more direct engaging with the target audience in order to generate a better interaction and understanding between them and the advertiser.

An assessment by the researcher was that the failure of many advertising campaigns could well be attributed to a lack of empathy being built into this form of communication. It was however felt that the call for empathy, whilst a valid consideration, did not offer an adequate incentive for recipients of advertising messages to become involved in the communication. The incorporation of sense-making theory into the design of advertising messages appeared to offer a possible benefit, one that would facilitate the transfer of meaning and thereby add substance to the suggestion of an empathetic approach.

Based on the above, an advertisement was constructed making use of sense-making principles to facilitate the transfer of meaning required.

An application of knowledge of sense making was then employed to assess the reception of the advertisement by a selected sample of respondents. The selection of respondents was restricted to grade 12 learners, the designated audience for the advertisement.

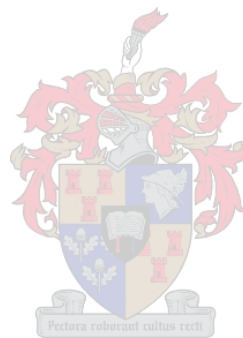
The study revealed that the advertising communication developed to incorporate visual and copy elements designed to facilitate the construction of 'specified' mental frames appeared to facilitate the transfer of meaning. The sense made by respondents subsequent to their exposure to the advertisement revealed that the meaning they derived was similar to that conceptualised in the construction of the advertisement.

The sage comment made by Lord Leaverhume, founder of the Unilever empire that "Probably half of every advertising appropriation is wasted, but nobody knows which half" (Sinclair, 1977 title page verso), reveals that the cost and efficiency of advertising has been questioned for some time. The concerns expressed by contemporary academics, authors and practitioners of advertising communications reveal that solutions to the problem remain elusive. Whilst no claim can be made that sense-making theory represents the 'holy grail' that could revolutionise the advertising industry, the positive results of this study indicate that the paradigm shift called for in the advertising communication industry, could well be accommodated by the application of sense-making theory.

## 6.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Whilst results gleaned from this study revealed positive and consistent outcomes in terms of the transfer of meaning facilitated through the application of sense-making theory, the exploratory nature of this research and sample size cannot be used to project the findings to large universes. The results do however suggest that a quantitative study conducted amongst a larger sample would be required to establish whether the results could be generalised.

The restriction of the study to print, a medium that has ‘static’ characteristics that allow for easy ‘back referencing’ also limits the application of the findings to this medium. The dynamic nature of electronic media and the inherent difficulty in being able to ‘refer back’ would probably require a different research procedure to assess the suitability of applying sense-making theory to this medium. Nevertheless the positive outcome reflected for print media does suggest that exploratory studies in electronic media could be fruitful in terms of seeking ways to enhance the effectiveness of these media formats in transferring meaning.



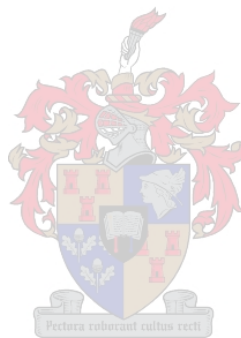
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## APPENDIX 1

FRANCHISE DIVISION: DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING.  
IMM CERTIFICATE AND DIPLOMA COURSES.

### ADVERTISING BRIEF.

#### CAMPAIGN REQUIREMENT:

- Full page full colour A4 print advertisement.
- Full page full colour A3 poster.

#### TARGET AUDIENCE:

Form 12 Learners planning to study for a career in the field of Marketing.

#### ADVERTISING OBJECTIVES:

To create a level of awareness amongst grade 12 learners that they can benefit from a full and enjoyable life enhancing experience whilst studying for an Institute of Marketing Management (IMM) Diploma at Technikon Natal

#### BRAND BENEFIT:

Technikon Natal offers you the facilities and opportunity to enjoy a full and enjoyable life enriching learning experience. It provides the environment that will enable you to study for the internationally recognised Institute of Marketing Management Certificate and Diploma qualifications at highly competitive rates. Not only are the fees competitive, free books are included for those who pay, in full, on registration.

#### SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Students enrolled to study IMM courses at Technikon Natal enjoy the 'holistic student life' experience, including exceptional study facilities, a balanced and fulfilling social life as well as the opportunity to build new and lasting friendships.

#### POSITIONING

Technikon Natal offers more than an excellent marketing education. It offers you a whole new life experience that will enable you to develop your talents, meet different people, make new friends and allow you to achieve your immediate career goals (an internationally recognised qualification).

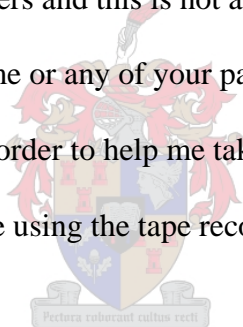
#### MANDATORY INCLUSIONS

The design of the advertisement must incorporate a lifestyle component that will serve as a 'frame of reference' for the target audience, one that they can readily identify with and project themselves into. The main purpose of this frame of reference should be to enable the target audience to focus on, and gain, a clear uncluttered insight of the benefits presented in the advertisement.

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Good morning, my name is Alex Watson.
- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.
- What I am trying to do is to get an idea of what grade 12 learners think and feel about an advertisement.
- I am going to show you an advertisement and would be grateful if you could tell me exactly what you think and feel about the advertisement.
- Please tell me anything that comes into your mind once I show you the advertisement.
- There are no right or wrong answers and this is not a test.
- I will not be mentioning your name or any of your particulars in my research report.
- I will be making use of a tape recorder to help me take notes of this interview.
- Do you have any objections to me using the tape recorder?



### EXPOSE THE ADVERTISEMENT

- Allow the respondent time to look at the advertisement and read the copy.
- Ask: Can you tell me what thoughts and feelings you have from looking at and reading the advertisement?
- Without being directional, ask follow up questions that attempt to cover the respondents constructions.

## FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

### 1. What respondent constructed.

- Can you tell me what thoughts and feelings you have from looking at and reading the advertisement?
- Do you have any other thoughts or feelings about the advertisement?

### 2. How did respondent construct?

- Can you tell me how you got to thinking and feeling that way about the advertisement?
- Can you tell me how the advertisement made you think and feel that way?
- Did you have to make up and ask yourself any questions to be able to answer the questions that have been asking you about the advertisement?

### 3. Why did respondent construct?

- Can you explain why you got those thoughts and feelings from looking at and reading the advertisement?
- Why do you say that?
- Did you have to make up and ask yourself any questions to be able to answer the questions that I have been asking you about the advertisement?



### 4. What effect did the construction create?

- Can you tell me what your overall impression is of the advertisement?
- Do you have any other thoughts and feelings about the advertisement?

## APPENDIX 3

5 Bartle Mews,  
6 Bartle Road,  
Gillitts  
3610  
17<sup>th</sup> February 2003

The Principal,  
Hillcrest High School,  
Hillcrest.

Dear Sir,

Re: Request to Conduct Interviews with Grade 12 Scholars.

I am currently reading for my Masters Degree in Philosophy through the University of Stellenbosch.

My supervisor is Professor J Kinghorn. Director of Programme: Value and Policy Studies. Department of Information Science, University of Stellenbosch.

I have completed the course work component and am required to write and submit a dissertation to complete the requirements for this degree. The topic of my dissertation is Sensemaking in Advertising. An Exploratory Case Study Conducted at Technikon Natal.

The research component of this dissertation requires that I interview approximately 6 grade 12 scholars who have indicated an interest in pursuing a career in the field of marketing.

The interview will consist of these scholars being exposed to an advertisement specifically designed to appeal to them. The advertisement in question is one designed to attract scholars to select a tertiary marketing course offered at Technikon Natal. (A photocopy of the advertisement is attached.)

Respondents will, in the first instance, be asked to comment on their reaction to the advertisement. The balance of the interview will consist of me prompting respondents to comment on whether or not elements making up the advertisement make sense to them.

It is envisaged that duration of these interviews will be 60 minutes.

I would be most grateful if you would permit me to conduct these interviews amongst grade 12 scholars at Hillcrest High School.

Yours faithfully

JA Watson

## APPENDIX 4

### Detail of Respondent Abel's Constructions.

#### What Abel Constructed:

Abel's initial reaction to the advertisement centred on him remarking that he thought it to be *interesting*. He, in addition, commented on the *payment* required and the *information* given. "Well I think it's quite interesting cause, it gives the, the youth something to look at for what they want to do in the whole of their, ... they can see how much they have to pay and the information they need on what they want to become, very interesting" (A: 1: 1).

His reaction to the query as to why he saw the advertisement as being interesting indicated a sense that, from his perspective, *the advertisement was addressed to those who want to study marketing and advertising*. "Because, they know what they want, when they read this, they know what they want to do, what they want to study, its what you want to do everyone needs marketing in this world, everyone and advertising as well you need to advertise correctly in order to, absorb the, the youths attention, see what they want to do" (A: 1: 2).

His comments about the visual aspects of the advertisement indicated a *positive reaction to the ethnically mixed student body* depicted and a view that there was a *sense of enjoyment* portrayed. "It's nice that they can have, like, you can see that its, all multi-racial you can mix together its not just either black or white or..." (A: 1: 3). "Um, they look happy, they look like they are enjoying themselves, look like they are having a good time..." (A: 1: 4).

When asked to comment on the copy in the advertisement, Able focused on the *fun aspect of learning* and the *relatively low cost*. "I like, I like where they say here they say you learn more you get to play more, play more and then you pay less, so they're saying that you're goanna weather you ...you gonna enjoy because you goanna have fun there, you're goanna learn more about it you don't have to pay like a substantial amount" (A: 1: 5).

Able, on being asked what the advertising copy elements meant to him stressed the importance of *education enhancing ones life*. "Well, I, I'd just like the first sentence where it says get an education get a life, if you don't have an education you don't have a life, really you need to go for an education ... so that just stands out to me it's like the most important sentence in it" (A: 2: 7).

Abel linked the aspect of *international recognition* to a view that this *made the offering in the advertisement appear to be workable and good*. "It also says here it's internationally recognised, so, then obviously if it's, it's not just in Natal it's all over the world then obviously it's it works ... it's good enough" (A: 3: 4).

#### How Abel Made His Constructions:

Probing the elements identified above provided an insight of how Able constructed his sense making. The *interesting* aspect appeared to emerge as a result of Able being very *positive about his career choice*. "This is like the career I've wanted to do all my life ... so I don't, I don't I haven't really changed my mind since I've been here I've always wanted to do marketing management ...cause my mother and my father do it" (A: 2: 2). This, it was felt,

would have been a significant factor in arousing Abel's level of interest on being exposed to the advertisement.

The aspect of *payment* and the relatively low cost could be related to Abel's *surprise at its affordability*. "...it's not too ... they don't have to, pay like, a lot you know..." (A: 3: 7). "I thought it would cost a lot more than this ... Cause this is this is the same as a school fee amount, it's quite affordable for the people..." (A: 3: 8). "...they say it there, they say you only have to pay less which true because it's very affordable for the average person..." (A: 5: 3).

With respect to *information*, Abel, indicated that the *details* given in the advertisement *were readily apparent*. "...they've given all the details here in the bottom line so ... its nice there so you can ... you know what you want to do you know how to contact them, you can onto the internet you can find out about it" (A: 6: 6).

Abel's use of the third person represents his acknowledgement that the advertisement was *addressed to those who want to study marketing and advertising*. "...they know what they want, when they read this, they know what they want to do, what they want to study..." (A: 1: 2).

How he indicated his *acceptance of other ethnic groups* was apparent from the following statements. "...it's nice, it's nice to have like an equal number of each, races, so that they can see that its not just for the blacks, it's not just for the whites" (A: 4: 6). "... its nice to see that, they're all, ah interact together, its not like they're separate..." (A: 4: 7).

The *fun aspect* referred to by Abel is clearly expressed in his comments in this regard. "Well I'd like go to it, um ... it looks like its very, um, very fascinating and people all have, look like, look like they're having fun..." (A: 1: 6). "I always think about work it's always serious and you never have any time to ... to play you know you never, you don't learn much, but now it looks like everyone's having fun so it looks like you can enjoy yourself" (A: 2: 4). "Well it says here that you can play more but you can you can, actually see that the people on their facial expression you can see that they actually enjoying themselves" (A: 2: 5).

Abel's reference to how *education is important in enhancing ones life* is spelt out clearly in his statement. "Because people need an education, they need to go out and be successful in the world, lots of people, ... lots of people if they don't have a matric or, they don't study further they don't have what it takes to get far in life..." (A: 2: 8).

With respect to *international recognition*, Abel's comments on being asked if it was important gave further weight to his view that this gave the qualification *added value*. "Because its nice to know that you can go overseas and you can go anywhere in the world where you know that its there that everyone's willing to buy it, or that you've got the qualification that's recognised, ah, internationally..." (A: 3: 5).

## Why Abel Made His Constructions:

Abel's comment, on being asked to explain why the advertisement was interesting, reflects his own interest and a sense of *involvement* in the communication. "...they know what they want,

when they read this, they know what they want to do, what they want to study, its what you want to do..." (A: 1: 2).

His positive reaction to the *price* and why it forms part of his construction is illustrated by a response to a question concerning whether the advertisement was persuasive. "I've heard, I know of, I've already spoken to people from Varsity College, and, I've, I believe it's a lot more expensive so it's nice that I can still get the same diploma in marketing, but then I have to pay a lot less, so, I think my parents will also be pleased with this so I, I'll probably go to this" (A: 4: 4).

An insight as to why Abel constructed *information* was gleaned from his answer to a query concerning the meaning of a phrase used by him, 'can open up the world', that he had employed to explain the advertisement's headline, 'Get an education, get a life.' He explained that his reasons for using the phrase was that "...it just gives you a whole outlook on what you really need for this work you need to be able to advertise you need to be able to market product ... um, ... I'd say with this you can do a lot, you can't just go into one field and that, with this it gives you like a lot of extra knowledge..." (A: 5: 7).

Abel's view that the advertisement was *targeted to school leavers* is given in a statement. "It's targeted the youth here..." (A: 8: 2). The why element is constructed as follows, "They've said here you have fun you don't have to pay much, you learn more, so obviously, the reader, would, would like to experience this, their parents wont complain..." (A: 8: 2).

The why construction for his *acceptance of other ethnic groups* is clearly reflected in his comment. "Most people don't want to go to a place if it's either just for whites or if it's just for blacks or Indians, they like to go where they can interact with everyone..." (A: 4: 8). When asked whether this applied to himself, his reply was emphatic. "For myself, exact same, I'd love, I'd like to interact with everyone." (A: 5: 1).

Why he constructed the *fun aspect* is clearly apparent in the following statement. "Um you need, you need to have fun to, to enjoy your work, you can't, sit there all bored cause then don't you start getting distracted by your surroundings and that's when you don't pay attention in class you don't listen, so when you're having fun you get absorbed into the lesson, you, you're having fun the teachers talking to you, you're enjoying yourself, so you, absorb more of what the teachers telling you" (A: 7: 6). Why the construction of the fun element took place was also clearly a function of the visual element of the advertisement. "Because I see the, I see the people interacting with each other which is nice to see, I also see them having fun, they look like they're happy they're enjoying themselves..." (A: 8: 1).

The why aspect of Abel's construction in respect of *education enhancing ones life* came about in response to a question relating to a statement he had made concerning the importance of getting an education. "...you can't just, um, come out of school or just stop when ever you feel like it and then try to get into a job you need to have like a good education" (A: 2: 8). Probing Abel's sense making of the headline elicited a response which further illustrates his why construction in respect of education and the enhancement of ones life. "Um, ... I'd say with the education, you, ... it opens up a lot of opportunities for you cause you can get into a job and then with that job you bringing in an income, you can buy things, purchase whatever you want ... then you've got your life set out for you" (A: 3: 2). Commenting on the effectiveness of the headline Abel underlined his why construction "...that's also very effective, without education you have no life" (A: 8: 4).

Abel's why construction of the *international recognition* aspect centred on it facilitating travel abroad, as a result of the acceptability of the qualification. "Because its nice to know that you can go overseas and you can go anywhere in the world where you know that its there that everyone's willing to buy it, or that you've got the qualification that's recognised, ah, internationally..." (A: 3: 5).

### The Effect Created by Abel's Constructions:

Abel's 'what' 'how' and 'why' constructions together with the question posed by the researcher that enquired as to whether he had made up questions in his mind when attempting to answer questions put to him gives an insight into the effect of his construction. It was apparent that his exposure to the advertisement together with the verbal and visual cues contained therein was of *significant interest* to Abel. His first comment, on being asked to give his thoughts on the advertisement, was that, for him, "...it's quite interesting..." (A: 1: 1). This interest was largely a function of his intention to make a career for himself in the field of marketing. On being asked to look at the detail of the advertisement, his response confirmed his desire to pursue his career choice. "This is like the career I've wanted to do all my life ... so I don't, I don't I haven't really changed my mind since I've been here I've always wanted to do marketing management..." (A: 2: 2).

Abel's construction of interest appeared to give rise to a heightened involvement in the advertisement. The interest and involvement were, in turn, enhanced by the *price element* contained in the advertisement. It appeared that his construction of price related to affordability as was made evident by him making frequent reference to, "...you pay less ... you don't have to pay like a substantial amount" (A: 1: 5). "...it's not too ... they don't have to pay like, a lot you know (A: 3: 8). "I thought it would cost a lot more than this... Cause this is this is the same as a school fee amount, it's quite affordable for the people..." (A: 3: 9). Referring to another tertiary institution, Abel commented, "...I believe it's a lot more expensive so it's nice that I can still get the same diploma in marketing, but then I have to pay a lot less..." (A: 4: 4). Other references to the price element were, "...the way that they say it there they say you only have to pay less which true because it's very affordable for the average person" (A: 5: 3). "...you don't have to pay much" (A: 8: 2).

The third element making up Abel's construction was related to the *information* given in the advertisement, "...it gives the, the youth something to look at for what they want to do in the whole of their... They can see how much they have to pay and the information they need on what they want to become, very interesting" (A:1: 1). The information that can be deduced from Abel's statement, given above, enabled him to construct a framework that linked a reasonably priced study programme [the IMM] to an opportunity that would enable young people to pursue a career [in marketing].

His construction of *who the advertisement was addressed to* is clearly reflected in his comments referring to youth. His use of the third person when describing what made the advertisement interesting for him reflected that his construction assumed that young people interested in pursuing a career in marketing would be the target audience. "Because, they know what they want, when they read this, they know what they want to do, what they want to study..." (A: 1: 2).

The cues provided in the visual element of the advertisement appeared to facilitate Abel's construction of a *youthful target audience*. He appeared to make use of these visual cues as well as cues given in the advertising copy to construct a frame that he could identify with. This construction included an aspect of *fun and enjoyment*. "Um, they look happy, they look like they are enjoying themselves, look like they are having a good time" (A: 1: 4). Confirmation of this construction is given in his response when asked why he felt they were having fun and enjoying themselves. "Well it says here that you can play more but you can you can, actually see that the people on their facial expression you can see that they actually enjoying themselves" (A: 2: 5). The construction included *meeting new people from different ethnic backgrounds*. "Its nice that they can have, like, you can see that its, all multi-racial you can mix together its not just either black or white or..." (A:1: 3). Abel's construction, in addition suggested that those wanting to enrol for the course would be *like-minded* "...so its nice for them to come, come through to, to meet new people that are like the same as them that offer the same qualities..." (A: 3: 6).

A major effect created by Abel's construction related to the *benefit* that would accrue *as a result of gaining an education*. Cues provided by the advertisement's headline were instrumental in aiding his construction which centred on the *need to be successful* and *making something of ones life*. "...people need an education, they need to go out and be successful in the world, lots of people, ... lots of people if they don't have a matric or, they don't study further they don't have what it takes to get far in life..." (A: 2: 8). Abel underlined this construction on being asked to elaborate on what he understood by 'get a life'. "I'd say with the education, you, ... it opens up a lot of opportunities for you cause you can get into a job and then with that job you bringing in an income, you can buy things, purchase whatever you want ... then you've got your life set out for you" (A: 3: 2).

Abel's construction on being asked to explain the advertising copy line, 'Learn more, play more, pay less', was that the *fun element enhanced the learning process*. "...while you're learning you're learning more, but, you're having fun learning, so you absorb more" (A: 5: 3). Probing the second paragraph of copy revealed that Abel's construction linking fun to learning was not flippant. Further probing concerning the effectiveness of this copy line revealed that his construction, linking fun to learning, was related to an enjoyment of life. "The way you can, the way you can play more or you can have fun while you're learning cause most, most people don't wanna, just be all serious and try and learn they don't have a lot of fun while they're learning..." (A: 5: 5).

On being asked whether he had asked himself questions when attempting to answer the researchers questions, his reply was that the advertisement *did not mention a time frame* for the study programme. Further probing revealed that cues given in the second paragraph of the copy, 'offers real benefits' did not allow him to construct. On being pressed, Abel presented a construction that the programme would provide a *superior education* to other courses on offer. "I think that it's to get a better education, than most of the other varsities or technikons" (A: 7: 3).

## APPENDIX 5

### Detail of Respondent Beth's Constructions.

#### What Beth Constructed:

Beth's first response on being exposed to the advertisement centred on its being *attractive* and *interesting*. "I think it's very, um, attractive, um, especially when you read it, and that, the words and that you want to know more about it, it's interesting" (B: 1: 1). Her response on being questioned on what she meant by attractive revealed that her construction related to her positive reaction to the visual depicting students in casual attire interacting and smiling. "Well, I mean lots of teenagers nowadays, you know, especially with them, walking over here, and they've got their, you know, normal clothes on, teenagers like that ... and everyone is just like smiling and just, ... I don't, know it just comes up, sticks out" (B: 1: 3). Her interest appeared to be a function of the layout employed and the diagonally positioned visual. "Um, I think it's, the way the layouts done and everything is very, very nice, also with the picture, cause it gives an effect of it not being you know straight up being slanted, on one side gives it an effect, so yeah" (B: 1: 6).

She reported that her feelings were positive and that the advertisement prompted a desire to think about trying to find out more about the benefit offered. "Um...mm, it sounds, feelings like, ha, like yeah, like it sounds good you know, just want to like try it or something, and lets have a look and see what its like, you know, just find more about it. Especially if it's a field you want to go into" (B: 1: 4). This comment, whilst reflecting an attractive construct also implies an *interest* in the content of the advertisement.

Responding to questions concerning the layout and copy, Beth's responses revealed a positive construction that included the aspect of *international recognition* and the *affordable rates* as contributing to a motivation to consider the benefit seriously. "For me, it's like, the way they say, you know, internationally recognised marketing qualification, it's like, sounds like a really big thing, you know, so, it makes you want to go and study and also, at the affordable rates and stuff like this especially today's kind of people, and that's, ah, they might want to take a step closer and have a look at it further" (B: 2: 1). Her construction included a positive response to the cues relating to the 'play' aspect depicted in the visual and copy that she construed to be *fun*. "Myself? Um, it sounds very cool, it looks like a lot of fun, especially, and, yeah it sounds like a lot of fun, as well, they, um, yeah, for me its great I think it looks really good" (B: 2: 2).

Probing of the headline gave rise to Beth's construction that life that would be difficult if one did not have a qualification. Her construction included an element of confirmation, that being that an education would result in one being able to embrace and *enjoy a comfortable life*. "Well it means like, you know, without qualification, you haven't really got a life, because it means it means you're gonna battle and everything, but if you get an education you've got a life already, so, you know you go out into the world..." (B: 2: 6). Her construction of a comfortable life related to the material benefits that would follow from being qualified "...so you can actually make quite a lot of money, and you could live a, really comfortable lifestyle" (B: 2: 8).

Beth, on being asked to comment on the first paragraph of copy, focussed on the aspect of exploring one's talents and made use of this cue to provide a construction that centred on *creativity*. "... where it says explore your talents, marketing is a talent and you've got to have like be creative, think, you know creatively and stuff, and yeah, become the person you want to be, with your creativity" (B: 3: 5). Beth's construction of creativity was linked to her construct of success. Success in this instance being related to her desire to reflect her personality in her design expertise. "The person I want to be, I want to be successful. If I went into this field I'd definitely use my creativity, into, you know layouts, everything you make sure everything's, just, you know right, so it reflects on, my personality in a way, you know the way I lay it out the way you know, I design it and everything" (B: 3: 6).

Beth saw the offering in the advertisement to be *exciting*. This was related to the construction of *fun* and the construct that fun and learning go hand in hand. "... its exciting its really exciting, obviously so much fun and everything, you know, you know as they say, get, learn more, play more" (B: 3: 7). She, linked this '*exciting*' construction to her earlier '*creative*' construction to generate a further construction that successful completion of the diploma advertised this would enable one to be *self employed*. "...it's actually a great benefit because you can actually come up and start your own practice, and design your own, products like" (B: 4: 8).

### How Beth Made Her Constructions:

Beth's 'how' constructions emanated from direct probing by the interviewer. Questions put to her revealed that her construction of *attractive* was based on her being able to identify with the frame and cues presented in the advertisement. "Um, it sounds very cool, it looks like a lot of fun, especially, and, yeah it sounds like a lot of fun, as well, they, um, yeah, for me its great I think it looks really good" (B: 2: 2). Probing of her use of the word cool gave a further insight into how this construction came about. "The cool, I think is, meeting, you know, new people, and, being able to wear normal clothes, (giggle) not uniform, and just have a great time with everyone" (B: 2: 3).

How she constructed the *interesting* aspect was revealed by her involvement in the visual and verbal elements incorporated in the layout. "It sounds good you know, just want to like try it or something, and lets have a look and see what its like, you know, just find more about it. Especially if it's a field you want to go into" (B: 1: 4). Her construction, in addition, appeared to be a function of her own interest in design and layout elements. "Um, I think it's, the way the layouts done and everything is very, very nice, also with the picture, cause it gives an effect of it not being you know straight up being slanted, on one side gives it an effect" (B: 1: 6). "The words are, really, made up well, and, the way, it's been, you know, laid down the words and everything it's just, yeah" (B: 1: 8). This was stressed by her response to a question asking her how she would interpret the copy phrase 'become the person you want to be'. "The person I want to be, I want to be successful. If I went into this field I'd definitely use my creativity, into, you know layouts, everything you make sure everything's, just, you know right, so it reflects on, my personality in a way, you know the way I lay it out the way you know, I design it and everything" (B: 3: 6).

Her comments regarding *international recognition* revealed that this construction came about as a result of her view that this made it "...a really big thing" (B: 2: 1). How she constructed in this instance appeared to be facilitated by her regarding this aspect as offering the experience of being exposed to a range of opportunities in the field of marketing. "Well it

offers experience obviously it offers like, a wide range, well, of different marketing fields...” (B: 3: 5) that would be “...internationally recognised overseas throughout the world” (B: 3: 5).

Beth revealed how her construction of affordable was made when she was asked to explain what she meant by her use of the word ‘great’. “Hmm, well great, hmm, I think is like ah, you know, especially, with, the price offer and everything, I think is like really, wow, you know cause, usually, varsities and that, they like, ask for a lot of money, you know, really a lot of money, which not many people can pay” (B: 5: 5).

With respect to *fun* and the *social interaction with others*, Beth clearly made this construction from the visual frame and cues provided in the advertisement. “Um, my thoughts, looking at the picture, is, um, here is the social part of it, and fun, and obviously, you know, pee, people in the picture I believe have got to know each other which is cool, so it’s, you know, nice feeling to get, know that you’re going to meet more people” (B: 5: 6).

How her construction of a *comfortable lifestyle* came about emerged from her replies to a question about the meaning of the headline ‘Get an education, get a life...’ Beth related this to being able to exploit ones own ideas profitably. “Like, if you, decide to advertise or market your own idea that you’ve come up with, and it sells well, and markets well and that so you can actually make quite a lot of money, and you could live a, really comfortable lifestyle” (B: 2: 8).

Beth’s construction of *creativity* and its link to *success* appeared to be triggered by a cue in the body copy of the advertisement that made reference to exploring one’s talents “...where it says explore your talents, marketing is a talent and you’ve got to have like be creative, think, you know creatively and stuff, and yeah, become the person you want to be, with your creativity” (B: 3: 5). Her response on being asked to how she would interpret ‘becoming the person you want to be’ gives a further insight into how the constructs *creativity* and *success* came about. “The person I want to be, I want to be successful. If I went into this field I’d definitely use my creativity, into, you know layouts, everything you make sure everything’s, just, you know right...” (B: 3: 6).

Her expressed desire to embark on a career in which she could make use of her creative talents provides an insight into how the cues presented in the advertisement that offered courses that could facilitate this desire were constructed by Beth to be *exciting*. “Um, and my feelings about the whole thing is great, it sounds really cool to go and study, um, marketing and stuff, cause, for me it’s um, exciting, will be exciting and creative, so people with that kind of creative mind, you know, people really enjoy their artwork and building, and, you know, whatever, you know, something to that effect I think will really enjoy it” (B: 5:3). She became fairly animated in her construct that the course being advertised at the Technikon offered *excitement*. “... it will benefit you what they’re offering at the Technikon, and, its exciting its really exciting, obviously so much fun and everything, you know, you know as they say, get, learn more, play more” (B: 3: 7). On being asked what benefits she was referring to, Beth provided an insight of how she had come to a construction that centred on self-employment. “Well, you know, if you, after the year that you’ve got your diploma and everything it’s actually a great benefit because you can actually come up and start your own practice, and design your own, products like...” (B: 4: 1).

## Why Beth made her Constructions:

Beth's positive comments when asked to explain why she felt the advertisement and the offering presented in it was *attractive* and *interesting* reflected her interest and involvement in the communication. Her comments, in addition, appeared to reinforce why she made these constructions. "Well, um, no everything here, it's on here, almost like a summary of what to do and stuff, and, I think that, yeah, it's the right way of going to study, cause, of the, qualification and certificates and diplomas that's advertised, at the Technikon" (B: 2: 4).

With respect to her 'why' construction of *international recognition* her statement that this "...sounds like a really big thing..." (B: 2: 1), and her statement "...because obviously people from different schools that you've never met in your life before, come here..." (B: 3: 5), revealed that Beth's rationalisation of this construction related to her viewing this as being both prestigious and providing an opportunity to meet with alien students.

Why she constructed the *affordable* aspect was spelt out in her response to a request to summarise the communication provided by the advertisement. "I'd summarise it as being, you know, um, affordable, for parents and stuff, as well as, um, you know, studying what you're able to study, what you want to study for those rates, and, you know, getting a life for yourself so, it's actually a benefit to everyone" (B: 5: 1). An additional 'why' construction was provided when she was asked to explain the meaning of her use of the word 'great'. Her explanation focused on the expensive pricing associated with a tertiary education and ended with her construction that not every institution offers "...value for money, like this, so it gives more opportunity for people who can't afford it, to go and study there" (B: 5: 5).

Why her construction of the *fun* and *socialising* aspect came about was revealed when she was asked mid way through the interview to reiterate any thoughts and feelings that emanated from her exposure to the advertisement. "Um, my thoughts, looking at the picture, is, um, here is the social part of it, and fun, and obviously, you know, pee, people in the picture I believe have got to know each other which is cool, so it's, you know, nice feeling to get, know that you're going to meet more people" (B: 5: 3). When subjected to a direct question as to why she would want to go to Technikon Natal her why construction of *fun* and *socialising* was clearly spelt out. "Because, you know, everything it offers, it sounds really fun, you know, and you can meet a lot of people so it's a new experience a new start to life" (B: 6: 4).

With respect to her construction of *success* and a *comfortable lifestyle*, it appeared that Beth made use of this latter piece of terminology to rationalise and soften her relatively harshly constructed motivation to make money, "...you can actually make quite a lot of money, and you could live a, really *comfortable lifestyle*" (B: 2: 8). This rationalised construction ties in and supports the sense-making principle described by Weick (1995) that sense making is constructed in a manner that takes cognisance of the requirement to be socially acceptable.

Her response to a request to reiterate any further thoughts and feelings conjured up by the advertisement revealed why Beth made her constructions relating to *excitement* and *creativity*. "...my feelings about the whole thing is great, it sounds really cool to go and study, um, marketing and stuff, cause, for me it's um, exciting, will be exciting and creative, so people with that kind of creative mind, you know, people really enjoy their artwork and building, and, you know, whatever, you know, something to that effect I think will really enjoy it" (B: 5: 3).

With respect to her construct of being *self-employed*, Beth, on providing an explanation as to why the advertising communication would prompt one to seek for more information stated that she would find what she was looking for. "...because, it seems like they offer, what, everyone wants to do, and, start business in marketing and advertising" (B: 6: 6). Earlier in the interview her 'why' construction emerged in response to a question relating to the benefits being offered in the advertisement. She explained that once having qualified the benefit that would accrue would be advantageous "...because you can actually come up and start your own practice, and design your own, products..." (B: 4: 1).

### **The Effect Created by Beth's Constructions:**

Whilst Beth had been selected as a respondent based on her having indicated that it was her intention to pursue a career in the field of marketing a remark made in the early stage of the interview indicated that she had not finalised her decision. "I'm, thinking about it, I'm just, yeah, I still haven't made up my mind (*giggle*) yet" (B: 1: 5). Her exposure to the advertisement and the subsequent constructions that emanated from this exposure revealed that the effect created by her constructions was to generate an action. In this instance the action was to consider choosing Technikon Natal should she pursue a career in the field of marketing. This was clearly revealed in her answer to a question enquiring how she would make a decision about which tertiary institution she would choose to study at. "If I was, if I'm like, you know, really concentrate on taking, this field, to study I would want to go here, I, really I would" (B: 6: 3).

On being asked whether she had to ask herself questions in order to answer the questions put to her by the interviewer, Beth affirmed that on being questioned how she would come to a decision about where she would choose to study, she attempted to find a different word to describe and explain her answer. The word she chose was "*mystery*". Beth described the effect of this construction as resulting in her wanting to find out more about the offering presented in the advertisement. "Um ... ah ... it's like, very, you know, um, almost like a, a mystery, because, you wanna, you see the picture over here, and a mystery's usually when people want to find out, you know, what it's about, so I think, looking at the picture and reading, what it's here to offer and that, for me it's like a mystery cause you want to go find out more, and obviously maybe even want to go there, to see, you know, try and find out, more, clues and stuff" (B: 6: 5). This construction together with her comments on being asked what she thought she would find revealed that the effect of her construction was to engage in an action. "I think if, I'd find what I'm looking for, because, it seems like they offer what, everyone wants to do, and, start business in marketing and advertising" (B: 6: 6).

The above constructions also indicate that Beth reframed the frame and cues provided in the advertisement to generate new constructions. The first of these was the generation of a construction that amounted to a high level of *interest*. The effect of this construction was to prompt Beth to try to find out "...more, clues and stuff..." (B: 6: 5). Her interest in design and layout prompted her to express a view that revealed a positive reconstruction and reinforcement of her earlier construction that the advertisement was *attractive*. This was indicated by her final comment about the communication. "I think it's, great layout" (B: 8: 4).

With respect to her construction of international recognition, Beth saw this as being prestigious, "...a really big thing..." (B: 2: 1) that would result in the course attracting people from "...overseas, throughout the world..." (B: 3: 5). This construction gave rise to additional constructions that appeared to combine the facets of *affordability* and *sociability*. She related

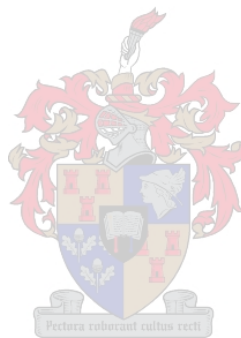
the relatively lower cost of the course on offer to being a motivation to attract foreign students that in turn would give rise to greater social interaction. "...it's affordable for like, a lot of people, and it's internationally recognised overseas throughout the world, like, and, it's nice, because obviously people from different schools that you've never met in your life before, come there, and you're gonna get to know a lot more people..." (B: 3: 5). Implicit in this statement are constructions that allude to action, the lower cost providing a motivation to attract foreign students to the course and the prospect of meeting new people.

Beth's elaboration of her construction of *fun* and *social interaction* that had emerged from her exposure to the advertisement revealed that the effect of these constructs was related to an action that was clearly spelt out as being life enhancing. "Because, you know, everything it offers, it sounds really fun, you know, and you can meet a lot of people so it's a new experience a new start to life" (B: 6: 4).

The *affordable* aspect of her construction embraced a further action. The action in this instance was related to the provision of an opportunity for those who could not afford to enrol at universities because of the expensive nature of these institutions. "Varsities and that, they like, ask for a lot of money, you know, really a lot of money, which not many people pay, you know, and a lot of kids want to go and study after school, to get themselves a life and, not every place that they, you know, offers, you know, value for money, like this, so it gives more opportunity for people who can't afford it, to go and study there" (B: 5: 5). This construct was, in addition, linked to a further action: that being, the opportunity afforded to those who are not well endowed financially to be able to achieve a degree of *success*. "Um, the whole institution, I'd summarise it as being, you know, um, affordable, for parents and stuff, as well as, um, you know, studying what you're able to study, what you want to study for those rates, and, you know, getting a life for yourself so, it's actually a benefit to everyone" (B: 5: 1).

The action component of her construction of *success* was manifold, incorporating elements of *excitement*, *creativity* and the prospect of *self-employment*. Giving a summation of her thoughts and feelings that emanated from her exposure to the advertisement, it emerged that her construction centred on the exciting prospect of being able to study marketing because of the creative component inherent in this pursuit. "...it sounds really cool to go and study, um, marketing and stuff, cause, for me it's um, exciting, will be exciting and creative..." (B: 5: 3). Her *creative* construction alluded to the *success* component in that she formed a link between marketing being a talent that she related to creativity. "...where it says explore your talents, marketing is a talent and you've got to have like be creative, think, you know creatively and stuff, and yeah, become the person you want to be, with your creativity" (B: 3: 5). Her statement regarding becoming the person you want to be was closely related to an action construct concerning gaining an education and getting a life that in turn would facilitate making one's way in the world. "...if you get an education you've got a life already, so, you know you go out into the world..." (B: 2: 6). The effect of the construction outlined above culminated in an action construction that focussed on her construct of *self-employment*. "...after the year that you've got your diploma and everything it's actually a great benefit because you can actually come up and start your own practice, and design your own, products like" (B: 4: 1). She made a further construction related to *success* that incorporated a distinct material benefit. This construction and the action that arose from it was closely related to her *self-employment* construct that encompassed the construction that one could market one's own ideas and, that, if these sold well one could "...make quite a lot of money, and ... could live a really comfortable lifestyle" (B: 2: 8).

An interesting effect that emerged from Beth's construction was the incorporation of a concept that she described as being a *mystery*. She made use of this construct to find out more of what was being presented in the advertisement. It emerged that the frame and cues employed in the advertisement were mysterious or intriguing enough to prompt her to seek out "more clues and stuff".



## APPENDIX 6

### Detail of Respondent Chris's Constructions.

#### What Chris Constructed:

Chris's first construction related to his view that being given the *price* 'up-front' was refreshing since this was seldom done in advertising. "...usually in advertising's they don't give you the price straight way which I, I think is refreshing" (C: 1: 1). He was able to make use of the visual frame to make a construction that the happy countenances displayed reflected an element of *fun* that he believed was a positive aspect. "Um, the pictures, like the, the people look very happy, an ah, they look as if it would be fun to go there so it's a, that's good as well..." (C: 1: 1). On being probed about copy elements making up the advertisement, his construction incorporated the idea that something could be achieved whilst one was having *fun*, "...you can, achieve something, and have fun while you're, achieving something" (C: 1: 2). Questioned as to what he understood by achieving something, he made use of the cue presented in the headline, 'get a life', and made his construction that this related to *success*. "Um, succeeding, um, getting a life, as they put it" (C: 1: 3). Further questioning revealed that his construction of the cue, 'get a life', related to success. His construction of success was to have successful job, be well balanced and have a loving family. "Um, I would think of it as, ah having a success, successful job, um, being well balanced, and having a, loving a family" (C: 1: 4). Following a request to elaborate on the cue 'become the person you want to be' in the body copy Chris provided a further insight into his construction of *success* as being related to the material pursuit of making money. "Being wealthy is very much part of being successful" (C: 2: 6).

The cues provided in the second line of the headline 'learn more, play more' facilitated a further construction that linked fun, learning and success as being integral components of the education on offer from Technikon Natal. "Um, I think the, the advertising immediately tells you that if you come here, if you come to the Technikon Natal that, you're gonna have fun, and, while you're learning you're gonna, be educated, and, that's gonna help you be successful when you're older" (C: 5: 5).

#### How Chris Made His Constructions:

The *price* aspect appeared to be important elements in Chris's sense making. It formed the core of his first construction on exposure to the advertisement. His comment that advertisements do not usually provide information straight away and that he found this to be 'refreshing' gives an insight as to how he made this construction. "...usually in advertising's they don't give you the price straight way which I, I think is refreshing" (C: 1: 1). His immediate focus on price tended to indicate the level of importance for him. His use of the word refreshing appeared to be a method employed by him to reduce any negative association that he might be a bargain hunter.

His rationalisation of the affordable price was also linked to his construction that the communication represented 'good advertising' in that it offered 'free things' which he construed to be a 'good incentive'. "Um, ... it's just good advertising, I think, the way they, they carry, continue offer you, offer you like free things you receive five free textbooks,

everyone likes to see free stuff free IMM membership for a year, and then at the end, it says, ah, if you do very well you get money back, which is ... incentive good incentive” (C: 3: 4).

How Chris’s construction of the *fun* and *socialising* elements came about appeared to be the result of his reframing the visual and verbal frame and cues provided in the advertisement. His construction was based on the observation that the students depicted in the advertisement ‘looked very happy’. His construction was embellished by his comment that the visual frame gave the appearance of a ‘perfect’ scene in the new South Africa reflecting the intermingling of different ethnic groups in a way that reflected that they were having fun. “Um, as I said they all look very happy... looks like um, perfect scene in the new South Africa, um, whites and blacks intermingling and having fun while they do it” (C: 1: 7). The fun component also incorporated a construction of learning and education being enhanced by fun. This ‘how’ construction was clearly underlined by his response to a question posed by the interviewer who enquired how he came to that point of view. Chris’s reply clearly relates to the frame and cues given in the advertisement. “Um, well first of all the picture, the picture of the people, I think they’re supposed to be, um, Technikon Natal students and they look very happy and, um, then there’s ah, get an education involved which, ah, reinforces that you will be getting an education there” (C: 5: 6).

His “how” construction of *success* came about as a result of him being questioned about the kind of person he wanted to be and what he meant by being very successful. It emerged that his resulting construction of how success could be achieved was based on the idea that the course on offer could facilitate an increased earning capacity. “...in today’s society you’re judged very much on how much money you have, and um, like the more money you have the more successful you are, you’re viewed as, so, so you let it, it could help you earn lots of money...” (C: 2: 6).

### Why Chris Made His Constructions:

Chris’s construction of the price aspect was that it enabled one to assess early on whether one could afford the offering presented in the advertisement. “Um, its good to have a rough idea of what you’ll be paying, what we will be paying if, if you, you’ll know straight away if you can afford it” (C: 3: 4). This construction, that was made in conjunction with a construction that reflected an approval of the receipt of free items irrespective of what these were provides an insight into Chris’s thrifty nature and the motivation that facilitated why this construction came about. “Well I think um, people like to, like to have stuff for free, they like to think they are getting things for free, and anything, um I don’t think it’s so much that, you’re getting free textbooks, it’s, or free IMM mem, membership, it’s just that you’re getting something for free” (C: 3: 5).

His *fun* construction and the link made by him that having fun would be an integral part of receiving an education was revealed by his answer to a question asking him to explain why he felt that was the case. “Um, the, the picture again, the, how they look so happy that, um, ... that they, they look not stressed they, they look like the way they’re getting an education is, is relaxed and though, even though they are getting an education, it’s fun as well” (C: 5: 7).

Why Chris made his *success* construction to reflect a distinct material bias appeared to be a result of his construct of society and the tendency of society as constructed by him to base its judgement of an individual’s worth on the amount of money that that individual could

generate. "... in today's society you're judged very much on how much money you have, and um, like the more money you have the more successful you are" (C: 2: 6).

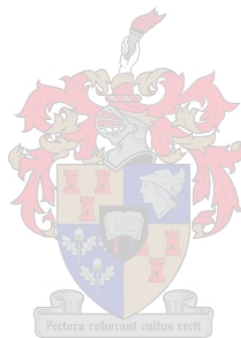
### The Effect Created by Chris's Constructions:

The *pricing* cues presented in the advertising communication appeared to be of particular significance in providing an insight into the effect created by Chris's construction. When asked what questions he had to ask himself in order to answer questions put to him by the researcher his construction was that it was like an English test where one was required to "...look deeper into the questions ... to answer them properly..." (C: 4: 4). When requested to provide an example of this process he made use of the cost cues provided in the last paragraph. His construction, in this instance, incorporated the idea that a reply to a question inquiring how the paragraph would appeal to readers would refer to how unusual but how refreshing it was for the advertiser to provide the price. "...how does this appeal to the readers, or something like that, and, um, say that it's un, unusual but it's refreshing that they do say it, how much money it is" (C: 4: 6).

The unambiguous *price* cues presented in the advertisement appeared to enable Chris to make a positive construction of the communication. The action component of this construction referred to one being in a position to know what one would be required to pay. This in turn gave rise to Chris's developing a construction that the advertisement was 'good' and 'effective'. "Um, I think it's good advertising the way they, they show people, ... um, the way that they do show you the price straight off, so you have a rough idea of what you'll be paying, um, ...yeah, I think it's effective overall" (C: 6: 1). His positive construction relating to price and the advertising being 'good' was further embellished by the cues provided in the communication that offered additional 'free' benefits. "...ah, the, the offer of free things, mentioning free things at the end is, is good advertising" (C: 6: 2). A further effect created by his *price* construction was the link to *fun* and the construct that an environment that exhibited an element of *fun would facilitate learning*. Evidence of these constructions and their effect were provided by Chris's response to a query concerning his thoughts and feelings towards the visual and headline copy elements. "Ah, again I, it's like, if you come here you'll learn, and, you'll, you'll have fun while you're learning, that's the way I see it" (C: 2: 1). "Um, ... ah, you can come and learn, can come and play, and it doesn't cost that much" (C: 2: 2). Both replies indicate that his constructions were action orientated in that they linked a learning process to being facilitated by an environment where fun and enjoyment were evident.

His construction of *success* and its close association with the generation of money was closely associated with a further construction that was based on a cue provided in the body copy. This cue described the courses advertised as offering 'real benefits'. Chris's 'action' construction emanating from this cue was that the benefits offered amounted to students gaining a superior education than if they studied elsewhere. "...the level of, education there, that, um, if you really take that course the benefits of the teaching would be there than if you went somewhere else" (C: 2: 8). A further 'action' construction that arose from this benefit was that it, the superior education, would in turn result in 'better' marks. These marks, he construed, would make it easier to secure a job and improve one's chances of being successful. He verbalised this construction on being questioned on what he believed the benefits would be of the teaching. "Um, will get better marks, and it will be easier to find a job when your older, which just makes you, gives you a better chance of being more successful" (C: 3: 2).

The frame and cues provided in the advertisement appeared to enable Chris to make an active construction, the effect of which was, to use his word, enticive [enticing]. “Um, ... I think ah, first if you look at the picture you’ll think that you’re seeing happy people, and, um, that it’s a good environment at the Technikon, which is always enticive. Then, um, the bold prints telling you how, how you can get an education in, today’s world, everyone wants an education cos that’s very important, um, basically, I think it’s, when you look at it you’re enticed” (C: 4: 2).



## APPENDIX 7

### Detail of Respondent Dave's Constructions.

#### What Dave Constructed:

Dave appeared to experience a level of difficulty in forming constructions. He did not express himself with confidence and could not provide much depth to the answers to questions posed to him. His initial construction appeared to be focused on the visual frame presented in the advertisement that he found to be *attractive*. "Um, I think it's very attractive" (D: 1: 1). He also expressed the view that he found the *volume of copy* in the advertisement to be *excessive*. "...there's a bit too much writing" (D: 1: 1). His construction nevertheless reflected that he found the advertisement to be a positive communication. "Um, I think it's, quite a good ad." (D: 1: 3). This positive construction came into being based on the level and *relevance of the information* provided. "Um, it's got like all the relevant information you need like it's ah price, um it's got for further information, the number you must call, and it tells you, a bit about the Technikon" (D: 1: 4).

His constructions appeared to be focussed on a concern that the advertisement, in copy terms, *provided too much information*. "Um, well I feel the advert should be short, quick, like straight to the point, but it's got a whole lot of, um, just information here that, you don't really need to know..." (D:1: 9). This construction also revealed that *pricing* was *not* a particularly *important* consideration for him. "...it should just say like, maybe just the price, um, like here it tells you how you can get let off, ah, get less, so you pay less..." (D: 1: 9).

Dave's construction of *fun* was based on the coloured visual frame. "...everyone's having fun, they're smiling..." (D: 2: 1). His re-construction of the visual frame and cues depicting students was to the effect that they were in an environment that that was *non discriminatory* and which facilitated both sexes and a range of ethnic groups. "...you can see by the picture that, um, co-ed cos like guys and girls here and there whites and blacks, so, very, neutral" (D: 2: 1).

His constructions based on the verbal cues given in the headline, 'Get an education, get a life' related to an education enabling one to continue and *improve on one's life*. "... it's like saying, you need an education to carry on with your life, to become, better at what you do" (D: 2: 5). His next construction based on his admission that he enjoyed sport, together with the sub-headline cues, 'Learn more, play more', was that he could *play sport whilst learning*. "Um, oh, well I enjoy sport and stuff but I sat learn more play more, it's like saying, giving me, saying to me I can play sport while learning as well" (D: 2: 7).

Dave's constructions appeared to verge on the cynical. On being requested to comment on body copy elements his responses indicated that his constructs focused on the *excessive length of the copy* "... but it's, I don't know, a bit long winded" (D: 2: 9), and that the words were attempting to *persuade* people. "...kinda you know, like try and catch you" (D: 2: 9). "...the words attract people" (D: 3: 1). His construction of the verbal cue in the first paragraph of copy 'become the person you want to be' was to the effect that this was obvious, "...obviously everyone wants to be the person they want to be, it's obvious" (D: 3: 1). He however made a further construction that *being the person one wanted to be related to*

*gaining a marketing qualification*. "...they, saying that you'll get, that you'll get a qualification, marketing qualification" (D: 3: 1).

Dave's construction from the cues provided in the second paragraph of body copy was that the qualifications on offer would *enable one to get ahead of others* entering the field of marketing. "...you'll be one step ahead" (D: 3: 3).

His construction of the price cues, provided in the third paragraph of body copy, revealed a fairly limited and conservative construction relating to *the free elements on offer*. "...you can get off, like some money off and, that, which is good" (D: 3: 5). His construction in this instance again reflected a concern for the amount of information provided, and that *information concerning free elements on offer could be gleaned by simply phoning in*. "...it shouldn't say all that, like you can phone in to find that out" (D: 3: 5).

With respect to the cues provided in the baseline copy, 'Educating people for the real world', Dave made a construction from these cues that revealed that, for him, one needed to be educated in order to be *prepared for the rigor's experienced in the world outside of school*. "...the real world, its very hard and its saying it's educating you for that so, like you'll be ready for it" (D: 3: 6).

### How Dave Made His Constructions:

Dave's construction of *attractive* appeared to come about as a result of cues presented in the coloured visual frame which he described as looking "good" and facilitating a focus on the headline copy. "...the photo looks good, like drag down, it pulls you towards the write, the, highlighted writing here..." (D: 1: 2). His *fun* construction also appeared to be elicited by the visual cues presented which included students being dressed in casual clothing and smiling. "Um, they very free dressed um, like you can see they just dressed the way they want to be, ... ah, ... yeah, ... they're having fun" (D: 2: 2).

How his construction of *information* came about appeared to be related to his concern that there was too much copy in the advertisement. He tended to focus on the shorter second paragraph and the cues provided therein to come to his construction. "...its like, very, short and quick, saying the certificate you can get ... yeah that's, that's the kind of thing I was talking about short, quick, straight to the point, tells you exactly what you can get" (D: 3: 2). His 'how' construction of *information* also appeared to take into account the cues presented in the bottom right hand boxed copy that spelt out in relatively succinct terms how to get further information via telephone and e-mail. "...they've got, all the, script here, they've got everything here, like, if you want to contact them, they've got the e-mail address or they've got two e-mail addresses, um, the, phone number, everything, so its good..." (D: 4: 6).

How he came to his relatively low-key construction of *price* was possibly a reflection of his desire to have information provided in a way that was to the point and unencumbered. "...it's got a whole lot of, um, just information here that, you don't really need to know it should just say like, maybe just the price..." (D: 1: 9). How his pricing construction was downplayed was also revealed by his relatively dismissive comments regarding the pricing cues provided in the third paragraph. "Ah, this is just telling you um, how much it costs, ... ah, like how you can get off, like some money off..." (D: 3: 5).

His re-framing of the verbal cues provided in the bold headline copy ‘Get an education, get a life’, provide an insight as to how he developed his construction relating to *improving ones life*. “...it’s like saying, you need an education to carry on with your life, to become, better at what you do...” (D: 2: 5). His involvement in sport provided an insight into how this part of his make-up together with the cues provided in sub-headline, ‘learn more, play more, pay less’, were re-framed and incorporated into a construction. This construction centred on *playing sport whilst learning*.

Dave’s answers to questions concerning the second paragraph of copy that contained cues relating to the qualifications on offer and their benefits revealed how he came to his construction. His construction was that the benefits would amount to one *being superior to others entering the field of marketing*. “...it’s going to get you, above the rest, of whoever’s going for that, that field” (D: 3: 3). His answer to a query relating to his understanding of the baseline provided an insight as to how he made use of the cues, ‘educating people for the real world’, to made his construction that an education would *prepare one for the rigor’s experienced in the world outside of school*. “...that’s very appealing, cos, like everyone’s talking about one day at school you go into the big wide world, the real world, its very hard and its saying it’s educating you for that so, like you’ll be ready for it” (D: 3: 6).

### Why Dave Made His Constructions:

Why Dave made his constructions in the manner that he did appeared to be a function of his requirement to keep things “... short, quick, straight to the point...” (D: 3: 2) and limit the verbal content, “I just think there’s too much writing” (D: 4: 1). This together with his apparent focus on what he described as the “full colour” visual frame and its inherent cues of colour and smiling students provide an explanation as to why he made his constructions of *attractiveness* and *fun*. “... it’s very catchy cos its like full colour, its, everyone’s having fun, they’re smiling...” (D: 2: 1). His response when requested to provide a summary of his thoughts and feelings towards the communication being discussed appeared to confirm why his constructions came about. “...very attractive, with the colour and everything, um, the bold writing really stands out very well, so it’s a, a value, how much it costs that’s all, that’s written in bold so it also stands up well...” (D: 4: 1). With respect to why Dave made his construction relating to there being too much copy in respect *information*, it was clear that he would have favoured shorter, more explicit cues in this regard. “Um, well I feel the advert should be short, quick, like straight to the point, but it’s got a whole lot of, um, just information here that, you don’t really need to know” (D: 1: 9).

His price construction came about in a manner that reflected that this was not a particularly important consideration for him. His response to the cues provided in the headline ‘learn more, play more pay less’ and subsequent answer as to why he thought it was a good slogan revealed that his construction was based on one having to *pay less to have more time available*. “Um, you get more time on your hands for less money” (D: 1: 7). He dismissed cues presented in the body copy concerning free benefits and price reductions as simply adding to the excessive amount of information provided. This dismissal tended to confirm why his construction of price was not a priority “...like here it tells you how you can get let off, ah, get less, so you pay less, but they, don’t really need to say that cause you can just call and find that out there” (D: 1: 9). Other comments made by him concerning price and free elements provided further evidence as to why his construction was dismissive in nature. “...it should just say that it costs seven and a half thousand Rand it shouldn’t say like, you know,

for A symbol you receive eight hundred Rand off, and, if you pay in full you get five free textbooks it shouldn't say all that, like you can phone in to find that out".

Why he came to his construction of *improving ones life* based on the cues provided in the headline copy, 'Get an education, get a life' appeared to be related to a need expressed by him "to become better at what you do" (D: 2: 5). Cues provided in the sub-headline, 'Learn more, play more, pay less' together with Dave's sporting orientation and relative lack of concern for the cost of the offering provide an insight as to why he developed his construction that centred on *playing sport whilst learning*. "Um, oh, well I enjoy sport and stuff but I sat learn more play more, it's like saying, giving me, saying to me I can play sport while learning as well" (D: 2: 7).

Dave's involvement in sport, a relatively competitive activity, together with the need expressed by him that one should strive to get ahead of others provide an insight into why he made his construction from the cues presented in the second paragraph of copy. This construction amounted to him regarding the marketing courses on offer as enabling one to *be superior to others entering the field of marketing*. "...it's going to get you, above the rest, of whoever's going for that, that field" (D: 3: 3).

Why he made his construction that an education would *prepare one for the rigor's experienced in the world outside of school* appeared to be a result of preconceived constructs of what was in store for one on leaving school. The cues presented in the baseline, 'Educating people for the real world', provide an insight as to why he employed these cues to re-construct his earlier construction. This appeared to be undertaken in a manner that would facilitate his 'new' construction. "...everyone's talking about one day at school you go into the big wide world, the real world, its very hard and its saying it's educating you for that so, like you'll be ready for it" (D: 3: 6).

### The Effect Created by Dave's Constructions:

Dave's *attractive* and *fun* constructions based on the visual frame appeared to enable him to develop a positive rapport with the communication. This resulted in his describing the advertisement in terms it being, "...quite a good ad." (D: 1: 3). The coloured photographic frame prompted the development of constructions that had the effect of enabling him to easily identify with the students depicted. Their smiling countenances and casual clothing prompted him to comment that it was "...very catchy cos its like full colour..." (D: 2: 1). His construction included a positive reference that they were, "...dressed the way they want to be, ... ah, ... yeah ... they're having fun" (D: 2: 2). When asked whether he would like to be part of that group, his emphatic response, "Yeah" (D: 2: 3), confirmed his construction to be positive and action orientated.

The body copy elicited constructions that indicated that Dave favoured more *direct and focussed communications*. His responses to questions relating to copy aspects revealed constructions that indicated that the copy approach adopted in the communication served to annoy him by providing too much information. "...there's a bit too much writing I think, should be short and quick." (D: 1: 1). The effect of his construction appeared to be partly a result of him not being overtly concerned with financial aspects. His response to a query about why he felt there were 'too many words' was that there was "...just information here that, you don't really need to know it should just say like, maybe just the price" (D: 1: 9). That he was not particularly concerned with pricing matters was revealed in his construction

“...like here it tells you how you can get let off, ah, get less, so you pay less, but they, don’t really need to say that...” (D: 1: 9). His construction in this instance ended with an action construct that reflected that the effect of this construction was the *choice of an alternative form of communication*, “...they don’t really need to say that cause you can just call and find that out there” (D: 1: 9).

The effect of his price constructions was to reveal that this was not a particularly onerous concern for him. His construction that arose from cues provided in the sub-headline ‘Learn more, play more, pay less’, illustrated that the effect that this construction created was one that the lower price enabled one to have *more time for less money*. “Um, you get more time on your hands for less money” (D: 1: 7).

Cues provided in the second paragraph of copy, that related to the benefits that would accrue to those entering the field of marketing, elicited an action construction from Dave. The effect of this construction was that the courses offered at the Technikon would elevate ones standing relative to others entering the field of marketing “...you’ll be one step ahead” (D: 3: 3).

It appeared that exposure to the advertisement and the constructions made by Dave from the frame and cues provided in this communication served in some measure to settle a ‘conflict of interests’ for him. Answering the question as to whether he had asked himself questions before being able to answer, his response provided an insight into Dave’s construction of the dilemma facing him. It appeared that he made use of the coloured visual frame and headline copy cues to reframe whether or not he wanted to attend the Technikon course, and get an education or take a year off. “ Um, like, ah, when you saying, um, you ask about the picture I said to myself, like, do I want to go to this Technikon, like, to meet the same sort of people and stuff like that, and, get an education get a life, see my days, as well, like, um, do I want to, have a gap year, or just go straight into education so you can be ready for the world” (D: 4: 4).

His final construction of the advertising communication clearly provided an action component that prompted his final response that he regarded the communication to be very good and would definitely make further inquiries. “Um, ah, its very good, ah, ... yeah ... I’d definitely want to phone, to find out more” (D: 4: 7).

## APPENDIX 8

### Detail of Respondent Eric's Constructions.

#### What Eric Constructed:

Eric's construction after his first viewing of the advertisement was that the Technikon *provided a feeling of safety and assurance*, "...you get a feeling of safety if you go here, sort of ... you feel assured that it's a good place to go" (E: 1: 1). He made use of the copy cues in the first paragraph to form a construction from the communication that it provided a *welcoming and personal* environment. "You're like welcome to come, ... its like quite personal in a way.(E: 1: 2). Cues provided in the visual, headline and sub-headline enabled Eric to make a construction that the *education* provided would be provided in a *less formal* context. "Makes you aware that you'll get an education ... um, ... it doesn't make it look like they're strict place..." (E: 1: 7).

Cues provided in the copy making up the first paragraph appeared to enable Eric to make a construction that the Technikon, apart from being a welcoming, personal and relatively free environment also offered one the opportunity for *self-development*. "Makes you feel welcome by making new friends, explore your talents, ... makes you feel free, things put an expression in there, by the team, kind of person you want to be..." (E: 2: 4).

Eric's construction of the cues provided in the third paragraph of copy was that by *revealing the price* one would *not be subject to any embarrassment* that might arise by having to phone in to enquire what the cost of the course would be. "Well its nice to show, they showing the price so you not like embarrassed to phone to find out..." (E: 3: 1).

His construction that made use of cues presented in the baseline 'Educating people for the real world' revealed that his construction of the *real world* was that it *was an uncaring environment*. His response to a question relating to what he understood by the term the 'real world' was a single word "Harsh" (E: 3: 5). His construction included the idea that the Technikon was *educating and preparing one to cope*. "...that shows that they can prepare you for that, educating you for it" (E: 3: 6).

Eric, on being asked to offer up any additional thoughts that he might have had concerning the communication, made a construction that the *marketing elements* of the advertisement were *not given enough emphasis*, "...it doesn't show you what the things about ... the marketing should be made bigger..." (E: 4: 5).

#### How Eric Made His Constructions:

How Eric made his construction that the Technikon appeared to *provide a feeling of safety and assurance* was revealed in his response to a query from the interviewer regarding the picture. He explanation revealed that how he arrived at this construction was based on the friendship and lack of discrimination portrayed in the visual frame. "Well you can see all the people are close together they're friends, and they're different races, so you know there's no discrimination at the place ... its... lovely" (E: 1: 4). How he made *his welcoming and personal* construction was based on cues provided in the first paragraph of copy. His 'how' construction in this instance was clearly conveyed in his statement relating to this paragraph..

“... the writing it like gives you a feeling, that, you’re like welcome to come” (E: 1: 2). Eric provided further evidence of how this construction came about in his explanation, “...they care about you as a person...” (E: 2: 7).

His construction that the *education* was *less formal* was based on cues provided in the visual, headline and sub-headline. How he made this construction appeared to come about by the sense of freedom conveyed by the visual and copy cues presented in the communication. “Well it doesn’t look like it’s, like a army camp, it looks like its freedom to play more” (E: 2: 1).

How Eric made his construction that the Technikon would facilitate *self development* appeared to be a result of his re-framing the frame and cues provided in the visual and copy content making up the first paragraph. “Well it lets you choose, what you want to become” (E: 2: 5). His comments that one would “...feel special...” (E: 2: 6), and “...feel like welcome as a person.” (E: 2: 6), provide further insight as to how this construction came about.

How he made his construction concerning *price not being an embarrassing factor* was revealed in his statement that the price was constant, the implication appearing to be that one was provided with a clear idea of the cost involved and would not need to make further enquiries. “...the price, its fixed so you know, its like, doesn’t fluctuate and that so you can just go there...” (E: 3: 3).

How his construction that the Technikon was *educating and preparing one to cope in the uncaring world* was revealed by his explanation of his use of the term harsh. “...the real world sees you just as a person, just they don’t care about you...” (E: 3: 6). The aspect of how this construction included the idea that the Technikon was preparing one to cope was made clear by his statement “... here they’re preparing you to meet that” (E: 3: 6).

Eric’s concern that the Institute of Marketing emblem and logo were small and difficult to see provide an insight as to how he came to his construction that *marketing elements were not given enough emphasis*. “Like that little badge, institute of marketing, you don’t really see that” (E: 4: 4).

## Why Eric Made His Constructions:

When asked to explain why he made his construction that the Technikon appeared to *provide a feeling of safety and assurance* Eric referred to the cues provided in the visual frame as indicating a feeling of closeness whilst the cues in the body copy of the first paragraph were regarded by him to be welcoming. “Well its all these people walking here, you feel like they’re close ...and the writing it like gives you a feeling, that, you’re like welcome to come” (E: 1: 2). An explanation as to why he made his *welcoming and personal* construction came about when he explained why being welcomed was important, “...you feel like special, you don’t feel like you just a, a statistic to them you feel that you an individual, that they care about you as a person...” (E: 2: 7).

Why he made his construction that the *education* provided at the Technikon was *less formal* was based on his use of cues from the headline and sub-headline that he explained. “ Makes you aware that you’ll get an education ...um, ... it doesn’t make it look like they’re strict place” (E: 1: 7).

Why Eric made his construction that the Technikon would facilitate *self development* was conveyed in his answer to a question posed by the interviewer enquiring as to what he understood by the copy statement ‘...become the person you want to be...’. Eric’s response, that one would be offered choices and not be subject to being moulded, provided an insight as to why he made this construction. “Well it lets you choose, what you want to become and not, like, moulding you, in what they want you to be...” (E: 2: 5).

Why Eric made his construction concerning the *price being revealed and thereby preventing any embarrassment* that might arise as a result of ones having to phone in to find out the costs was revealed in his statement. “...you know what you’re paying and you can work it out without having seen any, seen costs” (E: 3: 3). His apparent concern with pricing levels and affordability provided a further insight into why he made this construction. “Because not many people can afford it...” (E: 4: 8).

Why he made the construction that the Technikon was *educating and preparing one to cope in the uncaring world* was apparently linked to his view that the world was “harsh” (E: 3: 5), and that one would be looked after and given the necessary education at the Technikon. “...so its nice to see that you, you’re looked after here now you’re going out to where you just by yourself alone, you know, that shows that they can prepare you for that, educating you for it” (E: 3: 6).

Why Eric made his construction that *marketing elements were not given enough emphasis*, related to his concern that if one could not easily see what the communication was about, it would not be read. “... if it doesn’t show you what the things about you’re not going to really feel like reading about ...” (E: 4: 5).

### **The Effect Created by Eric’s Constructions:**

The effect of the construction relating to the *provision of a feeling of safety and assurance* appeared to be that Technikon Natal could provide an environment that Eric would feel at home in. His “action” re-construction of the frames and cues employed in the advertisement appeared to enable him to make a positively orientated construction that the Technikon was a happy place “They look happy there...” (E: 1: 5), free from discrimination and that it catered for a young people of both sexes. “Yeah its like there’s no discrimination at the place, they’re all, together, ... females and males ...well they’re all the same age” (E: 1: 6). These action constructions appeared to come about mainly from the visual frame and cues provided in the advertisement. “I think that the, the picture, actually, much describes the place by itself, showing the friendliness of the people...” (E: 4: 8).

His construction that the Technikon was a *welcoming and personal* environment had the effect of creating, for Eric, that it was a place where one would be treated as an individual and rather than simply as a group member. “...you don’t feel like you just a, a statistic to them you feel that you an individual, ... not as like a group of people” (E: 2: 7) His construction also had the effect of providing him with a sense of caring that “...they care about you as a person” (E: 2: 7), and of being made to feel special “...so you feel special” (E: 2: 6).

The effect of his construction that the *education* provided was *less formal* appeared to be linked to Eric’s requirement to move out of the relatively ordered and disciplined school system. “...it doesn’t look like its, like a army camp” (E: 2: 1). This construction also revealed that he needed to move on and start making his own decisions. “...you don’t want to

have to, be, like told, to what to do cos you're old now you want to, be able to do your own thing" (E: 2: 2). The effect of his construction, it can therefore be concluded, was to provide him with a sense that the educational environment offered at the Technikon would offer him a degree of freedom.

The effect created by Eric's construction of *self development* appeared to be related to his desire to be free from controlling or "moulding" influences and to be able to move out of the confining school environment. Evidence of this requirement was provided in his statements concerning no longer being told what to do, "...you don't want to have to, be, like told, to what to do" (E: 2: 2), and his view that at the Technikon they "... let you come out your shell, be your own, person" (E: 2: 5).

Eric's construction that the because the price was revealed, no embarrassment would be caused by having to phone in to establish what these would be appeared to be a result of his having limited financial resources. His comment that the word free served to gain attention and that a good matric result would equate to a price reduction appeared to confirm this. "... word use free, ...get, gets your attention, and by this achieve a symbol in matric exams achieve eight hundred Rand discount. That's a lot better..." (E: 3: 1). His positive comments concerning free textbooks also indicate that his finances could well have been limited. "Well its nice to see you get free books cos I know, I know books, textbooks at college and that is expensive, very expensive..." (E: 3: 3).

The effect created by Eric's construction that the Technikon was *educating and preparing one to cope in the uncaring world* was that high school was not preparing one for the rigors of the real world, "... high school's not really preparing you for it" (E: 3 5), but that the education offered at the Technikon would provide the necessary guidance "...shows that they can prepare you for that, educating you for it..." (E: 3: 6).

The effect created by Eric's construction that *marketing elements were not given enough emphasis* was that he did not appear to be able to make any constructions relating to marketing as a career. This was revealed by his comment, "...you wouldn't see actual, it's made for marketing, the subject" (E: 4: 5). It was also evident by his lack of, what appeared to be, relevant comment on aspects of the second paragraph, that specifically made mention of the marketing courses on offer, that the effect of his construction was to diminish his making of marketing constructs. His apparent inappropriate response to the copy cues provided in the second paragraph appeared to support this assessment. "Well it feels like they care for you by saying determined to enter the exciting field ... so, they feel like, you friends or something because they want to help you, and you want to help them..." (E: 2: 8).