

**COMMODIFICATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS:  
A STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL'S CORPORATE ADVERTISING  
CAMPAIGN.**

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**A RESEARCH ESSAY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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(Course Work and a 25% Research Article)**

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## **DECLARATION.**

I, Tokunbo Oyedemi, do hereby declare that the work presented in this study is my own. Any work done by other people has been duly acknowledged. No part of this work has been submitted for a previous degree.

Graduate Programme for Cultural and Media Studies

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Sign .....

### **DEDICATION**

This research essay is dedicated to my parents, brothers and sisters, though thousands of kilometres away, their prayers have been a great source of inspiration and confidence in my pursuit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This essay has been made possible through the efforts and assistance of various individuals, and to them all, I say a big 'thank you'.

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My Lord, **Jesus Christ**, with whom all things are possible

## Abstract

Following the global 'capitalisation' of public institutions, academic institutions have embarked continuously on a drive towards 'marketisation' and commodification of their services. Tertiary institutions are utilising aggressive marketing strategies and media campaigns to attract students. This study examines the advertising campaign embarked on by the University of Natal in 1998/1999. This is a first stage of a two-tier marketing strategy, and it involves brand-building the University. This research assesses the University of Natal's advertising campaign both on radio and in print, it analyses the campaign from creative conceptualisation to media exposure, while giving a brief background to advertising and commodification trends among tertiary institutions in South Africa.

Eric Michaels' (1990) proposal of a circular message transmission model called 'hermeneutic circle' (12-28) of a teleported text serves as the theoretical backdrop for the assessment of the conceptualisation process to the media exposure of the campaign.

A semiotic analysis of the University of Natal's advertising campaign is also given and located within a particular context in the 'hermeneutic circle'. Various focus group discussions were conducted: one comprising mainly white students from Pinetown Girls High School in Standard Nine; the second, mainly Indian students in their matric year at Queensburgh High School. The others comprised of black students from Ferndale Secondary School, Phoenix, but who reside in KwaMashu, and also black students from Amangwane High School in Bergeville, near Ladysmith. One on one interviews were also conducted with high school students. Most of these students were in Standard Nine with some completing their matric year. These discussions were conducted separately to avoid any kind of intimidation and domination of the discussions by students from the private schools who are more fluent in the command of the English language. The other group comprised of an alumnus, a parent, four students – two local and two international, and two staff members of the University. Their comments provide information in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign as well as the evaluation of the campaign concepts and contents in correlation with the cultural contexts of the target

groups. The group discussions also provide insight into the reception and perception of the campaign.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANNCR	ANNOUNCER
AIDS	ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME
FTE	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
FVO	FEMALE VOICE-OVER
HIV	HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS
I.T	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LSB	LINDSAY SMITHERS BOND
MCSD	MICROSOFT CERTIFIED SOLUTION DEVELOPER
MCSE	MICROSOFT CERTIFIED SYSTEMS ENGINEER
MVO	MALE VOICE-OVER
R.O.P	RUN-ON-PAPER
SABC	SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION
SARFU	SOUTH AFRICAN RUBGY FEDERATION UNION
SFX	SOUND EFFECTS
SLE	SENIOR LECTURER EQUIVALENT
TRANNIES	TRANSPARENCIES
UNISA	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

# PART I

## ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN TRENDS AMONG TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

*...the process of commodification has been extended to institutional areas such as public education... Declines in economic growth and the rightward shift in political power have prompted funding cutbacks for public information institutions such as libraries and public schools, prompting a turn to once unthinkable alternatives... (Mosco 1998: 153).*

### Defining advertising

Advertising has evolved through generations and it has generated different forms, formats and contents. In simple terms, advertising can be regarded as a strategy to sell products and services. In the explanatory memorandum on the draft directive on misleading and unfair advertising, proposed by the Commission of the European Economic Committee to the council of the member states, advertising was defined as “an integral part of the system of mass production and distribution, serving the general public” (Murdock & Janus 1984: 9). While this definition seems apt, it only gives a descriptive position to advertising as part of mass production and distribution processes. It does not give an insight into what advertising does within these processes. Advertising can be defined as a paid, non-personal communication of information about certain products and services by a sponsor through the mass media in an effort to persuade, change or influence behaviour. It is paid because large amounts of money are involved in the advertising process: the advertisers pay the advertising agency and the agency in turn pays the media institutions. These institutions to a large degree depend on income from advertising. It is non-personal because it is directed at a group or mass of people in a given or largely dispersed location, even when it gives the illusion of a personal communication (direct marketing). This illusion is what Judith Williamson describes as “part of the deceptive mythology of

advertising" (1985: 17)). For the purpose of this research article, I will draw on a definition by Graham Murdock and Noreene Janus as this suits the thrust of this essay: "In its broadest sense, advertising covers all the ways that individuals and organisations publicise the goods and services that they have to offer, and promote a positive image of themselves" (1984: 9). Promoting a positive image of themselves translates to an effort in increasing their income base, and invariably, the process of advertising is employed.

### **The South African experience: Issues leading to commodification and advertising trends**

In broad terms advertising campaign trends amongst tertiary institutions in the country are a resultant effect of a society (the world in general) totally enshrined in capitalist manoeuvrings. Academic institutions have to advertise aggressively to secure a share of the competitive educational market. This trend is also as a result of the commodification process that is rapidly changing the operations of public tertiary institutions. Commodification involves "the process of turning use values into exchange values, of transforming products whose value is determined by their ability to meet individual and social needs into products whose value is set by what they can bring in the marketplace" (Mosco 1998: 143-144). Vincent Mosco argues that commodification is implicit in the discussions of the process of capitalist expansion; it ranges widely to include the global extension of the market, the privatisation of public space, and also the massive growth of exchange value in interpersonal life (ibid.). Implications following from Mosco's definition of capitalism and the commodification process have a direct bearing on the functioning direction of public education. There are various academic products on offer to potential students and tertiary institutions have to advertise aggressively to recruit their market share. Education is then presented primarily in terms of exchange value: a degree is seen as a commodity that can be exchanged for lucrative employment, rather than its traditional use-value as an opportunity for personal and academic growth.<sup>1</sup> Eve Bertelsen notes that: "the commodification of higher education to serve the market is

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<sup>1</sup> Mason A. Paper presented for seminar three of the Political Economy of the Media post-graduate class, Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal. 2000.

revolutionising our entire practice, from institutional image through to managements, jobs and curriculum” (2000: 4). The opening citation from Mosco (1998) gives an insight into the commodification process as it relates to ‘public’ institutions. From this, I will attempt to analyse some of the critical issues that have led to advertising trends among tertiary institutions, especially the universities. Some of these issues are: income generation; the information technology revolution; on-line education; increasing growth of private tertiary institutions; redefining image in a post-apartheid ambience; and the competition between the technikons and universities arising from the recruitment of students. These are some of the contributing developments that have led to competition amongst universities and their aggressive marketing drives. I will now endeavour to analyse these issues.

### **Income generation**

The process of commodification has become an overriding trend among universities in their effort to generate income. University faculties generate income in three major ways: through registration/tuition fees, through government subsidies for registered students and through research publications. To ensure viability, universities have to admit quite a substantial amount of students to generate funds from fees. This notwithstanding, the calibre of students matters as the government subsidy is based on number of students that pass to the next level. A faculty can assess its financial viability by calculating the rand value of its income from 'full time equivalent' students (FTEs) and the cost of its staff, usually rendered in 'Senior Lecturer equivalent' units (SLEs). In other words, a full-time student who passes an academic year of study has a subsidy value of one FTE, so invariably a student passing five courses from different departments shares the FTE among those departments, bringing 0.2 to each. A full time Honours student completing the course in a year brings in one full FTE to the department (Licindorf 2000: 5). Generating income from students fees is one reason to attract considerable number of entrants. International students, mainly from the West provide a substantial amount of income to the universities, since their fees are calculated in foreign currency (usually U.S Dollars). For example, the University of Natal has announced that for the year 2000,

international students from outside the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region are required to pay (U.S) \$4,000 as tuition fee per annum (University of Natal, Student Fees 2000). Prior to this, both local and international students pay a parity rate with an additional international students levy for non South African students. Although this is a global trend, the University failed to realise the impact of this development to the institution. An African student who comes from outside the SADC region is expected to pay same amount as an American student. The point is, for this African student to pay about (U.S)\$7,000 - (U.S)\$8,000 (which includes some other additional university cost such as residence, stationery and so on) to study in South Africa, he would rather study in America or Europe. This development would undoubtedly affect the University in some ways. For instance the University boasts of students from sixty-nine countries studying in the various departments (Gourley: International Student Home Page Introduction). These departments would feel the effect in terms of student enrolment.

With this dependency on student fees, the university has become an industry, where students are required to pay for the service the institution render. Peter Horn (2000: 25) puts it succinctly that "the university does not only resemble an industrial enterprise: it is such an enterprise. Its students do not resemble customers; they are customers". Martin Oosthuizen, a Professor at the University of Port Elizabeth sums it up with a practical explanation: "you need about 70 or 80 students in a first year class to make the teaching time financially justifiable" (Cited from Lincindorf, 2000: 5). This has further placed a premium on managing educational institutions based on economic/business sense rather than simply rendering a business-free public service. It has also resulted in the process of objectification whereby humans are conceived as 'things' and thus weighed according to market value. Mosco (1998: 144), however, cautions that objectification should not be conflated with commodification. He argues that objectification is an offshoot of the totalising process of commodification, and he locates it to the original meaning in market exchange to encompass "any process of depersonalization". On the other hand, Mosco posits that "commodification is a specific form of this process whereby the 'thing' that acquires phantom objectivity is a commodity, i.e., an object whose value is established in

the market place" (ibid.). Invariably, Oosthuizen's explanation gives an insight into the subtle objectification of students as 'commodities', which are measured by what they are worth in monetary terms to the universities.

### **The information technology revolution**

Modern society has witnessed rapid major changes in the arrangement of knowledge, access to information and its delivery process. These changes are characterised by the information technology revolution, a revolution that epitomised information and communication know-how and a high-speed transfer of information made possible by computer and digital technologies. This technology encompasses a heavy reliance on the computer as a tool for education, entertainment and business with the attendant link to the convergence of technologies which is evident in the development of the Internet, mobile telephones, digital broadcasting and all other computer and digital technologies. The resulting effect of this revolution is the boom in the Information Technology profession. The profession offers an attraction to students and it has continuously attracted crops of high school leaving students and professionals in other fields who aspire to move into the high paying profession. The global trend where corporations award their own degrees has actually started to shake the traditional notions of university study. Commercial organisations and corporations have started to sign up students across the globe and award their own 'degrees'. In South Africa this resulted in many private institutions providing training lessons for the 'degree' awarded by these corporations. This is very common among computer hardware and software companies. Microsoft, the world's largest computer software corporation, already has its own global 'university' with various certifications under its stable: MCSE (Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer); MCSD (Microsoft Certified Solution Developer) and many more. Many training institutions, spread all over the country are providing paid tutorials towards sitting for these certifications (see example, Appendix1). This development has seen a number of prospective tertiary education students enrolling at these institutions, rather than following the age-long tradition of a tertiary university education.

## **Development of on-line education**

One of the major consequences of the information technology revolution is the rapid growth of on-line education. This has also dealt a blow to the traditional concept of a sit-in format of instruction in the universities. The interactive face-to-face method or teacher/students concept is being radically challenged. With the emergence of the online education, traditional learning institutions will face (and are facing) competition largely from Internet based institutions. The on-line trend, which has been stunningly profitable in the United States, is becoming popular among institutions in South Africa. The University of Phoenix, the largest private university in the United States makes \$12,8 million a quarter through online and distance education (MacLeod 2000: 8). Two of Southern Africa's leading distance tertiary institutions, Damelin College and University of South Africa (UNISA) are successfully tapping into the online education method. The Damelin initiative is preceded by that of UNISA's 'Student on-line'. Students can download notes and course works from the Internet, access discussion groups and submit assignments, bringing higher education to the tip of the mouse (Sigonyela 2000: 1). This trend has affected the sit-in format of traditional universities. Students can now pursue a degree in which flexibility allows them to engage in paid employment at the same time. Tertiary institutions have capitalised on this development enormously to expand their 'market' nationally and transnationally. On the other hand, this has put pressure on the 'sit-in' institutions. They now need to be more aggressive in attracting 'customers' as the market is getting more and more competitive. The on-line trend gives an insight into the commodification of 'free space' in a public Internet and electronic mail spheres. This trend has further expanded the market for universities as students are signed across cities. Mosco notes that the perceived conception of the media (of which the Internet is an integral part) as free space in a public sphere is questionable. He argues that:

"Depending on how you define free, i.e., how much contamination can be absorbed before free space turns into market or state space, the free spaces in communication include traditional forms, such as alternative press, public service...broadcasting, as well as

new forms, like public access cable channels and *computer network* that open an electronic meeting place" (1998: 170. Italics added).

Mosco notes further that, the 'public' or 'free' space in public service broadcasting is being commodified, as evident in the sale of space for advertising. This also goes for the space in computer network. One notes that following Mosco's argument, the Internet and the electronic mail have contributed to and facilitated the commodification process in tertiary institutions as they have become the new medium of instruction. Undoubtedly the constraint caused by market, class consideration and access to interactive networks has slowed down this process. However, "(a) university professor whose (access) charges are underwritten by the state, by universities (which are the recipients of considerable state support), or by companies trying to create a market in the new forms of communication" (ibid.) uses this medium to exchange educational materials with his/her on-line students who have paid for this service. Predictably, the 'sit-in' institutions would invariably bow to market demand and embrace the on-line trend. A Canadian delegate to a recent conference on distance learning and on-line education in Johannesburg and Cape Town opined that on-line education would become the largest global industry. He made reference to the way tourism on the Internet has generated a large boom in the range of billions of dollars, that "by 2015, the largest company in the world would be something like education incorporated" (*Business Report*, April 7, 2000: 1). Sadly, with the commodification trend among tertiary institutions, this could unfortunately happen earlier, as institutions would have totally bowed to the principles of market operation.

### **The increasing growth of private tertiary institutions**

The proliferation of private tertiary institutions around the country has been identified as strong competition for traditional higher institutions.<sup>2</sup> These institutions command a large student base, who otherwise would have striven to get admitted into the traditional higher

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<sup>2</sup> Criticism towards these institutions is that most of them are 'fly-by night' colleges. The South African Department of Education launched an enquiry to the affairs of these Colleges based on the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) *Special Assignment* broadcast on March 14 2000 and some were shut down.

institutions. Damelin College is the leader in this category and it has campuses in and around the major cities in South Africa and some Southern African countries. The University of Natal in its "Strategy for 2000" document, admittedly notes that though some of the students in these private institutions are not direct competitors for the high calibre students that the University wishes to attract, the level of activity creates a perception of energy and growth. The University also notes that the competition from these private tertiary institutions has led to a gradual erosion of its market position in many of its stakeholder constituencies (Saunderson-Meyer 1998a: 1).

### **Redefining image in post-apartheid South Africa**

A redefinition in the image of tertiary institutions has been conditioned and influenced mainly by some of these factors: a new political dispensation; socio-economic environment and the global trends. A new political dispensation is of particular relevance to the argument here. As noted in the opening citation from Mosco, shifts in political power have prompted cutbacks for public information institutions such as libraries and public schools. In post-apartheid South Africa, institutions are redefining their traditional status for a more liberal pose to attract more students. The Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch, which were previously predominantly 'white' institutions, are trying to attract more black students. Stellenbosch is faced with a peculiar dilemma, while trying to convince black students that it is no longer an all-Afrikaans institution, it is also struggling to honour its commitment to remain a centre of the Afrikaans language (Merten 2000: 14). Most of the obvious apartheid-era references on the campus have gone: the H.F Verwoerd building, one of the D.F Malan buildings and Balthazaar Johannes building is today known as Arts Building (ibid.). Although Afrikaans is the language of instruction, students can write exams in English and most post-graduate work is done in English. However, the institution is obliged by law to keep Afrikaans as its primary teaching language, as entrenched in the 1992 University of Stellenbosch Act (ibid.). The institution has two full-time recruiters who continue to target students from the disadvantage schools around Northern Cape, Western Cape and Cape South Coast (ibid.). Consequently, South African universities are laying claims to the process of

transformation in order to position themselves strategically in a post-apartheid dispensation. Transformation, according to Bertelsen has a two-pronged interpretation: the first is based on the South African history of political struggle which eventually warranted a discourse premised on democratic justice, and issues in policies of redistribution and redress designed to correct historical injustices of race, class and gender (2000: 4). With reference to the second interpretation, Bertelsen says:

The second version comes from the corporate world. Its premises are neo-liberal tenets of business - that there is no alternative to market forces and that the pursuit of private profit is the only route to general good - and it issues in policies which will drive the sort of change the market requires: cutting-edge competition, "natural" stratification and the promotion of unfettered production/consumption (2000: 4).

The resulting effect of this form of 'transformation' as Bertelsen notes is that, "knowledge becomes an "information", a commodity to be manufactured, packaged, bought and sold, and intellectual work a matter of goods being cost-effectively manufactured on a production line" (ibid.). In this regard transformation is camouflaged in euphemistic terms such as 'restructuring'. Restructuring is a term that when skinned exposes expenditure and increasing productivity that transform universities into 'lean-and-mean' producers of informational content and profitable skills to satisfy an export-driven economy (Bertelsen 2000: 4). These are the dynamics of the commodification trends that are inundating the entire academic culture with a drive towards market forces.

### **The technikon and varsity tug-of-war**

In a climate of rapid change, competition and uncertainty in the educational terrain, a kind of tug-of-war has been created between universities and technikons in South Africa. According to the Department of Education statistics released in July 1999, universities used to attract more undergraduate students, but recently, the technikons have gained an upper hand. This has made the universities more aggressive in terms of the recruitment of

students. The Department of Education statistic shows that in 1998, there were 62,309 first-time undergraduate enrolments in the technikons as against the universities 60,801.<sup>3</sup> Between 1993 and mid-1999, university first time enrolments were up by 15% while those of the technikons grew by 46%. Many reasons have been enumerated for this, some of these are: the ability of the technikons to offer structured study programmes that are career and vocation-specific; flexible entry and exit points and experimental learning with hands-on training.

As a result of the above-described scenarios, and in an attempt to 'sell' their images, attract students and position themselves well in this competitive market, universities are aggressively adopting 'branding' and market strategies. Knowledge has been conceded as a commodity to be traded and universities become subject to the full protocol of the market. The big question then is what are the options left for the universities in this current milieu of a market-driven globalisation of knowledge? In an ironic twist to her critique of the commodification process, Bertelsen argues that if universities resign to the fact that there is no alternative to adapting a market-style operation, then why not operate enthusiastically with the logic? She argues further that "a truly visionary CEO of the future will surely be the one who can re-imagine the university as a genuine "knowledge business" modelled on the transnational corporation" (2000: 4). Based on this premise, she arguably suggests and foresees an adoption of the commodification and mergers prevalent within other threatened "knowledge industries" like the press or public broadcaster. This process involves the commodification of audiences, as they are being delivered to advertisers. This is a form of income generation manoeuvring that characterised the media institutions and it also involves the mergers and acquisition trends that cut beyond borders and take a transnational approach in a bid towards maximisation and agglomeration of capital. She declares: "...So subsidies are disappearing. You believe you have a good product, but are strapped for cash. Advertise your outfit while it's still a going concern. Find a foreign equity partner"(ibid.). She goes further to compare this to *Time-Warner* owning a chunk of e.TV, Tony O'Reilly 'buying'

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<sup>3</sup> *Mail & Guardian*, May 12 – 18 2000. Beyond Matric supplement:2

out half of the South African press,<sup>4</sup> and *The Guardian* (U.K) having a large size of the *Mail & Guardian*. She then asks:

What are the universities waiting for? The 'transformed' public broadcaster survives by cosying up to the globals and delivering its audience to advertisers... So strike a deal. Find a partner to inject substantial capital. Then start doing business proper. Eliminate loss making lines, repackage the rest and embrace the law of supply and demand (ibid).

Embracing the law of supply and demand might sound rather unpalatable for academic institutions, however, the fact remains that most institutions in the country are compelled to indulge in activities that will help them stay in 'business'. Staying in business implies embracing, at least to certain levels, some principles of marketing and business strategies. These are the strategies that lead to 'marketisation' and commodification of our tertiary institutions. Undoubtedly, the impact of these strategies would inevitably affect the traditional notion of a university. Academic courses would then be designed to fulfil market demands, a dispensation that would affect the academics and the whole notion of the revered academia.

To conclude this section, I will refer to the objective of the University of Natal advertising campaign, as this is the main thrust of this article. The objective was mainly to build a University of Natal brand, and to develop an image of excellence, communicating strongly the proposition that a degree from this University will secure one's future (Gourley 1998: 1). The task of doing this was awarded to an advertising agency, Lindsay Smithers Bond, Durban. It is the eventual production of this agency that this essay attempts to analyse.

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<sup>4</sup> Tony O'Reilly of the Independent Newspapers, a newspaper publishing conglomerate with a major market capitalisation in major cities in the country.

## PART

## II

### THEORETICAL APPROACH

*Advertising absorbs and fuses a variety of symbolic practices and discourses. The substance and images woven into advertising messages are appropriated and distilled from an unbound range of cultural references. Advertising borrows its ideas, its language, and its visual representations from literature and design, from other media contents and forms, from history and the future, from its own experience, and also from specific experiences and discourse of its particular target market; then it artfully recombines them around the theme of consumption.*

(Jhally, 1987: 142)

#### **Eric Michaels' Model of Teleported Texts and its application to the University of Natal's advertising campaign**

The preceding section attempted to offer a brief background and some analytical explanations to advertising, while teasing out various critical issues that engendered advertising campaign trends among tertiary institutions in South Africa. In this section, I will provide an evaluation and analysis of the University of Natal's corporate advertising materials. This research article acknowledges various other endeavours by staff members and students at analysing the advertising campaign of the University. These analyses provide a pool of information from which this essay draws, however, some of these works are limited in their scopes. The analysis provided by Shashida Cassim (1998), for example, is based solely on the concepts employed in the advertising campaign materials and their exposure, while Kakar *et al* (2000) offer a semiotic analysis of the 'Star Trek' concept of the campaign. This essay goes beyond these scopes: First, it gives a conceptual framework as a background to the advertising campaign. It does this by locating the advertising trend as a resulting effect of the commodification process that is rapidly changing the entire practice of academic institutions and which leaves them no

choice but to result to corporate advertising strategies. Secondly, looking at the various issues that led to the University of Natal's decision for an advertising campaign, the earlier works focused on the immediate reasons for the campaign. Some of these are the gradual loss of potential students to traditional rivals, the competition from new private 'varsity colleges', issues of safety and so on. However, this research takes a holistic approach by defining both immediate and remote reasons. The remote reasons being the social issues discussed in the preceding section. Kakar *et al.*'s (2000) analysis of the 'Star Trek' advert was done using Eric Michaels' model of a teleported text, a conceptual framework that this essay intends to apply. In this regard, Kakar *et al* provides a body of resources from which this essay draws reference to in the analysis of the 'Star Trek' material. This essay also draws on other works related to the campaign. One of these is the research commissioned by the advertising agency and conducted by a private research agency, Nyasulu & Associates. This research was to check the market comprehension of the main message, to ascertain whether the message is credible, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign and to check if the campaign has been successful in clearly positioning the University of Natal (McMurray 1998). This and other research works, such as the one conducted by Khanti Bhowan and Shahida Cassim (1998) focusing on the "perception of the University of Natal" provide insight to understanding the need for the campaign.

This research provides a wider scope to some of the above mentioned works. It covers both the radio and the print advertisements as compared to other analyses, which basically focused on the print advertisement. The study further also attempts to evaluate not only the produced advertising materials, but also the different stages and processes in the conceptualisation, production, planning and the eventual exposure of the University of Natal advertising campaign. This will be done by drawing on Eric Michaels' (1990) Model of Teleported Texts. This model provides scaffolding for an analytical assessment of the production process and exposure of the University of Natal corporate advertising campaign materials. This model was chosen mainly because it offers some flexibility to the study of media while giving deep insight into various complexities that exist in message conceptualisation, production, transmission and perception. Michaels' model

portrays intrinsic structures of the television medium as a negotiation of different texts between producers, technology and audiences and the different features that occur in the social organisation and construction of meaning. That the model was originally proposed for the television medium is not critical to the argument here, rather I will explore the model as it is adaptable to all forms of media message conception and transmission. This model accounts for the interaction that exists between the audience, text, mode of transmission and the producer. Michaels proposes a circular model of message transmission called the 'hermeneutic circle' (See Figure One), it portrays a cyclical conceptualisation of a message transmission system, a radical departure from the conventional assumption of a one-way transmission of information: sender to receiver, which presumes passivity on the latter.

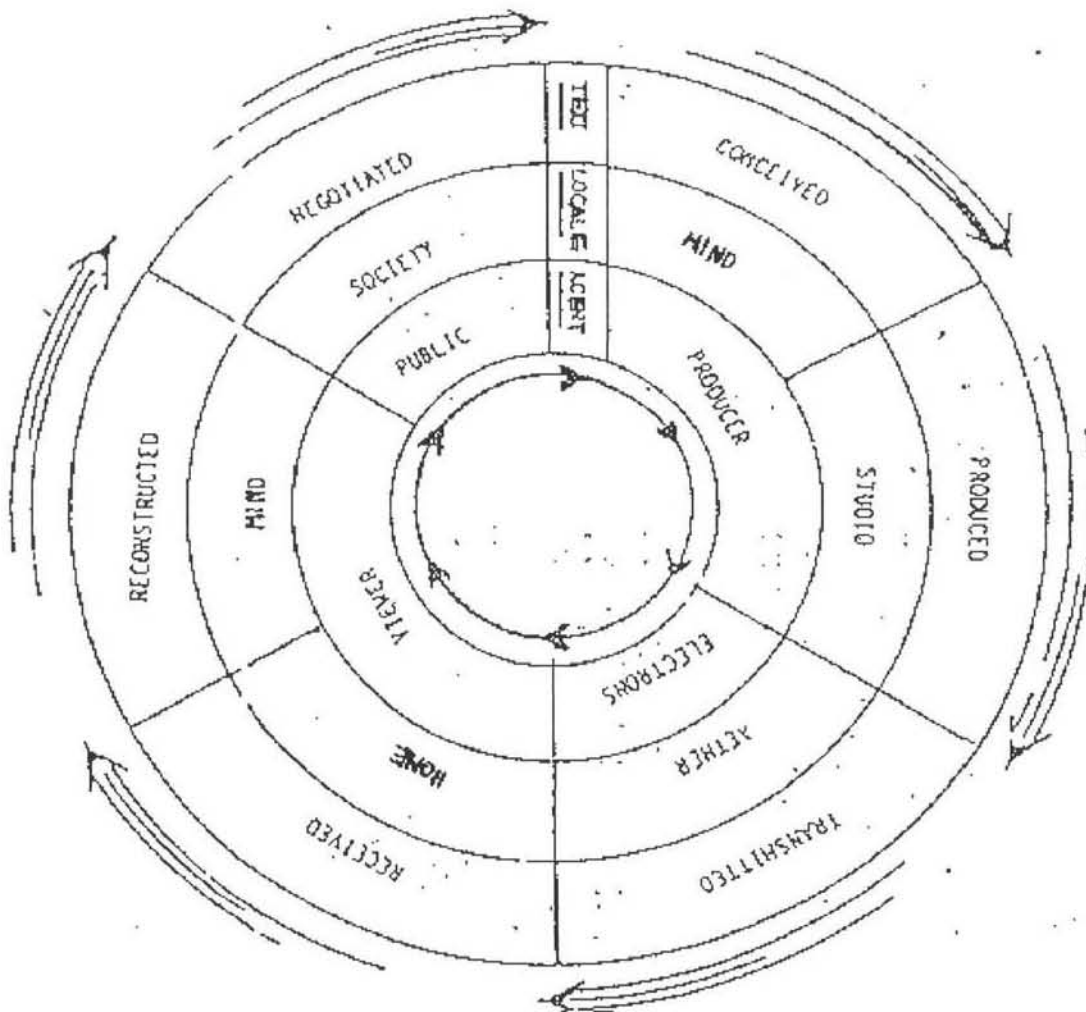


FIGURE ONE: The preliminary formulation of Michaels' 'Hermeneutic Circle'.

Source: *CONTINUM: An Australian Journal of the media*. Vol. 3, no2: 13

Michael's hermeneutic circle states that media transmission is a continuous and cyclical process influenced by social and contextual variables. The circle is described in a way that one can even analytically reverse the forward direction of information flow. 'Text' in this approach should not be misconstrued as alphabetic groupings of words comprising a body of notes in a book; it refers (in semiotic parlance) to a specific media discourse, a television or radio programme, pictures and other forms of media expressions.<sup>5</sup> A semiotic description of the advertising materials will be provided and located within a particular stage in Michaels' hermeneutic circle. Semiotics basically refers to:

the study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance and other forms of expression. The method incorporates not only how meaning come to mean, but how prevailing meanings are the outcomes of encounters between individuals, groups and classes and their respective cosmologies and conditions of existence (Tomaselli 1996: 29).

Studying how meaning is constructed and perceived with regard to the University of Natal's advertising campaign will be the thrust of this section. Michaels' model provides the backdrop. The model comprises of different levels of texts in the production and consumption of media messages: *Conceived Text*, *Production Text*, *Produced Text*, *Transmitted Text*, *Received Text*, *Perceived Text*, *Social Text* and *Public Text*. In analysing/evaluating the corporate advertising campaign of the University of Natal, we will follow Michaels' model beginning with the function of the *Conceived Text*.

### **The Conceived Text**

The *Conceived Text* is the creative idea in a producer's or a scriptwriter's mind and it comes in various formats for different media. It is the author's script, the original idea and the origination of a creative concept. It may come in a form of brief to an advertising agency or as a spoken idea to a team of producers. Whichever format, the *Conceived Text*

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<sup>5</sup> Tomaselli distinguishes between texts: as a product (video programme, the film celluloid, article or a book) and the text as the interaction between the reader / viewer/ listener and signs encoded into messages. The former being 'inactive text' while the later 'activated text'. See Tomaselli (1996) 33.

is presented as a flexible and negotiable 'property' (Michaels 1990: 12). In 1997, the University of Natal identified the need for a concerted advertising campaign to 'sell' the University and a substantial budget was allocated for this project, one million rand for the initial campaign (Saunderson-Meyer 1998a). The campaign was based on the realisation that the educational terrain was becoming competitive, and that the university was losing potential students to other competitive institutions, namely the Universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Rhodes and also to the new generation of private 'varsity colleges'. The campaign was an attempt at "reclaiming for the University an unabashed position as one of South Africa's leading educational institutions, stressing quality, international ties and multidisciplinary" (Gourley: 1998:1). Prior to choosing an advertising agency, the University embarked on research into what exactly the public perception of the University was. The Communication and Publicity office with the assistance of experts in the Department of Business Administration on both the Durban and the Pietermaritzburg campuses undertook this preliminary research (ibid.). Following Michaels' model, this can be regarded as a *Pre-Conceived Text* as events and suggestions arising here were eventually compiled and utilised in the brief to the advertising agency. Ultimately, it was envisaged that this would help to mould the brief that would be given to the advertising agency, so that they can formulate strategies and proposals accordingly (Saunderson-Meyer 1998d: 1).

Still on the *Pre-Conceived Text*, as this has the function to lay the foundation for a proper understanding of the *Conceived Text*, a number of focus group discussions were held with the stakeholders of the University: staff, alumni and students of both campuses. The *Perception of the University of Natal*, a research conducted by Khanti Bhowan and Shahida Cassim in 1998 was seminal to the moulding of the brief to the advertising agency. Findings, however, showed that students and their parents preferred institutions such as the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Rhodes to the University of Natal. This was not necessarily based on a perception that standards were dropping, but other issues were identified: high incidents of violence (rape) and crime, lack of safety and the lack of social atmosphere (Bhowan & Cassim 1998: 2). The need for a concerted effort at addressing the image of the University locally and international also has some

historical perspective. About a decade ago, in 1991, Professor Tomaselli noted the low image that the University possessed both internationally and locally (Tomaselli 1991).<sup>6</sup> He stated that little was known about the University internationally, due to lack of international linkages and various lost opportunities at strategically placing the University internationally. He also observed that the conflation of the University of Natal with the University of Durban-Westville by many scholars with whom he interacted with in the United States had some negative effect, as this was negatively impacting enrolment at the University. In the following excerpt from his letter he clearly states that:

People often got confused between the University of Natal, Durban, and the University of Durban-Westville, Natal. The similarity between the two names caused my acquaintances to think that there was only one University in Durban (Westville). This confusion will have serious effect on how NU (University of Natal) is perceived in the future. Strategies are urgently needed to address this very serious problem... (Ibid.)

This very serious problem, ten years after, has continuously affected the image of the University of Natal, as the conflation in the public mind of the two institutions persisted. Based on these perceptions and comments (*Pre-Conceived Text*), the University compiled a list of reasons for an advertising campaign. The University approached some two dozen agencies and four were eventually short-listed. Lindsay Smithers Bond, the Durban based affiliate of one of South Africa's largest agencies, with branches around the world was unanimously chosen by the marketing committee, which includes representatives from all the faculties and from support staff structures (Saunderson-Meyer 1998d: 1). The brief was for the agency to come up with an advertising strategy to address the fact that the University was experiencing the erosion of its position in many of its stakeholder constituencies. This competition came from new commercial colleges offering classroom support for UNISA (University of South Africa) degrees and from other private colleges

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<sup>6</sup> Professor Tomaselli is the director of the Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies and his observations were contained in a letter sent to the then Principal of the University, Professor J. Leatt. These observations were noted during a fourteen-month visit to the United States, Canada and England.

and established Universities: Universities of Cape Town, Pretoria, Stellenbosch and Rhodes, which are the University of Natal's traditional rivals. In the brief to the advertising agency, it was stated that the campaign should address the misguided perception of continual student strife and the "unfounded fears that academic excellence may have been compromised by the process of racial transformation (in fact, in many cases standards have increased)" (Gourley 1998: 1). The campaign should also address outsider stakeholder groups: academically achieving potential students and their parents, disenchanted alumni of the University, and past and potential corporate donors to the University. William Saunderson-Meyer (1998a) notes that with this marketing strategy,

the University visualises the campaign as possibly focusing on the students and parent target groups, and then sequentially aiming at the concerns of other stakeholders: alumni (a crucial source for political and ultimately financial support), and the corporate sector (both a funding resource and potential employer of many graduates).

This and the other issues mentioned above provide insight into the brief to the advertising agency. This constitutes the *Conceived Text*.

### **The Production Text**

The *Production Text* emanates from the original authorship of the *Conceived Text* and it is the result of an industrial process at work. The *Production Text* is an interpretation of the *Conceived Text* and it is delivered in various forms: from production meetings on scripts, creative/concept meetings and brainstorming sessions in advertising agencies to a pre-production meeting in television production. Michaels (1990: 13) argues that "we need only note here that the first *Conceptual Text* is likely to be radically different, from any perspective, from what is finally developed as a script for production in the studio or elsewhere". This is the stage that the script for production in the studio or on location is finally developed. As an example, a script developed from a novel for a film shoot is in most cases different from the original *Conceived Text*, here, the novel is adapted to a

shooting script to fit the celluloid medium. Michaels (1990: 14) argues further that "we have already distinguished two quite separate texts, the *Conceived Text* emanating from creative authorship, and a *Production Text* (script), the result of an industrial process at work on the first text". This is the stage that the agency, Lindsay Smithers Bond, began the process of interpreting the University brief into a complete media message. This is the interpretation of the University's brief into a creative advertising concept, which is the outcome of a creative and brainstorming meeting. Lynton Heath,<sup>7</sup> the creative director of the agency says "what we did was to create an advertising strategy. We evaluated the situation at the moment and we came up with a two-stage advertising strategy" (Personal interview, May 2000). He states further that "what we tried to do was actually inject the values the University represents into the University brand. That is the first stage of the advertising" (ibid.). The first stage basically involves packaging the University as a product through the process of brand building. 'Branding' as an advertising strategy involves the process of building awareness for a product or company and the aim is simply for the product or company to be known to the prospective buyer (Bovee et al. 1995: 104). Creating a brand as a whole is a combination of the brand *name*, which is the portion of a brand that can be expressed verbally. This include letters, words or numbers, in this case the 'University of Natal'. The second element is the brand *mark*. This portion of the brand cannot be expressed verbally. It includes graphic designs or symbols and other visual composition, in this case the University crest. These two elements were combined artfully by the advertising agency to create a set of materials: print and audio, and to build awareness for the University, making it known to prospective students, parents and donors. The agency then embarked on a creative process to interpret the University's brief into a creative 'brand-building' advertising concept. The result of this process was the creation of a set of print materials dubbed: 'Superman'; 'Basketball player'; 'Star Trek' and 'Rolls Royce' and also a set of radio materials: 'Bill Clinton'; 'Desmond Tutu'; 'Louis Luyt' and the 'Rolling Stone' (see Appendices 2-4). Let us now examine each of these advertising materials in turn.

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<sup>7</sup> He is also a copy writer who met constantly with the art director in the conceptualisation process.

## Superman

This advertisement was built on the popular Superman icon and it features a white male in the famous Superman 'transformation' pose. In this advertisement, the man is in the process of revealing his 'superhuman' quality by removing his corporate attire of suit, white shirt, and a silver and blue striped tie, exposing his 'trade mark', the Superman blue vest. Here, instead of the Superman logo on the vest, we see a large crest of the University of Natal. The camera angle of the shot slightly hides the face of the 'Superman' giving emphasis to the University crest and the 'transformation' process. The striking feature of this advertisement is the 'motion' that was created in the still photograph: the action of transformation, reminiscent of the Superman 'metamorphosis'. The text title reads 'The Power to succeed'.



FIGURE TWO: The Superman concept of the advertising materials.

Source: <http://www.innerweb.und.ac.za>

### Basketball player

This material features a black male in a basketball player's gear: a white sleeveless top with red and gold stripes at the sides and the number '80' imprinted on the back; red shorts with white and gold stripes at the sides; a pair of white and black sport shoes with the University crest imprinted on the soles. In the background are floodlights accentuating the atmosphere of a sporting arena. On the top left hand corner is the title of this material: 'Giving you the edge'. The University banner and crest are placed at the bottom with the tag line/slogan: 'The Power to succeed'. The low-angle shot of the basketball player gives a towering image of a man, in a 'flying' action with the basketball firmly gripped with his right palm and about to be dunked. The camera-angle also affords us the sight of the University of Natal crest embossed on the soles of his sport shoes.

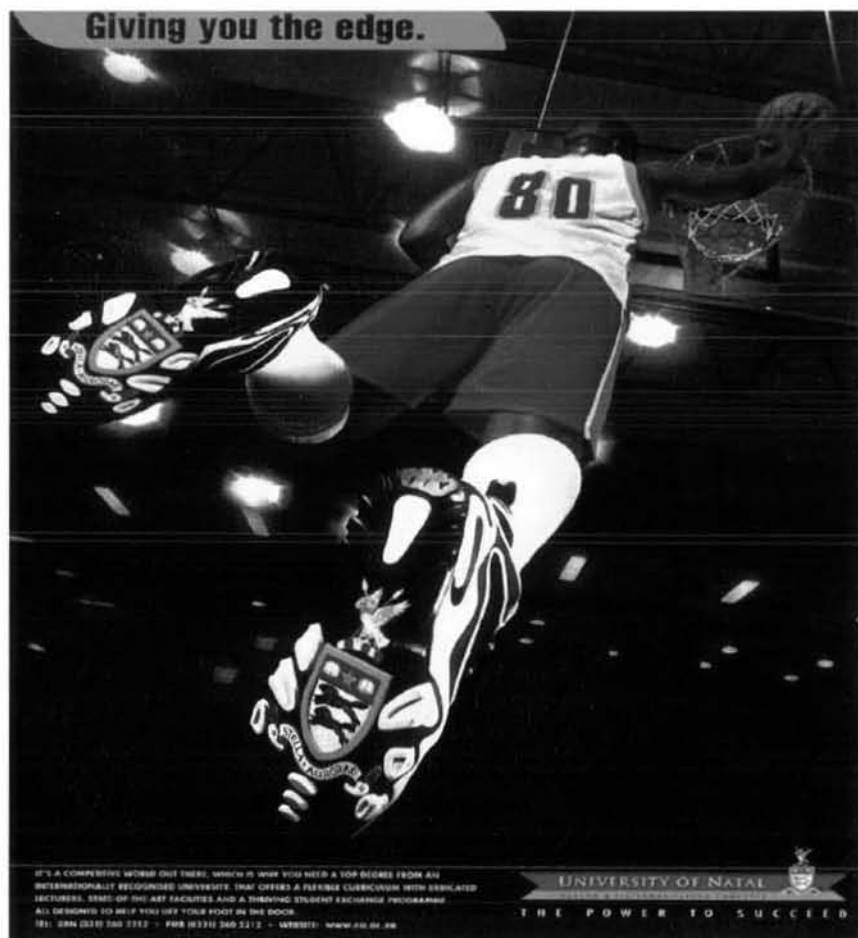


FIGURE THREE: The Basketball player concept of the advertising campaign

Source: <http://www.innerweb.ac.za>

## Rolls Royce

The idea of creating motion in a still photograph also comes to bear in this advertisement. This piece is a tight close-up shot of the bonnet and the radiator grill cover of a shining metallic grey Rolls Royce. The illusion of movement was created with the “swoosh” induced blue background, creating the impression of a moving car. The obvious element here is the placement of the University crest in front of the bonnet where the Roll Royce emblem normally is. The message reads: 'For a degree that takes you places'.



FIGURE FOUR: The Rolls Royce concept of the advertising campaign

Source: <http://www.innerweb.und.ac.za>

### Star Trek

This advertisement shows a young and beautiful woman of Asian or Indian Origin (more of Indian than other Asian racial groupings) in a medium camera shot. Her arms are folded confidently across her chest with a slight smile on her face. She is wearing a brightly-coloured spacesuit with an epaulette in the University of Natal corporate colour (red, white, and gold) on the shoulder of her suit. The University crest rests conspicuously on her front left upper chest. In the background is a 'galaxial' star studded sky and a silver-steel spaceship. The message reads: "Take control of your future".



FIGURE FIVE. The Star Trek concept of the advertising campaign

Source: <http://www.innerweb.und.ac.za>

## The creative process and the advertising materials

Creativity is the backbone of any advertising campaign and it contributes enormously to the business of advertising. It is the ability to generate original ideas or original ways of looking at existing ideas (Meeske & Norris, in Bovee et al. 1995: 221). This is what the agency did, by coming up with original ways of looking at existing ideas. Existing ideas here are quite evident, in the sense that these concepts have been utilised before, even in advertising (see Figure Six below). Therefore, all the agency did was to weld the University's value into these ideas.

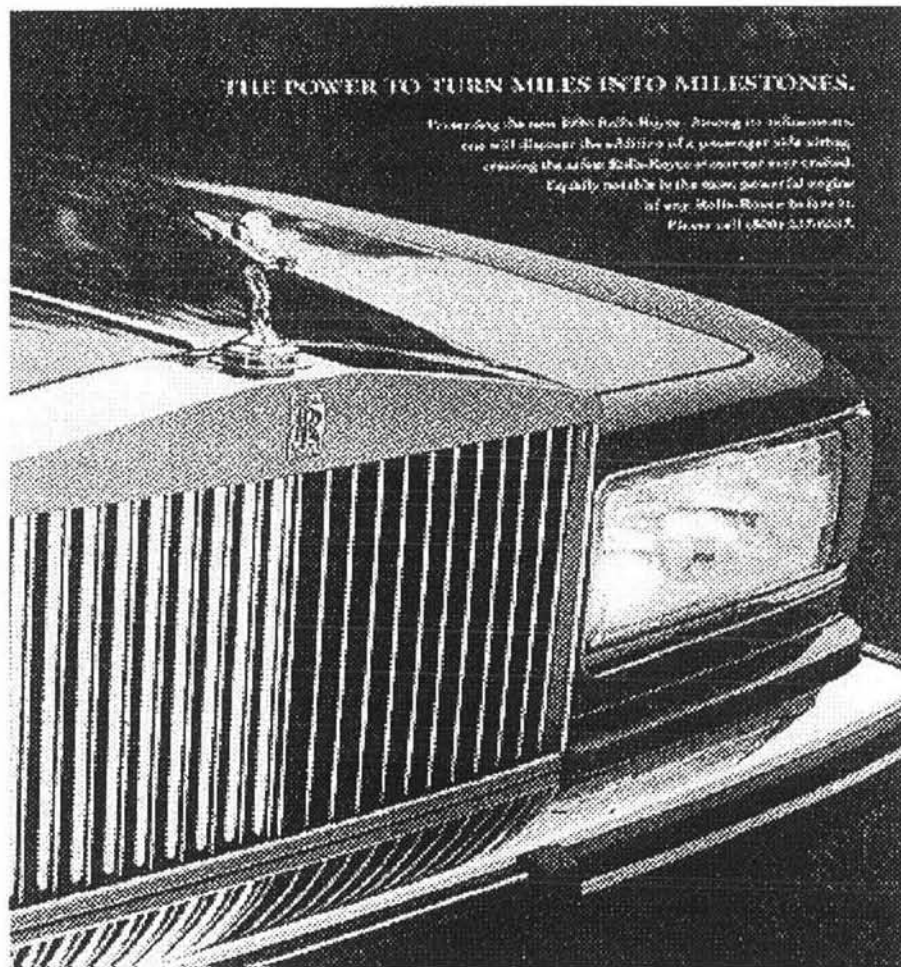


FIGURE SIX: The print advertising material for Rolls Royce.

Source: Bovee, C.L. et al. 1995: 51

The idea behind the whole campaign is the University that gives you the power to succeed (Interview with Lynton Heath, May 2000). The Superman icon demonstrates the

power to succeed and this idea was subsequently developed in the other concepts. The Radio materials were built around the images and speeches of some popular figures: The U.S. president, Bill Clinton, the former rugby union boss, Louis Luyt and Desmond Tutu, former Arch- bishop of Cape Town. Heath states: "by taking these figures and locating their values, their international images, with the values of the University, people think this is an important and a prestigious institution. That is why I basically did the campaign around these people" (ibid.). Heath believes that the idea was justified in that, the 'Bill Clinton' concept won an international award in New York. 'I think it is fantastic for the University. It actually helps to communicate the status of the University: that it is an international University" (ibid.).

### **The Produced Text**

The *Produced Text* anticipates the alterations that the medium itself and the production process will necessarily perform on the production text. Here, professionals on set in the studio: cameramen, directors, actors, photographers add their ideas from their professional expertise to the actualisation, interpretation and elaboration of the text. However, these same people may not be able to deliver what is expected of them due to various reasons: "technological constraints and the intrusion of the predictably unpredictable: equipment failure, illness, bad weather, bad temper etc" (Michaels 1990: 14). The *Produced Text* takes us to the studio, the set of the actual production of the campaign materials. The images in the University advertising materials were all shot on transparencies (trannies). This photographic medium allows for flexibility as the prints could be developed for various media. Patrick McGee, the photographer, claimed that on getting the brief from the agency, he realised that it was going to be a tricky and highly creative job and that a high professional creativity would be needed (Personal Interview, July 2000). In the basketball player concept, the question was, how can this jumping motion be achieved and still maintain a crisp and clear image? McGee explained how this was done: the basketball player was placed on a tall ladder to generate the 'flying' ambience and the ladder was then draped in black velvet. Technically, in professional photography and specifically with regard to this job, the black velvet drape did not register on the film and the result was a basketball player floating up high. Unlike the

basketball player who was shot in the basketball court, the 'Star Trek' was shot in the studio and it features a combination of three different images. The female model and the space ship model, which was specifically built for the shoot, were shot separately in the studio and the background was taken from some library stock on trannies (see Figures Seven, Eight and Nine below). These three elements were combined into a single picture. The Rolls Royce provided a similar style, as the various elements were shot separately. McGee says he prefers to shoot all elements in any photography job as the computer editing does not necessarily add any realistic touch to images, photography shots always give a natural tinge to image (Interview, July 2000). Based on this belief, he shot the background to the Roll Royce with a fast pan of the camera to generate an illusion of movement, an effect that could be generated on the computer. The car was shot separately, so was the eagle emblem and the University crest. All these were artfully combined at a later stage.

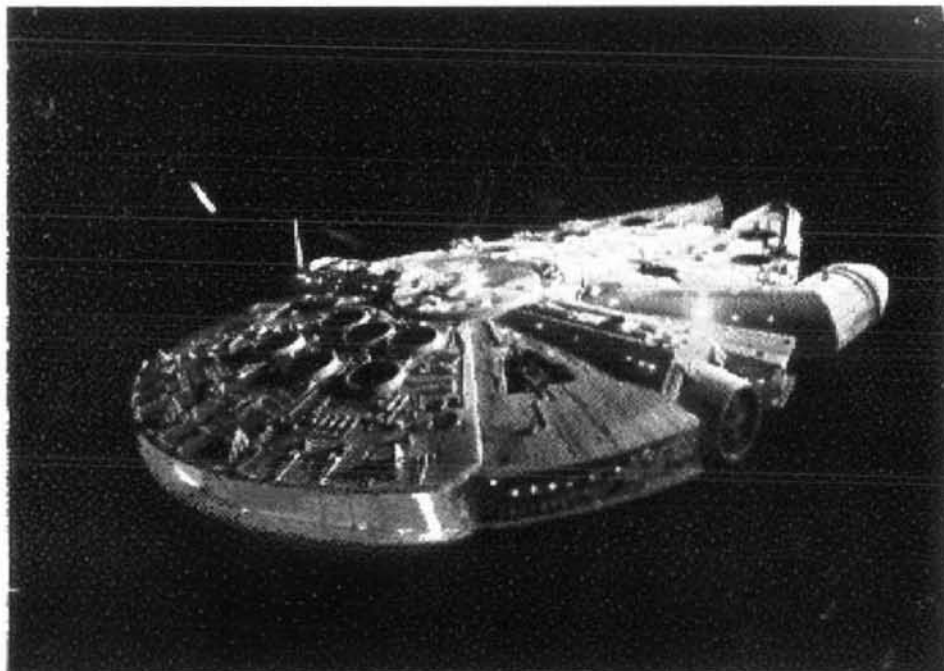


FIGURE SEVEN (above): The studio shot of the Space ship, shot separately.  
Source: Patrick McGee.



FIGURE EIGHT: Steve Smith of LSB adding the lighting effects to the Space ship. The 'starry' background, which was from library stock, was added later. Source: Patrick McGee.



FIGURE NINE: Studio shot of the female model. Shot separately and later superimposed on the Space ship. Source: Patrick McGee.

The radio materials required a different form of creativity. Lorens Persson, the radio producer at Sterling Sound, noted that since the materials borrow extensively from television footages, some kind of creativity was needed to create these pictures in the minds of the listeners. The sound footages of Bill Clinton's speech, Desmond Tutu's speech and Louis Luyt's interview were all acquired from the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) library. These footages were polished and sampled in the sound studio, and they were professionally combined with appropriate sound effects, such as the 'applause' to create a visual image in the minds of the audiences. The voice-over was another element that required some professional retouching, as the big chunk of the weight of the message relies on the rendition. Tim Modise, a radio and television personality and professional broadcaster did the voice-over, and the depth, tone, accent and confidence in the voice-over arguably added some effects to the total message composition.

### **The Transmitted Text**

Michaels (1990: 14) states: "It would be a mistake (often made in experimental media research) to treat the *Produced Text* as what the audience actually views. In fact, the text as it is transmitted may be again radically different, depending upon the economic infrastructure and the distribution technology". On television, we have insertions of commercials, station identity, newsbreak and sponsors' comment in between programmes, so viewers have become accustomed to different commercial slots in between the televised soap operas. Media messages are presented differently due to the distribution technology. This is why a print advert would look different on the back of a glossy magazine as compared to a page in a newspaper – which might also differ if placed in colour or black and white. The *Transmitted Text* deals with the form by means of which the campaign message is transmitted. This stage involves media selection, a process whereby media are selected through which the target markets can be reached in the most effective manner. Budgeting to a large extent determines media selection, as media expenditure takes up the bulk of advertising. The University of Natal's campaign had an initial one million rand budget. This could explain the exclusion of television materials from the campaign, as television production cost and exposure could take a big

slice of the budget. It is at this stage that the process of encoding and message construction is completed, and it is at this transmission stage that the text (campaign message) undergoes various alterations, as the text transmitted may be radically different, depending upon the economic infrastructure and the distribution technology. The 'Communication Strategy' stated that the University would communicate with its target audience through a combination of traditional above-the-line advertising, promotional support and one-on-one communication. Each of these has distinct roles, but they will work together to create a synergistic programme in building the image and reputation of the University, attracting high calibre students (University of Natal, 'Strategy 2000': 5).

The media strategy was supported by press (print) and radio (electronic) advertising. The print medium was to communicate the overall branding to the target market, and it also offered the opportunity to communicate a more complex message than the one provided by radio. The markets targeted basically reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where the University is situated and which accounts for about 80% of the students (LSB Campaign Analysis). The advertisements appeared in selected Newspapers, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Sunday Times (KZN metro)*, *The Mercury*, *The Independent on Saturday*, *Natal Witness* and *Sowetan KZN*. *The Sunday Times (Gauteng Metro)* and *Sowetan Gauteng* were also used to cater for the  $\pm 20\%$  audiences mainly in Gauteng.

The campaign was launched at size 39/7 (full page). However, in order to maximise the budget, the execution was reduced in size to 30 x 6 (A4 Size). This was to allow for greater exposure. Invariably, the text here was being conditioned and determined by financial restraints. The effect of this media strategy revealed interesting responses: some of the students I interviewed had never seen the advertisements before on any of the daily newspapers, however; they did acknowledge that some of the posters mainly the 'Superman' and the 'Star Trek' were pasted on their boards at school. Students from Pinetown Girls High School emphatically stated that the 'Superman' stood out amongst posters from other institutions on their school wall. On further enquiries, I gathered from the students, and this cuts across racial segmentation, they do not read newspapers. They sometimes do browse through them and in this process, some remember having come

across the advertisements, however, the impact could not be compared to the large poster they have in their school. This could translate to the fact that the newspaper placements were targeted at the parents. A parent did acknowledge this: "I think I have come across this (basketball player concept) once or twice and I think its creative" (Focus group discussion, August 2000). Based on this, it could possibly be argued that the newspaper placement had no direct impact on the prospective students.

#### Below-the-line advertising campaign

There has been an intensified approach to direct marketing as a result of economic difficulties and rising inflationary dispensations. This has put pressure on advertisers, who aim to achieve maximum coverage with limited budget. Invariably, advertising media operations have come under tough scrutiny. For this reason, "stretching advertising budget suddenly became an important goal, and deriving every possible benefit from a set amount of money evolved into an important objective of advertising practise" (Jugenheimer and Turk 1980: 4). The resultant effect of this is the contention that there is no mass market. Forms of mass media such as radio and press are considered too broad and dispersed, however, marketers are still "trying to reach mass markets, still develop strategies based on averages. They plot average viewing and average readership" (Hupkins in Sinclair 1997: 5). A person who buys a marketer's goods or service is not an 'average', but an individual, and must be spoken and communicated to as such. This has prompted a focus on direct marketing and a well-defined target audience approach. The University of Natal explored some below-the-line advertising strategies as a spin-off from the mainstream radio and press advertising. Large poster copies of the campaign materials were produced and giving to some selected school around Durban to be pasted on their boards and walls. These posters were also put on the University boards and walls to boost students and staff morale. Postcard-size of the materials were also produced as well as T-shirts merchandising. The effect of this was quite evident in my discussions with some students, who claimed not to have seen the materials in the newspaper, but emphatically stated that they had seen some of them pasted on boards in their schools.

Unlike the print medium, radio is transient, it leaves no trace, and if one misses a commercial there is no way of retrieving it, unless it was pre-recorded and played back. Its advantage lies in the power to stimulate the imagination. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and Coenie de Villiers (1998: 151) note that, "radio is traditionally referred to as a 'blind' medium: it can stimulate the imagination as the listener attempts to visualise what he or she hears and to create the owner of the voice in mind's eyes". One hundred and sixty spots were bought on two radio stations: *East-Coast Radio* and *Lotus FM*. Seventy-six spots on *Lotus FM* and eighty-four, on *East-Coast Radio* and the commercial ran for two months. Helen Alexander, the media executive at Lindsay Smithers Bond noted that *Lotus FM* appeals to the traditional Indian community and this would target the parents, whereas students tend to prefer *East-Coast Radio*, which is more vibrant (Personal interview, May 2000). From this perspective, it can be argued that the other racial groups were not strongly targeted except through a spill over from *East-Coast Radio*. It becomes obvious that the University is trying to attract more students from the Indian community. Reason for this remains unexplained, however, black students constitute the highest enrolment figures in the University. (See Appendix 6). The campaign was run regionally in KwaZulu-Natal, this was basically due to budget constraints (ibid). Based on the various focus group discussions I conducted some of the University of Natal staff and students never heard the radio campaign. A senior staff member at the Student Academic Affairs, a first port of call for prospective students declared that she was only listening to the commercial for the first time at the focus group discussion, more than a year after it was run. The radio *Transmitted Text* provides us with a peculiar characteristics: the commercials are less than sixty seconds and people are accustomed to taking quick breaks from their favourite programmes during commercial break. This could be another contributing factor to the low listenership of the radio campaign, however, this will be discussed in details in the next section. One apparent distinction between the *Produced Text* and the *Transmitted Text* is the addition of the text messages on the bottom left of the University print materials. However, a clear distinction does not exist with regards to the radio campaign. This distinction in the print advert helps in the message transmission and comprehension.

## The Received Text

The *Received Text* is the interface between the audience and the media platform. It has to do with the way a media message is received in contrast to other competing events surrounding the consumption. In the case of television, Michaels elaborates, “All media ethnographers report that many, many other things are going on beside TV in almost all viewing settings – talk, handwork, household chores, social interaction...” (1990: 15). All these have some resultant effect on the message consumption. In print, the interaction between the advertisement and the audience might vary due to the placement of contesting, competing or distracting information around the advertisement. Helen Alexander of Lindsay Smithers Bond (LSB) noted that the campaign materials were placed in the educational supplement of some newspapers. *Sowetan* carries such supplements on Fridays and one is confronted with an array of articles, on education and choice of school and also with different advertisements of tertiary institutions vying for the market. In this regard, the viewer reads the University of Natal advertisements *vis-à-vis* other advertisements and a case for comparison arises which inevitably has an impact on the decoding of the advertisement. A typical case of the impact of contrasting information around the advertisement is the one placed in the educational supplement of the *Mail & Guardian*, ‘Beyond Matric’ May 12 to 18 2000. The material is large, and there is apparently no way any one could miss it. Unfortunately, as pointed out by a matric student of Pinetown Girls High School (Focus group discussion, August 2000), right on top of the University of Natal advertisement is a picture of students in a tertiary institution and the caption reads: “Power of youth: Universities are no longer the automatic option for all matriculants” (*Mail & Guardian* May 12 - 18 2000 ‘Beyond Matric’: 3). This according to the student could have an adverse effect on the University of Natal’s advertisement, as the caption relates to other alternatives available for matriculants as opposed to university education, which the University of Natal offers. This is the text this particular student received and obviously it impacted on her reading of the University advertisement. On the positive note, most of the students interviewed did acknowledge that the ‘Superman’ and the ‘Star trek’ posters stand out amongst the advertisements from other institutions on their notice board. This also contributed to a

positive decoding of the *Received Text* as it is juxtaposed with simultaneous and competing information, which has an effect on the University of Natal's advertisement. Positive, in the sense that the others do not match the aesthetic presence of that of the University of Natal. Alexander further stated that, in a situation that the papers did not carry any educational supplement, then the advertisements were placed on a R.O.P (Run on Paper)<sup>8</sup> basis. This obviously has its own disadvantages, since there is no guarantee of the kind of information that will surround the advertisement; this could have some negative effect on the advertisement as stated above.

The radio campaign was hinged on a time-frame basis. They ran between six a.m. to eight a.m. and from four p.m. to about seven p.m. This is the time when parents and students are preparing to go to work and school, or already on their way. The afternoon slots meet the students at home and the parents at either home or on their way back from work. I gathered that the slots were not based around any specific programme that either the parents or the students love to listen to, but rather on time slots basis (Interview with Helen Alexander, LSB. May 2000). The radio *Received Text* is faced with many problems: one, since the commercials are slotted in between programmes or during programmes, there is a high possibility that parents and students might not be interested in the programme being aired, and invariably their attention is diverted to some other events. Many other things are going on beside radio in almost all settings: talk; household chores; preparing for school; washing and dressing up and so on. Since the morning time slots of the radio advertisements fall into this busy time frame, the *Received Text* received in this setting is highly influenced by the other things which impact on a haphazard grasp of the message. These situations could be contributing factors to the general lack of awareness of the radio campaign.

### **The Perceived Text**

This deals with the process of individual perception of the media message. This process is a psychological one in which the stimulus of the media is perceived, and interpreted in

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<sup>8</sup> This means that the Editors of the newspapers concerned will use their discretion to place the advert on any page in the paper.

the viewer's mind. Michaels (1990) argues that this "concerns perception and thought which are believed, in Western cosmology at least, to be internal activities of the individual mind, and questions of language and semiotics which are believed to be external and shared social creations" (16). The *Perceived Text* basically deals with the perception of media message, and as Michaels notes, it is the story that an individual tells himself/herself about the story he/she has seen. Roger Sinclair (1997) also emphasises this, that perception "is the link between the mind and the environment. All of senses are used to give us a view of the world around us" (18). The *Perceived Text* involves the decoding of semiotic signification: iconic, indexical and symbolic and the construction of meaning based on this decoding.

Advertising becomes meaningful when we dissect the materials and analyse the coding of meaning in their construction. "We can only understand what advertising means by finding out *how* they mean, and analysing the way in which they work" (Williamson 1985: 17). Semiotics, which is "the study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance and other forms of expression" (Tomaselli 1996: 29), provides the tools for the descriptive analysis of the campaign materials. The semiotic analysis of these materials will be conducted under the three basic categories of signs, the Peirce's triad of sign: iconic, indexical and symbolic (Tomaselli 1996: 30 - 31). Signs are the basic building blocks and conceptual tools of semiotics, the understanding of semiotic signs helps in the perception and decoding of media messages. The iconic constructs a literal interpretation: the photograph of a university looks like what it stands for, a university. The indexical takes us further as the sign draws attention to what it refers, that might not be physically seen. The picture of a university refers to higher education and advanced schooling. The symbolic takes us into the metaphorical realm, the sign has no obvious connection to the idea it portrays except through ideas that we have internalised and taken as natural or for granted. The picture of a university then symbolises attainment of knowledge, a step towards success and achievement in life. In advertising and in most literary/art works, meanings are not conspicuously embedded in photographs, films, sound and television materials. The co-operation of the audience/viewer is necessary for decoding meaning. Advertisements do not really manipulate the audience, but subtly lure

them into interpreting and articulating the meaning. This is referred to as 'participation' (Jhally 1987: 131), whereby the advertisement invites the audience's participation in the construction of meaning. Peirce further developed the semiotic triad by proposing that meaning is derived from the triple origin of existence: encounter (firstness), the experience (secondness) and the intelligible (thirdness). This aptly complements the three sign order.<sup>9</sup> Based on this triad of sign, a semiotic analysis would be conducted and thereafter, the perception of the advertising materials would be evaluated from the points of view of the participants in the various focus group discussions.

*Firstness*, which is analogous to the iconic is autonomous, the first encounter of explanatory understanding. The Superman in the University advertisement, on first encounter signifies a man an unspecified man.

*Secondness* takes us into the first level of deep interpretation of sign, it implies a relative autonomy, and the object exists in relation to something else. This is the indexical stage of sign categories. It draws attention to the thing/s, to which the object refers. Looking at the advertisements from the perspective of the indexical, the Superman in the advertisement instantly draws our attention to the popular film the superhuman characteristics of the character. The general mood refers to power (superhuman power). The transformation motion in the image refers to a process of revealing the source of his power enshrined in the University crest; the crest refers to power. The thrust of power is further enhanced by the machismo characteristics of the 'Superman' we see this in the physique of the man. The camera angle that slightly hides the man's face gives him an indeterminate personality which refers to the fact that this could be just anybody. There is a subtle reference to the transformation process of the Superman in the popular comic series: this process takes place whenever Superman is about to rescue somebody in distress or save a situation from calamity. Likewise, we can read the man in the advert as in the process of transformation, to render some assistance to his immediate constituency

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<sup>9</sup> This is embedded in the concept of Phaneroscopy, a model that was further developed by Tomaselli from Peirce. See Tomaselli 1996: 30 - 37

and contribute to the growth of his professional calling through the power he has – a degree from the University of Natal which is referred to by the crest on the vest.

The third category of sign, symbolic, has no direct connection to the image presented. Meaning is derived from the metaphorical interpretation of the idea represented. This is the stage of *thirdness* – “a medium of connection between a first and a second: it is a mode of relations – a method of combining various elements and making them intelligible” (Tomaselli, 1996: 58). The advertising agency, Lindsay Smithers Bond (LSB) claims that the image of the Superman icon is to “demonstrate the power to succeed which the University gives you as a quality institution” (Lynton Heath, Creative Director LSB). How far does this symbolic interpretation of the different elements suggest this? The University crest symbolises learning and knowledge, which results in the acquisition of power. Placing the crest on the blue vest of the Superman, where the Superman logo normally resides, indicates that the source of his power lies in the University crest. The transformation pose symbolises that the University graduates are successful professionals in their areas of specialisation, and removing his corporate attire and exposing the University crest reveals the source of the success. The message ‘The power to succeed’ aptly fits into the image and helps in the intended meaning. So the suit, shirt and tie symbolise a professional, the slight hiding of his face symbolises a faceless unidentified individual, these are the professionals you see or come across everyday and everywhere. In all, the general meaning decoded here is that of a University that gives the strength and equips you with power to succeed in life.

Indian students interviewed from Queensburgh High School believe they can identify with the ‘Superman’. The qualities that Superman possesses, of invisibility and power are easily transferable to the University. A student from the school stated further that the advertisement says, “the University gives you knowledge, which means power” (Focus group discussion, August 2000). On the other end of the spectrum, black students from Ferndale Secondary School and Amangwane High School had no idea who ‘Superman’ is and invariably could not transfer any quality of this icon to the University campaign. This gives justification to the probing question of a senior staff at the University Student

Academic Affairs office: “how many black students in the township know anything about Superman” (Focus group discussion, August 2000). Stuart Hall (1993) notes that “every visual sign in advertising connotes a quality situation, value or inference, which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational positioning” (in During 1993: 97). Invariably, students without pre-conceived knowledge of the ‘Superman’ icon had no cultural expertise from which to draw an inference to the understanding of the Superman concept. The stories perceived from this concept vary due to the different cultural contexts of the audiences. This is what Hall calls the *negotiated code* (102). He states that: “these codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained by their differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power”.

While the black matric students believe that the University is saying that you need a lot of power and zeal to try and succeed in the University, some Indian students also in matric from Queensburgh High School believe the University gives knowledge, which is the power to succeed. A post-graduate American student believes the Superman concept is saying that the University is a powerful institution with powerful academia, this view was also supported by a Jamaican Researcher who visited the University recently (Personal interview, August 5 2000). The transformation pose of the 'Superman' was not mentioned or interpreted in these focus group discussions. However, in earlier research commissioned by the agency, students from Crawford High School noted that "the shedding of clothes means the person who comes out is a different person to the one who entered the University" (McMurray 1998b). This translates that the University of Natal will transform students into 'superheroes' at the completion of their programmes. An alternative reading which Hall calls an *oppositional code*: “the decoding of message in a globally contrary way” (in During 1993: 103), was given by a student from Pinetown Girls High School. The student claims that the over-riding theme of power evident in the muscular build of the ‘Superman’ could have negative impact on skinny little boys who are brilliant and aspire for tertiary education. The impact could be the fear of intimidation from prospective fellow students in the University who possess the machismo physique of the Superman (Focus group discussion, August 2000). Based on the various comments

above, this advertisement produced diverse reaction from students across different social stratification, social background, geographical locations and cultural backgrounds.

On the level of firstness, the Basketball player also conjures no other image but that of a basketball player, here we instantly eject the internalised or pre-conceived image of a basketball player. Secondness provides for a deeper perception, we see a player that is almost and definitely reaching his goal – dunking the ball. We normally associate sports shoes with performance, the University of Natal branded shoes refer to where the power lies, propelling the player to achieve his goal. The image also conjures the picture of a popular basketball player, in what Sut Jhally (1987) refers to as “transferring the meaning of one sign to another” (130). This is a process of transferring meaning of a person, a social situation, something in nature, another object, or an emotional feeling to a commodity. What Jhally refers to here is merchandising in advertising, but here the image of Michael Jordan, a successful basketball player is conjured by the University advertisement. Michael Jordan is famous for his deftness on the court and for his Nike sport shoes, which are branded with his name. He has advertised and merchandised the shoes as the power behind his dunking ability. An alternative reading of the advertisement is that the absence of spectators in the background refers to the fact that the basketball player is in a world of his own, unnoticed by the outside world. Moving to the third category of sign, we begin to read symbolic meanings to all the elements of the advertisement. Placing the logo on the soles of the sport shoes of the basketball player enhances the overall theme of power to succeed. “We normally associate sport shoes (with) giving you the edge in whatever sport you are in, we use the University logo to state that this is the University to help you achieve in your particular area” (Lynton Heath, Creative Director LSB). This is the meaning intended and it can be argued that the powerful visual composition enhances this to a large extent. The University crest under the soles of the sport shoes symbolises a source of energy and of power that propels you high up to achieve your goal. So the University of Natal equips you with the power to reach your goal, giving you the edge in life.

At the focus group discussion organised for this study, four Standard Nine white students from Pinetown Girls High School collectively gave a definite 'no', when asked if they could identify with the basketball concept. They claim that it does not appeal to them, but believe it will appeal to black students. They, however, stated that the message here is that the University could help you reach your goal. Some black students from Amangwane High School could identify with it, albeit, not totally, as one prefers boxing and some soccer. In any case, they identify with the concept and the message of the University giving you the knowledge to achieve your goal. One of the black students stated that the advertisement says "one needs to study higher to get success". In the Kwa-Mashu group of the focus group discussion compiled by Nyasulu & Associates which was commissioned by the advertising agency, one of the reasons the students liked the advertisement was based on "the fact that a Black person is the one scoring" (McMurray 1998b). Indian students from Queensburgh High School believe that the University will take you to new heights and that the University is stressing multidisciplinary approach to education, by balancing academic well with sporting activities. Black students from Ferndale Secondary School share this opinion; they believe that at the University you can do a lot of things apart from education even sports.

The Rolls Royce, at first encounter conjures an image of luxury and top-of-the-range car, but here is a Rolls Royce with the University crest in place of the Rolls Royce emblem. Secondness in this regard connects us to image of the Rolls Royce, which is recognisable through the reference to the front grill, and the whole frontal design of the bonnet, these refer to luxury and opulence. The University crest connotes an institution of learning and the 'swoosh' impression created in the background connotes motion and mobility. So the general connotations implied here are luxury, opulence, mobility and an institution of learning. On the symbolic realm, Heath states "there is a kind of misconception about what Rolls Royce stands for, and people tend to take things in different ways sometimes" (Personal interview, August 2000). This attests to the fact that signs do not necessarily have totally fixed meanings. He states further: "some people saw it as a colonial icon which was not intended" (ibid.). Reading the Rolls Royce advertisement in this regard, the University then symbolises a colonial, traditional and conservative institution,

meanwhile “all the Rolls Royce was meant to do was to communicate the University as a quality institution” (ibid.). This is true, if read the way it was intended. The University crest on the Rolls Royce is aimed at transferring and identifying the quality of the Rolls Royce: luxury, symbol of achievement, accomplishment and excellence to the University. A degree from the University takes you to the top and takes you anywhere, because of the quality and excellence attached to its degree. The Rolls Royce concept also provides us with different forms of perception. Contrary to general perception, that the Rolls Royce translates that the University is old fashioned and conservative and not moving with modern times, a student from Ferndale High School stated that the Rolls Royce concept is actually very appropriate. She noted that the Rolls Royce is an old car, meaning that the University is old, tested, well established and has stood the test of time. These are the qualities that their parents look for in an institution, which gives the University of Natal an edge over the new colleges and fly-by-night private institutions. A staff member of the University claims that the advertisement says that the University is targeting people with high potentials and those that can afford the high cost of education (Focus group discussion, August 2000). This perception is contrary to what the agency intended to communicate about the University through the Roll Royce Concept, which is that of quality and class, the general perception was oppositional. Various comments were gathered during the focus group discussions: while some students believe that the University is for students from affluent backgrounds, some believe that the institution is old fashioned, expensive and not affordable. According to the view of a parent, “students from rural background may not be encouraged” (Focus group discussion, August 2000). A student from Amangwane High School in Bergeville noted that the University is saying “if you finish your education you’ll achieve and buy expensive things.”

The ‘Star Trek’ material on first encounter simply reveals a woman commander in a confident pose with a space ship in her background. With regard to secondness, The young woman in ‘Star Trek’ exudes confidence and power. Her folded arms connote that she is in control and doing well in a stereotypical perception of a man’s world. In general, her looks - the slight smile and the general demeanour - suggest control, contentment and confidence. The space ship refers to travel into space, an endless space. The overall

indexical reading is a contented, confident and powerful young woman taking control in a technological milieu. According to Kakar *et al*, (2000: 8) an alternative reading is that she is self-satisfied and idle, she might as well exude arrogance, as intended messages are not always interpreted as desired or expected. This also explains the alternative reading of a student from Pinetown Girls High School, who claimed that the 'Superman' material could create a fear of intimidation in the minds of skinny students about prospective students who possess the brawny physique of the Superman. The reading of the Rolls Royce material to refer to the University of Natal as old and conservative also confirms the assumption that messages are not always interpreted as desired or expected. On the third level of the deconstruction of meaning - the intelligible, we begin to associate some connotational meanings to the 'Star Trek' material. This is the symbolic stage and the third category of sign. The woman in the 'Star Trek' piece of the campaign conjures the image of a space-ship commander who is obviously in control. The message, 'Take control of your future' is enhanced by the futuristic ambience of the poster. Reading this advertisement in reference to the combination of all the elements: the spaceship; the young woman; her demeanour and the University crest, and also with the symbolic interpretations, exude a sense of accomplishment. The University of Natal gives you a 'badge of honour' that enables you to be in charge of your chosen profession. It gives you the power to control your future and attain the desired height in your career. As the world moves more and more into advanced technological development, a degree from University of Natal equips you with the resources to survive and not only that, to take control of whatever the future has to offer. Using a woman in the advertisement symbolises a revolutionary departure from a predominantly patriarchal society. The meaning in this piece is derived from the metaphorical interpretation enshrined in the symbolic military milieu: The spaceship, the spacesuit, and the words 'badge of honour'. These symbols and signs are encoded into the academic milieu.

The 'Star Trek' concept presents almost a uniform perception among people interviewed. The theme of woman empowerment is generally observed, while some believe the University empowers women and it is non-sexist, others believe that the University will

equip you with the knowledge to take control. In the analysis of Kakar *et al* (2000) a respondent argued that "the theme of the University and Star Trek implied that University like a spaceship, (is) a vehicle to the future". A student from Ferndale Secondary School in Phoenix made this point clearer, she said succinctly that:

- "You can go overseas after your study" (reference to the space and futuristic ambience of the advertisement);
- "It says the University has got skill and technology";
- "It shows that women can do something in life";
- "The race of the lady does not make any difference".

A general comment from students in the focus group discussion sessions was that the 'Star Trek' concept is aspirational, an idea the agency aimed to create. This does not mean that no alternative reading of the advertisement was derived, a student from Ferndale Secondary School, Phoenix, believes that the lady is too static, lacking any form of dynamism. A visiting researcher to the Centre for Gender Studies at the University claimed that the advertisement is read as an attraction for women to join the University, specifically in the information technology department. She believes that it is a good advertisement for a specific programme in the University but not a good one for a corporate University advertisement. She goes further that the slogan 'power to succeed' means women can succeed in information technology (personal interview, August 2000).

Two critical issues arise from the different concepts of the University of Natal's print advertising materials: the use of popular culture and a bias towards 'Americanisation'.

Popular cultures are found in the global cultural realities: sports, politics, fashion, film and so on, here we find the power of motion pictures (film and television) influencing the creative process of advertising, as referred to in the opening citation of this section. Superman was popularised as a cartoon character through the medium of television, the basketball concept relies heavily on the American NBA (National Basketball Association) league popularised over the years through television. The Star Trek advertisement "derives its coding and hence the bulk of its meaning from the Star Trek movie produced in 1977 and the present day tele-series" (Kakar, 2000: 10). In the bid towards an international appeal, the agency relies heavily on American culture for the

campaign materials. The Creative Director of the agency noted that “a lot of kids relate to it and kind of aspire to it. We are exposed to American movies, American shows on TV”. He stated further: “I am not saying whether they are good or bad, but from the communication point of view, it’s a kind of aspirational value. It’s all about communication”. (Lynton Heath, personal interview, May 2000)

As with the print advertisements, radio advertisements also involve creative concepts and productions. However, it is a different sort of creativity, since sound is the only element one has to work with. The lack of visuals in radio places a great burden on a radio copy,<sup>10</sup> and invariably, words, sound effects, music and voice are used to create pictures and images in the minds of the audience. The relatively cheaper cost of radio production puts it at an advantage over other broadcasting medium, this advantage then requires a great deal of creativity to achieve the impact that the visual element of television normally has. Steve Rabonsky (Cited from Bovee 1995), an executive in an American advertising agency, declares “I can do a radio commercial that convinces you, you’re on Mars. On television, we’re talking big bucks for that” (327). The University radio advertisement also draws its creative concepts from popular culture, enshrined in political and social lives. This is seen in the use of political figures and international icons. The ‘Bill Clinton’ concept (Appendix 2) derives its thrust from the scandal that rocked the ‘White House’ in 1997/98, when the American president’s involvement with a former ‘White House’ intern (Monica Lewinsky) dominated global media. The president denied the affair, but after damning evidence was produced, he retracted and acknowledged having had a “relationship with Miss Lewinsky, that was not appropriate” (radio copy, Appendix 2). The advertising agency builds on this lack of moral ethics to launch one of its programmes: the Centre for Comparative and Applied Ethics, because the University believes that “ethics should form part of every one’s education” (radio copy, Appendix 2). This concept and others were tinged with some high level of humour, which invariably helped in the total appeal of the commercial. Analysing this in semiotic parlance, one notices the utilisation of *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic* structures of interpretation. The paradigmatic structure makes use of resources outside the text and

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<sup>10</sup> Copy refers to the words in an advertising message.

sign, and the syntagmatic is based purely on internal reading of the text. (Jhally 1987: 140-141). The external use of sound effects, sound footages from original sources help in creating a realistic picture in the minds of the listeners. On first contact, one recognises the voice of the American president as it is being welded into the University of Natal's advertisement. The voice then triggers the image of a powerful human being; a president of a powerful country and it automatically refers to power and authority. This indexical stage is further enhanced by the sound effect of the applause, which refers to a large gathering of people. The third stage, the symbolic gives a clearer understanding: the voice of Bill Clinton symbolises an international figure, giving the University an international appeal. The sound effect of the applause refers to an international figure lying right in front of a global audience, this symbolises the height in lack of moral ethics. It is this lack of moral ethics, wrapped up with a tinge of humour that the advertising agency builds on to introduce the University of Natal's Centre for Comparative and Applied Ethics. Which is the core message of the radio advertisement.

This same interpretation can be said to go for all other radio materials. However, I will only endeavour to sum up their symbolic meanings which are derived from the indexical encounters. Louis Luyt, a former chairperson of the South African Rugby Federation Union (SARFU) resigned at the height of an enquiry commissioned by the then president, Nelson Mandela, into the affairs of the rugby union. Luyt, then formed a political party, to launch himself into the political mainstream of the country. The advertising agency uses this to introduce the multidisciplinary of the University of Natal's degree: "so if your chosen field is in the sporting world, you can also choose to study Political Science" (radio copy Appendix 3). The underlining message here is that, no one knows what the future holds for a person, so it pays to have a multidisciplinary approach to one's education. Just as Luyt who was once a sport icon found himself in the political arena. The 'Desmond Tutu' concept (Appendix 4) solely builds on the personality of the famous Archbishop. The characteristics of this personality were explored to deliver the advertising message. This international icon is known for his oratory ability and his anti-apartheid speeches, which were hinged on freedom for South Africa, and consequently, he symbolises liberation. It is the play on the word 'freedom' and the transferring of the

Tutu icon that the advertising agency uses to bring to the fore the freedom the University of Natal offers: freedom to choose your own subject; freedom to choose where you want to study from the two campuses.

The *Perceived Text* derived from the radio advertisements varies from different respondents in the various focus group discussion sessions organised for this study. According to a student from Queensburgh High School, “the ethics message is not working”, as too much emphasis has been laid on Bill Clinton’s voice which distracts listeners away from the message. In addition to this, she believed that the Bill Clinton issue has been over-used in the media, there was a tendency to wave the University advertisement off as one of ‘those’. A student from Ferndale Secondary School mentioned that the advertisement was too complex, ‘comparative ethics’ is not one of the courses their generation is interested in and in any case he was not aware of the Bill Clinton scandal. The Louis Luyt concept does not appeal to young students at all, the emphasis on the multidisciplinary of the University programme, to them, is boring. There is less emphasis on extracurricular activity, as students do not come to the University to learn only. The political over-emphasis with the Luyt and Clinton advertisements was far too boring to them. Girls from Pinetown High School declared in the focus group discussion “we are tired of politics, we are sick of politics, there is too much politics in South Africa”. At a discussion group organised with some staff members of the University, a staff member claimed that Luyt was not an icon to be used by the University, as his character is tinged with some negative connotations. To quote example, he was involved in some fertiliser factory scandal in the seventies, the South African Rugby Federation Union (SARFU) squabbles in the nineties, and eventually a political party with a meagre followership (Focus group discussion, August 2000). Another staff member mentioned that, though the advertisement is cleverly done and the multidisciplinary of the University is cleverly delivered, the Luyt icon has a negative connotation. An interesting discovery was that the people involved in the various focus group discussions did not recognise the voice of Desmond Tutu, a white high school student from Pinetown Girls High School thought it was the voice of Winnie Mandela. To the white high school students, the message perceived was that the University is a black institution full of freedom fighters,

which is not inviting to them. A university staff member declared: “the freedom message is good, but mind you, some level of qualification is needed to get in” (Focus group discussion. August 2000). He expatiated further that students must be made aware that you need some qualification to get in, that freedom might be misconstrued to be free entry into the University programmes. The ‘Rolling Stone’ concept was the one that actually appealed to most scholars, students and staff. They claimed that the message was okay, straight to the point and it said a lot about the University of Natal. That unlike the other universities, University of Natal is very flexible to meet individual needs. Though they noted that a younger band would have been a better idea.

The various comments stated in this section have exposed the different perceptions of the campaign materials. We have discovered that meanings are not always interpreted as intended and that meanings are derived from different variables: the social; cultural and geographical backgrounds, which impacted on the audience deconstruction of meaning.

### **The Social Text**

This stage in message transmission is influenced by social and incidental factors. People talk and negotiate their individual perception of text as seen in the *Perceived Text* to the extent that the text moves toward a generally accepted perception. Michaels (1990: 17) argues that people “presumably negotiate and revise, within some limits, the meaning they have ascribed to what they have seen”. The Public may even discuss and hold meetings and demand some kind of community response to the media message. For example, when *Nandos* – a franchised popular fast food eatery, launched an advertising campaign on television, featuring a guide-dog misleading its owner in order to have the owner’s take-away chicken pack, there was an outcry from different quarters: ranging from the association of the blind to the guide-dog trainers association. The commercial was eventually taken off the screen and re-edited. The *Social Text* also involves the gradual reversal of the direction of the deconstruction of media meaning. Michaels (1990) notes that any two households that received the same or similar texts to each other, through negotiation of meaning would move a step towards commonality of

meaning. This is so because people negotiate, renegotiate and revise, to some limits the meaning they have ascribed to what they have seen. Michaels (1990) argues further that:

Rarely is the cross-checking of meaning explicit; it seems more likely to be contained in the discussion of preference - like or dislike or some program or character. But in all these activities, a kind of cross- checking of interpretation can be observed, weeding out obviously deviant meaning and privileging certain others. Thus, the Social Text moves from variability to commonality. (17)

Michaels (1990), however, points out that a constraint to commonality of meaning is stratification: social structures; class; gender; ideology and so on. These structures do contribute in a way to commonality of meaning within a specific social class. In some academic quarters, of which Michaels himself notes, there has been debate whether these structures do require a sharing of meaning or common semiotic resources and whether the media actually brings its viewers together, pull them apart or maintain existing boundaries (Michaels 1990: 18).

With reference to the University of Natal's campaign materials and the observations noted in the various focus group discussions, the respondents and participants to some extent share some common points of view, which they ascribed to the advertisements. It was noted that the whole campaign was tinged with too much emphasis on American culture. The issue of American culture runs though from the 'Superman', 'Star Trek', and 'basketball' down to the 'Bill Clinton concept'. A parent puts it aptly "is there no way of using South African social culture and still deliver same message? There is no South Africaness in most of the advertisements" (Focus group discussion with staff, students and parent, August 2000).

Stereotyping is another issue that cuts across all the readings of the advertisements by most of the participants. For instance, that the basketball is a 'black' sport. The Visiting - Researcher to the University interviewed expanded on this further, that black males are

generally believed to excel in sports and not in academics, hence the use of black males to advertise sports. Superman is 'white', connoting the false conception of white power. White students from Pinetown Girls High School could not relate to the basketball concept because it is a 'black' game (Focus group discussion, August 200).

Another common issue ascribed is the overall use of old icons that runs through the campaign. Superman, the comic icon is old. This coupled with the historical context of the country could explain why some black students are not aware of the icon. Rolls Royce is an old car, and a staff member at the Student Academic Affairs noted that "the address of the University used to be King George Avenue and we had to change to the use of postal and private bag addresses to get away from the colonial connotation and now we get a Rolls Royce" (Focus group discussion, August 2000). A student from Amangwane High School brushed off the Rolls Royce icon: "is old fashioned, why not a BMW". The female participants though gave credit to the use of a female in the Star Trek materials; "it emphasises 'girl power', she is in control and in charge" (Student from Queensburgh High School), but they all claimed that the materials are not gender-balanced both on the prints and the radio material. These are some of the general comments and opinions that run through the various classes of people involved in the discussions for the study of the University campaign.

### **The Public Text**

The *Public Text* has to do with getting feedback on audience perception of the text. The producers develop or project their audiences' reading of their programmes and it is at this stage that the perception is juxtaposed with the meaning the producers intended. The audiences become the central focal point, as "commercial infrastructure of (electronic) mass media demands increasing sensitivity to audiences" (Michael 1990:19). Audiences and not programmes are the central commodity of mass media, and this is what media sponsors exploit to sell their own messages. This stage also involves sampling, surveying and statistically collecting the viewing patterns of some sample of viewers to bring increased precision to the matter of evaluating audience attention. This task is too wide

for the scope of this research article, however, comments from the *Perceived Texts* and *Social Text* both combine to give an analysis of the *Public Text* and the perception of the advertising campaign materials. This, I hope the University and the agency would take into cognisance in the production of the second phase of the marketing strategy.

The deconstruction of media message ends at the point of the *Public Text*. This is the stage where the 'hermeneutic circle' revolves back to the *Conceived Text*, the origin of the media message. The feed back from the *Received Text*, *Perceived Text*, the *Social Text* and eventually, the *Public Text* combine to send feed back to the producer and the author, so that these could be juxtaposed with their intended meaning in the message coding. Thus rotates the circuit of media message transmission *a la* Eric Michaels. Tomaselli (1996: 34) in analysing Michaels' 'hermeneutic circle' sums it all up thus:

The first four elements of Michaels' topology are subsumed as part of life – history of the inactive text. It is only at the point of the received text when the viewer/reader/listener intercepts the communication, that the communication circle is completed and the text becomes truly active.

Tomaselli states further that what Michaels does not mention is that each of the texts could themselves be sites of confused and contested meanings. Contested, negotiated and re-negotiated meanings amongst, or between, those involved in production, transmission and reception processes. In this way, *Produced* or the *Production Text* become sites of struggle for meaning and its construction, in that it reproduces the differences between the producers and readers of the text, as well as between groups and individual readers.

One other thing that Michaels does not mention is what I call *Aesthetic Text*. This deals with a set of principles of good taste, appreciation of a work of art and finding a symmetry or harmony between all various components of the photography, television or radio programmes. How does the construction of the set in a television programme enhance the coding of meaning, what role does the text layout, colours and image layout play in the overall symmetric ambience of the media message? The overall composition

of all these elements contribute in most instances to message coding and decoding. With reference to the University of Natal's campaign materials, the first comments uttered by most high school students interviewed were: "It's colourful", "nice", "very bright colours", "the girl is pretty" (Star Trek). A student from Pinetown Girls High School, however noted, that the basketball material was rather dull, that more colours should have been added to brighten it up. Some suggested that the voice-over in the radio commercial is not good enough, others believe that having a female voice-over for the pay-off line "The power to succeed" is not apt enough, as it is too seductive for an educational advertisement. Another comment concerns the text messages at the bottom left of the posters, the messages were a bit hidden as too much emphasis was laid on the images. The general comment was that bigger fonts should have been used to attract attention to the text messages. The overall assessment was that the advertising materials are catchy and the creativity quite good, but it is targeted at the wrong audiences. A staff member of the University noted that, visitors to the recent world HIV/AIDS 2000 conference in Durban commented on the aesthetic beauty of the University advertisements. It is this aesthetic beauty coupled with the creativity that contributed to the 'Bill Clinton' concept winning an international award at the New York Advertising Festival.

This section of the study has attempted to analyse the advertising campaign, while showing the dynamics that exist within a complex process of message conception, production and exposure. The research has done this by locating each variable into Eric Michaels' 'hermeneutic circle'. Based on Michaels' circular conception of message transmission, I have formulated an adaptation that specifically locates the different stages of the University of Natal's corporate advertising campaign into the circular model of message conceptualisation and transmission (see Figure Ten below).

## PART III

### FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

*The ... mistake of critics is in their cultural theory: they take people as if they did nothing but respond to ads, while we have seen that people take up ads actively, and there are many ways in which ads can have unintended effects, or no effect at all. People are not stupid, and even if they were, they would not be predictably stupid.*  
(Greg Myers 1999: 213)

Consumers and audiences are getting more educated in reading and perceiving advertising contents. The findings that were discovered from the process of this research attest to this, consumers have caught up with marketing. That consumers and audiences are vulnerable to advertising because promotional culture has colonised so many other discourses that might provide alternatives, is wrong. Audiences don't just take messages passively, they negotiate, renegotiate and analyse the content in their reading of the meaning. Greg Myers (1999: 212) argues that "most advertising today is not devious enough. Consumers have caught up with and, in many ways, overtaken the marketing community. There's barely a strategy left they haven't seen through". This essay has shown that people read between the lines in their perception and reading of advertising materials. However, the University of Natal advertising materials were and still are being commended for their creative ambience. The level of creativity in the materials is good, but unfortunately it overshadows the message and this explains why it generated different responses from the target audience. The advertisement winning an international award attests to the high standard of creativity.<sup>11</sup> "The creativity is there but it's not appropriate for the South African context", this is the way a student from Queensburgh High School wrapped up the campaign. My argument is that the agency should have found a way of

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<sup>11</sup> Critics argue that award is a way of keeping the advertising industry alive and entrenching it more into the human culture. It is an extension of capitalism, as agencies with awards tend to get more business.

creating a balance between creativity and the message while taking cognisance of the socio-cultural context of South Africa into consideration. In one of the group discussions organised for the study of this campaign, a staff member at the University of Natal juxtaposed the University advertisement with that of University of Cape Town. That of Cape Town has a picture of one of the buildings in the University and a simple text message that reads: "Our degrees are internationally recognised". This simple message is quite loaded; it does create a negative connotation on the degrees of other universities. A foreign Indian student at the focus group discussions declared, "If my father had seen that, I would have been sent straight to Cape Town". It could work well, in this era of global village and globalisation, students would obviously want an internationally recognised degree.

The media exposure also calls for some critical assessment. The University of Natal noted that the marketing campaign was to address among other issues, the loss of potential students to traditional rivals like Universities of Cape Town, Rhodes and Stellenbosch. This only points to one fact: that if prospective students leave the province to study in other provinces, it is only logical for the University to protect its home base and also attract students from other provinces. After all, universities from other provinces pull prospective students from KwaZulu-Natal. The media exposure did not address this issue well enough. I acknowledge the placement of the print materials in the *Sunday Times* (Gauteng-Metro) and *Sowetan* (Gauteng) to cater for the approximately 20%<sup>12</sup> audience mainly in Gauteng; however, the same could not be said of the radio campaign. The radio materials were limited to *East-Coast Radio* and *Lotus FM* both in KwaZulu-Natal, although a large number of participants in the focus group discussions would have preferred a station such as Radio Metro with a national footprint.<sup>13</sup> Budgeting provides a ready-made excuse in this regard, as Helen Alexander (Media executive, LSB) noted. My contention is that, having one hundred and sixty spots in a predominantly Indian station and an 'all races' station both based in KwaZulu-Natal did not do justice to the campaign.

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<sup>12</sup> Lindsay Smithers Bond, University of Natal campaign Analysis.

<sup>13</sup> The latest Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS) states that *Radio Metro* commands about 5.6 million listeners a week, second only to *Ukhozi Fm*, which commands some 6.7 million listeners (<http://www.metrofm.co.za>).

The advertising agency, however, noted in the campaign analysis that the radio spots had the tendency to reach all races, when *Lotus FM* is a predominantly Indian station, this contradiction calls for some concern. The agency however noted that the second phase of the marketing strategy would take stations such as *Radio Metro* into consideration in the media campaign (Helen Alexander, Media Executive LSB).

Though some criticisms were levelled against the racial stereotyping of the whole campaign, I believe to some degree that the racial segmentation is commendable: Superman - White, Basketball player - Black, Star trek - Indian. Communicating to audiences in South Africa requires that the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the country should be reflected, invariably, every cultural context of all the races could not be totally represented in the campaign. The easy way out of this is to categorise racial groupings into these three predominant racial groups.

As stated earlier, the campaign is highly influenced with American culture. While the impact of American culture is highly noted in the teen generation, as evident in movies, music and television shows, the agency has over estimated this impact in their bid towards creating an aspirational mood. The youth as well as the adult interviewed for the purpose of this research, crave for local identity. They crave the South African identity, which is missing in the print advertisement. High school students want to see their local heroes presented as role models, these are their everyday people and these are men and women they can identify with. I asked some of the high school students during the University open-day session, if they would study at the University of Natal. The responses here are self-explanatory:

First student: Yes!

Researcher: Why?

First student: My neighbour studied here and he is doing well (*reference to local heroes*)

Second student: I want to go overseas (*effect of too much aspirational desire of Western culture?*)

Third student: I think I want to go to Varsity college.

Researcher: Why?

Third student: I think it's cool, I have a lot of friends there.

Fourth student: I don't know, but there is a possibility.

I asked the staff member from the Student Academic Affairs if there was any notable increment in the student number after the launch of the campaign. Her reply was that the student number dropped that year. While a lot of other reasons could be attributed for the drop, the campaign did not have any dramatic effect on increasing student enrolment. This staff member further stated that, the advertisements did not do anything in attracting students, but it placed the University in the limelight, an example of this was the University's stand at the world HIV/AIDS conference in Durban. Visitors were commenting on and commending the University advertising materials.

In conclusion, the process of marketisation and commodification of the academic institutions has been characterised by massive aggressive campaign in the media. This process has overlooked the basic needs and aspirations of the students they try to attract in the first place. This process would also affect the educational institutions in the sense that "a university that promotes itself will also be changed in its practises of curriculum development, teaching, and grading" (Fairclough in G. Myers 1999: 228). Bertelsen (2000) notes that the recasting of tertiary institutions as service industries for capitalist enterprise has a considerable impact on academics. She argues further that in this dispensation "what gets taught or researched matters less than that it is excellently taught or researched; that is, that it satisfies market demand"(ibid. 4). As the marketisation and the commodification processes get more entrenched in to the academic culture, an adoption of the principles of business becomes the order of the day. For example, in the business terrain, when production cost gets too high, the remedy is outsourcing, that is recruiting staff on a cheap tenure, contract or part-time basis. For the universities, this implies part-time recruitment, contract and exploited graduate labour (ibid.). From this, one notes that:

South African universities are already buying in cheap labour to replace "redundant" tenured staff. If they can secure this for a fraction of the cost of a tenured post, why should "rational"

employers continue to pay? For business, "buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest" remains the golden rule (Bertelsen 2000: 1).

Bertelsen argues further that the effect of this is that staff are downsized, departments and faculties merged and work is rapidly being casualised. Peter Horn (2000) agrees with Bertelsen's argument and he opines that this is gradually destroying collegiate structure of the university. These business/market driven strategies would eventually devalue academic work. Courses are now determined by business or market rather than academic consideration (Horn 2000: 25). Academic research is only good if it creates new product and courses that do not feed job skills are seen as waste of time. Invariably, "courses are determined by business rather than academic consideration" (Ibid.).

Furthermore, what exists in our institutions is the gradual redefining of roles. Bertelsen's argument is relevant in this perspective. She notes that "manager is replacing the professor as the central figure of the university, and trends show excessive growth in spending on administration relative to instruction." (2000: 1). Horn again concurs with her and he declares that the tendency to make heads of departments, deans and vice-chancellors "managers" rather than "administrators" ... seriously undermines the ethos of the universities" (Horn 2000: 25). These scenarios are the fall-out effects of the commodification trend that is rapidly changing the age-long concept of the traditional notion of university as an institution in the society.

One other fall-out effect of this commodification trend is the marketing strategies employed by universities. These strategies tend towards global marketing principles at the expense of the traditional ethos of academic institutions. South African universities in an attempt to be globally competitive have continuously employed international ideas and draw from global (foreign) cultures at the expense of local identity. For instance, as analysed in this study, The University of Natal's advertising campaign materials have no connection to any South African culture or experience. All the images portray ideas from basically American popular culture, which though aspirational, are foreign to the majority of the students the institution intends to attract. The images have no direct symbolic

reference to academic institution or the creation of the desire for attainment of academic qualification. When the University of Cape Town declared that “Our degrees are internationally recognised”, in one of its advertisements, an advertisement that featured only an image of one the buildings in the University. A student at the University of Natal did not hide her feelings about this when she declared: “If my father had seen that, I would have been sent straight to Cape Town” (Focus group discussion, August 2000). This cited instance states how a simple and powerful message can be more effective than creating an aspirational desire based on foreign culture. A culture that has no positive effect, as this study has shown that prospective students and their parents crave for local images.

This essay has attempted in abbreviated form to give an insight into the commodification trend amongst 'public' institutions, while teasing out global and local issues that have engendered this process, specifically in the South African context. An analysis of the University of Natal's corporate advertising provided a case study for the research, and findings emanating from this effort gave insight into the process of message construction, production, transmission and finally deconstruction. This essay most importantly re-enforced the thesis that meaning derived from message does not always coincide with the intended meaning. South Africa provides a peculiar scenario with its cross-cultural and socio-political hybridity, which gives insight into the multiplicity of message perception and meaning as evident in the findings of this study.

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## Microsoft Certified Solution Developer

### Overview

#### What is the MCSD (Microsoft Certified Solution Developer)

For developers, the Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD) credential is offered. MCSDs are qualified to build Web-based, distributed, and commerce applications by using Microsoft products such as: Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Visual Basic, and Microsoft Transaction Server. The MCSD track will give students the necessary knowledge to build desktop applications and access corporate databases using Visual basic 6, as well as building distributed 3-tier client-server solutions. As an option delegates may learn how to build web-based solutions using Microsoft FrontPage or how to develop applications using Microsoft SQL Server database engine.

### Who Should Attend

Delegates with intermediate experience in the computer programming industry that wish to take their skills to an advanced level. Delegates requiring the ability to build, design and implement desktop and distributed application solutions using Microsoft Visual Basic 6.

### Prerequisites

Delegates should possess intermediate skill in programming with Microsoft Visual Basic. This includes skills in the following areas:

Write solid event-driven code.

Create stand-alone, multiform applications.

Create an effective interface.

Access and modify a database.

Candidates who do not qualify should attend the Visual Basic Fundamentals course before attempting the MCSD track.

### Timings

20 days - Instructor-led

### How to become certified

Students need to pass 3 cores and 1 elective exam. On completion of any core exam students will become MCP's (Microsoft Certified Professionals). Once all 3 core exams and an elective exam has been passed students will then be fully qualified MCSDs.

### On Completion

Delegates will have mastered all the skills necessary to design, develop and implement stand-alone and enterprise wide programming solutions using Visual Basic 6.

Microsoft **Certified**  
**Professional**  
*Solution Developer*

# Why Choose IT?

## What is IT?

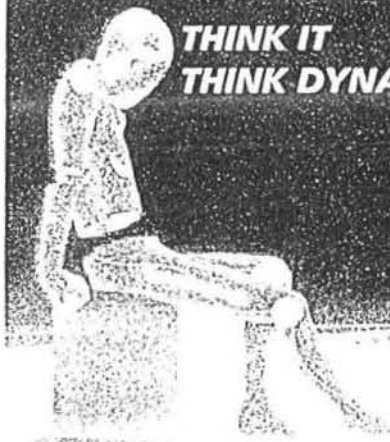
IT stands for Information Technology. Because computers and related systems cover such a broad range of diverse industries, it all gets lumped under the global heading of IT. In other words, if it involves computer technology in any way, it's IT.

The creativity and dedication of the men and women in the Information Technology (IT) industry is all around us. From the latest computer software used to write a term paper, to computer generated animation in the latest blockbuster, from networks and programs that let you order books over the internet, to the satellites and systems that allowed NASA to drive Path Finder on Mars.

Behind each of these technologies is a wide variety of jobs and people, perhaps a lot like you, who put it all together and make it work. Just what do these people do? Read some of the stories in here and find out! Maybe one of these careers will take you where you want to go.

**SECURE YOUR FUTURE  
IN THE IT INDUSTRY.**

**THINK IT  
THINK DYNAMIC!**



## IT Pros: The World's New Deficit

The computer industry has become the fastest growing industry in the world by far. The demand for trained computer engineers is growing faster than traditional training methods can supply these professionals. This in turn has started an Education Revolution, with short, "byte-sized", hands-on practical courses increasing in popularity all over the world.

In America alone, there is a shortage of over 300 000 trained Computer Professionals and in Europe the situation is similar. South Africa being an average of 2 years behind America will soon face the same problem.

Because of this shortage, qualified computer professionals with the necessary skills can demand very high salaries. The starting salary of a computer professional is between R3500 to R4000 after only 1 year's training. This increments to +/-R16000 after 4 years' experience. It is not uncommon today for 21-year-olds to earn salaries of R10, 000-a-month, with many under-thirties becoming millionaires overnight by listing or selling off their computer companies they started up in their garages.

Within the 1 decade of the New Millennium, an astounding 25% of jobs will be made redundant by computers. Therefore, acquiring computer training and skills is an absolute necessity if one is to be successful in the New Millennium. Careers in the computer field not only offer extraordinary high rewards, but also provides you with a secure career and future.



## APPENDIX 2

### **Title: Bill Clinton**

ANNCR: \* The President of the United States.

SFX: Applause

CLINTON: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.

MVO: More and more people are becoming concerned with morality and the ethical values of our modern society.

CLINTON: I never told anybody to lie, not a single time. Never!

MVO: The University of Natal is the first in the country to establish a Centre for Comparative and Applied Ethics. We believe that ethics should form part of every one's education.

CLINTON: Indeed I did have a relationship with Miss Lewinsky that was not appropriate

### **PAY-OFF LINE**

FVO: The University of Natal.

SFX: A 'swoosh' sound

FVO: Giving you the power to succeed.

*\* (ANNCR. – Announcer, MVO - Male Voice Over, FVO - Female Voice Over, SFX – Sound Effect)*

### APPENDIX 3

**Title: Louis Luyt**

LUYT: This Commission was not about SARFU, This Commission was about Louis Luyt.

MVO: Because know one knows what the future holds for them.

Luyt: I intend to remain in the way for a long time.

MVO: The University of Natal offers a multidisciplinary approach to its degrees. So if your chosen field is in the sporting world, you can also choose to study political science.

ANNCR: South Africa has a new political party, and its leader, Dr. Louis Luyt.

MVO: And perhaps even Marketing and Communications.

ANNCR: Who is going to be voting for this Federal Alliance of yours?

Luyt: Hopefully the entire opposition

PAY – OFF LINE:

FVO: The University of Natal

SFX: Swoosh sound

FVO: Giving you the power to succeed.

Luyt: I have a fifty percent chance of governing the country.

## APPENDIX 4

### **Title: Desmond Tutu**

SFX: Chorus in the background

Tutu: I want to tell you none is free until we are free.

MVO: At the university of Natal, we support freedom.

Tutu: All of us in South Africa.

SFX: Applause

MVO: The freedom to pick your own subjects. The freedom to change your mind.

Tutu: And we want to succeed.

MVO: The freedom to choose where you want to study, at the Durban campus or at the Pietermaritzburg campus.

TUTU: We are free!

### **PAY-OFF LINE**

FVO: The University of Natal

SFX: Swoosh sound

FVO: Giving you the power to succeed.

Tutu: Join us, join the winning side.

## **Appendix 5**

### **INTERVIEW WITH THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR (LSB). LYNTON HEATH**

**QUESTION:** What was the brief from the University to you?

**RESPONSE:** Well, the University has not done any advertising or proper advertising before, there's been no coherent advertising strategy in place. What we did was to create an advertising strategy. First, it was marketing strategy then an advertising strategy. We evaluated the situation at the moment and we came up with a two-stage advertising strategy. Because the University has not done any advertising before, the image of the University, the University as a brand, as a product was a bit low. People didn't know what the University stood for; it stands for quality, it stands for prestige. There was no proper perception of the University. So the first stage of the campaign was this (basketball etc). What we tried to do, was actually inject the values the University represented into the University brand. That is the first stage of the advertising, this is what the University of Natal represents from a brand value point of view: it is a quality institution; it's got power, it's got strength. Here the message is simple. The second stage of the campaign, which we are actually shooting at the moment....

**QUESTION:** Why I asked the question was to know what you actually worked with from the University, in terms of the direction of the campaign.

**RESPONSE:** They basically gave us a freehand for creative process. They basically said "we'll work with you, you go ahead and produce the work".

**QUESTION:** How then did you interpret the University brief to these concepts? How did you interpret the brief to a basketball player for an example?

**RESPONSE:** Well, I'll look at all of them. What we wanted to do was to talk to students, young people, basically in a language they will understand.

The idea behind the whole campaign is the University that gives you the power to succeed. It gives you something extra to get ahead in whatever you are doing, be it sport or a professional person. The first advert that we launched was the Superman icon to demonstrate the power to succeed which the University gives you as a quality institution. This we actually took further in the basketball player, we took the University logo and put it under the basketball player's trainers. We normally associate sport shoes to giving you the edge in whatever sport you are in. We use the University logo to state that this is the University to help you achieve in your particular area. We use the image of the basketball because it's not so busy and it talks to different audiences, and it talks to kids on the street level, which is what we are trying to achieve with this particular communication. We brought it down to street level.

QUESTION: Don't you think the image of the basketball is not really South African? It is American.

RESPONSE: Yes it is American

QUESTION: Soccer and rugby are some of the sports that South Africans really like. Why didn't you explore this concept?

RESPONSE: Yes, basketball is American but I think it has some kind of aspirational following in South Africa. It's growing very fast in South Africa and it is very cross-cultural. You know in this country, rugby is perceived to be very white and soccer is perceived to be very black, you know that kind of stuff. Whereas, basketball is kind of international and has American values and sort of talk to everybody in the same kind of level and I think in a way, the American values are what a lot of kids here relate to and kind of aspire to. You know we are exposed to American movies, American shows on TV. I am not saying whether they are good or bad, but from the communication point of view it is a kind of aspirational

value. It is all about communication, it allows us to talk to a wider audience

QUESTION: Okay. Looking at the basketball, you have a black male, Star Trek, an Indian lady. Were you trying to do some kind of racial segmentation?

RESPONSE: I think it was intentional. The University is cross-cultural, it's made up of Indians, Blacks and Whites. In fact the Indians are the highest population of the varsity. Well, from the communication point of view I think people should feel represented in communication. I particularly chose Star Trek, if you watch Star Trek, there is a huge cross-cultural element to Star Trek: there are Blacks, Indians, there are aliens. I used an Indian girl because I feel Indians need to be represented in communication. The University is a cross-cultural institution and I think that should be represented in the communication. What I tried to stay away from is to make it obvious. As soon as Star Trek opens you notice it is cross-cultural. Superman of course is white and he is such known icon that we think people would relate to. Well, we never got any negative feedback from the University saying why did you use a white male for the launch material and why don't you make it black? I think by taking a particular character known as white and making it black, then it becomes a racist issue.

QUESTION: Looking at all the materials, they actually do not portray South African realities: basketball, 'Superman' and 'Star Trek' are all American. Don't you feel people would not be able to identify with them because they are not South African realities? Did you envisage any kind of misconception or perception in this regard?

RESPONSE: Well, when we sat down, we, in a way wanted to create something aspirational with the communication. In an attempt to bring communication down to realities you can lose the aspirational. We wanted to utilise well-known sport super hero icons and character in the communication. As soon as you bring it down to local or reality

perspective you lose the aspirational. And you lose the desire of 'want to be up there', 'want that'. The other problem with communication in South Africa to a cross-cultural audience is that it is very difficult to do that and use local icon without alienating other particular cultures.

QUESTION: Let's talk about the Rolls Royce concept.

RESPONSE: Rolls Royce concept, we have no problem with it, probably a few negative response from the University and students. I think it is a kind of misconception about what Rolls Royce stands for; people tend to take things in different ways sometimes. All the Rolls Royce was meant to do was to communicate quality. It was meant to communicate the University as a quality institution and in a way make people feel proud that they have been accepted into the University, and they will be graduates of the University, graduates of the Rolls Royce institution. That was what the Rolls Royce was targeting. It was communicating the quality value of academic institution. Well, some people saw it as a colonial icon, which was not intended.

QUESTION: In South Africa, when you talk about cars, the youths want cars like the BMW's. I'm saying this because you mentioned something about aspirational.

RESPONSE: Well, it probably would have been better, there was much discussion whether BMW or Rolls Royce. I understand your concern in that area and it was also the concern of the agency. We just felt that the Rolls Royce was more distinctive than the BMW.

QUESTION: Looking at all these concepts, is there anything you would have loved to change, or do differently.

RESPONSE: That is a very interesting question. Well in creatives you look back and you think that there are some things you could add here and there. I think these jobs have actually done what they were meant to do. I think

essentially this job is meant to give the University a value, a set of distinctive value and I think the University of Natal has a very distinctive personality. Looking at the communication, I mean it is different, if you look at what the other universities are doing, there are no where near us, in terms of execution you could always do something better, but I think we did this to the best of our ability.

**QUESTION:** The concern of some people is that the materials are image based and not text based.

**RESPONSE:** It is a two-stage advertising process. We believe that this initial stage of the advertising should communicate the basic packaging of the University, the branding of the University. We are now in stage two, which is, text oriented and with visual as well. This stage is kind of general about the University.

**QUESTION:** Let's talk about the radio ads. I have to commend your creativity; you use a lot of humour. Why did you decide to use well-known figures in the ads?

**RESPONSE:** The 'Bill Clinton' won an international award at the New York festivals: one of the top three in the world, in the education category and I'm very pleased with that. It didn't win a local award. For a university here in Durban to win an international award, I think it is fantastic for the University. It actually helps to communicate the statue of the University: that it is an international University. By taking the figures and locating their values, their international images, their statues, their values with the values of the University, people think this is an important and a prestigious institution. That is why I basically did the campaign around this people. The footages were actually got from the SABC. The Tutu speech was from his speech in one SABC documentary. Luyt, we actually made fun of him as one of those 'mad' Afrikaners, especially his political aspirations and we thought he should have got some education from the University of Natal (Laugh)

solely in the way he presented himself. Bill Clinton as the president of America, his international statue, although we have a go at his morality the fact that he denied his affair with Lewinsky. I think he has a good statue all the same.

QUESTION: Can you take me through the conceptualisation process in terms of the creative process within the agency.

RESPONSE: I am a copywriter by trade and a creative director. Normally we work in a team of two or more people that work on a job. A copywriter and an art director, although they are called different things they are basically on equal level. They work together and come up with ideas based on their discussions. Once the idea is approved, they present the idea to myself, I work with them on the idea. We then present it to client. Once the idea has been approved, the copywriter works on the text and the art director is responsible for the photography and the visual element. So that's how we approached this particular job from the agency point of view. In fact I worked on it with the art director.

QUESTION: Form the budgetary point of view, was there any problem with this campaign?

RESPONSE: No! There wasn't. We produced them locally, we made budgeting reasonable in the production of the ads.

QUESTION: Let's move from the agency now, based on your brief to the producer/ photographer, were they able to implement, alter or improve on the agency's concept?

RESPONSE: It was very difficult. A lot of the jobs were very difficult. For example we had to create the University badge exactly, particularly the shoes (basketball). The Logo wasn't super-imposed on the soles of the shoes. They were specially made for the shoot, the uniform and the badge were specially made.

QUESTION: So there was no kind of computer wizardry in the process.

RESPONSE: I think there was computer wizardry from the point of retouching the pictures. But we actually created everything on the shoes, and in fact, the 'Star Trek' uniform was made by a local designer here in Durban. The Rolls Royce emblem was created in Jo'burg. The 'Star Trek' ship was actually built, it was a model. We shot the ship and the model separately. The sky was actually from a magazine. We then cut and put everything together on the computer.

In general, I think it was a good campaign. You should see what other universities are doing. The campaign actually won an award in the education category of the golden arrow.

# APPENDIX 6

## CONTACT AND DISTANCE PROGRAMMES

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL  
STUDENT ENROLMENTS : 2000 COMPARED WITH 1999  
Figures for 2000 are as at 28 August 2000

CENTRE	YEAR	UNDERGRADUATES (incl NDP)						POSTGRADUATES						TOTAL STUDENTS					
		AFRICAN	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE	OTHER	TOTAL	AFRICAN	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE	OTHER	TOTAL	AFRICAN	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE	OTHER	TOTAL
*DURBAN	1999	3764	229	3821	1458	15	9287	1202	126	949	1128	29	3434	4966	355	4770	2586	44	12721
	2000	3718	245	4065	1575	9	9612	1247	138	1011	1049	17	3462	4965	383	5076	2624	26	13074
	% Difference	-1.2%	7.0%	6.4%	8.0%	-40.0%	3.5%	3.7%	9.5%	6.5%	-7.0%	-41.4%	0.8%	0.0%	7.9%	6.4%	1.5%	-40.9%	2.8%
MEDICAL SCHOOL	1999	422	33	395	41		891	111	14	323	109		557	533	47	718	150		1448
	2000	425	39	424	46		934	105	16	292	99		512	530	55	716	145		1446
	% Difference	0.7%	18.2%	7.3%	12.2%		4.8%	-5.4%	14.3%	-9.6%	-9.2%		-8.1%	-0.6%	17.0%	-0.3%	-3.3%		-0.1%
#PIETERMARITZBURG	1999	2094	79	742	1306	21	4242	2289	31	248	738	12	3318	4383	110	990	2044	33	7560
	2000	1602	82	769	1229	2	3684	582	37	211	608	2000	3438	2184	119	980	1837	2002	7122
	% Difference	-23.5%	3.8%	3.6%	-5.9%	-90.5%	-13.2%	-74.6%	19.4%	-14.9%	-17.6%	#####	3.6%	-50.2%	8.2%	-1.0%	-10.1%	5966.7%	-5.8%
TOTAL	1999	6280	341	4958				3602	171	1520				9882	512	6478			
		11579		2805		36	14420	5293		1975		41	7309	16872		4780		77	21729
	2000	5745	366	5258				1934	191	1514				7679	557	6772			
		11369		2850		11	14230	3639		1756		2017	7412	15008		4606		2028	21642
	% Difference	-8.5%	7.3%	6.1%				-46.3%	11.7%	-0.4%				-22.3%	8.8%	4.5%			
		-1.8%		1.6%		-69.4%	-1.3%	-31.2%		-11.1%		4819.5%	1.4%	-11.0%		-3.6%		2533.8%	-0.4%
PERCENTAGE	1999	43.6%	2.4%	34.4%				49.3%	2.3%	20.8%				45.5%	2.4%	29.8%			
TO TOTAL		80.3%		19.5%		0.2%	100.0%	72.4%		27.0%		0.6%	100.0%	77.6%		22.0%		0.4%	100.0%
	2000	40.4%	2.6%	37.0%				26.1%	2.6%	20.4%				35.5%	2.6%	31.3%			
		79.9%		20.0%		0.1%	100.0%	49.1%		23.7%		27.2%	100.0%	69.3%		21.3%		9.4%	100.0%

\* Includes Technikon, Edgewood, Institute of Nursing and CASME

# Includes Natal College of Education, Madadeni, SACTE, MSTP and ELET

### NOTES:

- Both Full- and Part-Time students are included in the figures.
- Self-Funded degrees and diplomas are included in the figures.
- 1999 figures were generated on 19 February 2000.
- Figures include non-subsidisable qualifications.
- SACTE registrations for 2000 have not been captured into Banner. We have been informed by the Dean that there are approximately 2000 SACTE students registered in 2000. The figures will now include these students.
- 2000 SACTE students are shown under OTHER within Postgraduates. The racial breakdown is unknown at this stage.

## APPENDIX 7

### FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION

1. School: Queensburgh high school, Queenburgh, Durban.  
Class: Matric  
Race: Indian  
Gender: Four female students  
Age: 16 - 18 years
2. School: Ferndale Secondary School, Phoenix, Durban.  
(Participating students reside in Kwa-Mashu)  
Class: Standard 9  
Race: Black  
Gender: Four female students  
Age: 16 - 17 years
3. School: Amangwane High School, Bergeville, near Ladysmith.  
Class: Standard 9  
Race: Black  
Gender: Five male students  
Age: 16 -18 years
4. School: Pinetown Girls high School  
Class: Standard 9  
Race: White  
Gender: Four female students  
Age: 16 - 17 years
5. One alumnus, a parent, four students (two local and two international) and two staff members from Student Academic Affairs and Admissions.