

## **A Proposal of Reconceptualization of Intertextuality in Advertisements**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to analyze and understand the new role that the intertextuality has gained in the communicative interactions through advertisements (and through their translations). As a concept that expresses the relations of a text with other texts, intertextuality stands out in advertisement language. In this context, intertextual references, their effects and how they work in audiences' perception through advertisements will be discussed and by deepening the meaning of intertextuality and by opening new dimensions to the concept, this study will try to portray that the concept 'intertextuality' requires reconceptualization in the advertisement world different from literary texts in the sense that advertisements use the concept to lead the audience references to a single point either by visuals or through specially chosen language.*

**Keywords:** intertextuality, advertisements, advertextuality

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## 1. Introduction

Intertextuality, which stands for the sophisticated web-like connections between texts undertakes a functionality of meaning-making and interpretation in various forms of advertisements (Genette, 1992). Within the realm of commercials, visuals such as videos and photographs play a significant role in the shaping or forming intertextual relations. The intertextual elements and the relations they represent in the production process and in the acceptance process of a commercial text requires specific attention as they influence how the audience interpret, perceive, and react to the message in the text, that is, the product itself. The dynamic and unusual interplay in commercials which will be focused below is different from other texts. Although intertextuality deals with the texts in terms of the relations it has with other texts, the reference(s) a commercial creates in the minds of audiences constitutes the main purpose of the present article.

Intertextuality, by its nature, is a complicated concept. So, it should be divided into two basic subheadings to unveil the covert relations it constitutes in commercials. Firstly, intertextuality refers to the creation of a text by focusing on the references it gives to other texts. That is, a text or its writer can get benefit from other texts as in Abrams & Harpham's words 'any text is interwoven with other texts' (A Glossary of Literary Terms, 2015). Or, there may be different voices in a text, as in the conversation between a politician and a hawker. All the words and sentences are disguised or masked. These two dimensions give a text multivalence function. The second and most important feature of intertextuality that constitutes the main concern in the present article is the references that a text creates in the readers' minds. Any individual can make different connections/references after reading the same text. In another word, the same text can create many different connotations/references in many different minds. Moreover, the same text can give different references to the same individual after reading it again in a couple of years later. These features also constitute the multivalence of a text.

Advertisements or commercials can have similar intertextual features with other types of texts such as literary texts in the creation of the texts. They both can be created by using various intertextual elements. But the perception process of these two types of texts is different. While the latter can create many connections in the reader's mind after reading the text, the former, commercial, leads the audience's mind to only one point, that is, to the product. This is against the nature of intertextuality. In terms of intertextuality, a text is to be able to refer to various texts in the creation and perception process (in the reader's mind). It is assumed that this is because of the visuals used in commercials. (Anything can be a text such as road signs, pictures, conversations, or written texts and they can be translated. So, the visuals are assumed to be borrowed from other languages as is the case we see in translation techniques.)

The purpose of the present article is to portray the new characteristic that the intertextuality has gained in commercials by reconceptualizing it as 'adverttextuality' which stands for its leading effect on the audience to a single point, to the product itself in minds, rather than giving multiple references.

## 2. Literature Review

The term intertextuality is basically related to the relations of one text with other especially previous texts and reveals these relations in a web-like procedure as it is very sophisticated and difficult to uncover them because of its multidimensional layers. To start with its historical background, intertextuality dates back to Bakhtin and his ideas on ‘dialogue’. For Bakhtin the only place where meaning can be found is in the conversation that words and utterances have with their context and in a dialogue, each statement is a response to anything that has come before it (The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays, 1982). It is understood that a text includes different voices, ideas and ideologies in it, which signifies the unstable and ever-shifting nature of meaning and intertextual references. Depending on these ideas, Kristeva conceptualized it. For her, ‘the term ‘intertextuality’ refers to a variety of connections between one text and other texts that can take many different forms, including direct quotation, citation, allusion, echo, reference, imitation, parody, pastiche, literary conventions, structural parallelism, and allusion to a variety of sources that are either intentionally used or unintentionally reflected’ (Zengin, 2016). In the essay ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’, Kristeva (1986) inserts the idea that every text is built as a mosaic of quotations; every text is the absorption and alteration of another. That means a text has traces of previous texts, but it is nearly impossible for the reader to infer the same as every single person has their own life experiences. What is less significant for one person may have high values for another and it causes people to give intertextually different references. Another distinguished scholar in the field of intertextuality is Riffaterre. In his article *Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive*, he underlines the importance of the reader by stating that the reader plays a crucial role in meaning making process: he/she uses their experiences to make intertextual connections among texts (Riffaterre, 1990). It is signaled that a text includes various cultural, historical and literary references and every reading creates numerous meanings because of the reader’s experiences and familiarity to the context.

Intertextuality plays a crucial role in advertisements by creating complicated connections between texts, and influences the interpretation and meaning making process in the audiences’ minds (Scott, 1994). Different from other text types, commercials include lots of visuals such as photographs, images and cinematic sections and they are particularly important to build intertextual references in the audiences’ minds. These intertextual elements and the references they create in minds shape the way the audiences interpret and approach to the message in the commercial and also affect how the audiences engage with the product in the advertisement. It is stated that advertising and advertisers rely mainly on visual elements to convey their ideas and influence the audiences (Chatterjee & Parihar, 2023). They attract audience attention, create curiosity and by associating the product with certain symbols, they also establish a strong brand identity in the audience mind. Unlike literary texts, commercials basically lead/take the audience’s attention to a single point intertextually, to the product itself. This deviation from the nature of intertextuality has raised questions on the effect of visuals in commercials. Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaite (2016) state that visual elements are effective tools for controlling and restricting the audience’s flexibility of interpretation while focusing their attention on the desired message.

To explore this different characteristic of intertextuality (which creates one reference in the minds), reconceptualization of intertextuality (as ‘advertextuality’) is proposed in the present

article. This reconceptualization aims to analyze the new characteristic of intertextuality in advertisements/commercials by taking the used visuals and their effects into account in the process of perception by the audiences. In this context, the new-born term advertextuality aims to intertextually analyze how people who have different life experiences with the product can refer the same product and the brand name.

### 3. Methodology

Advertisement is a vast field, there are lots of companies that have numerous different products from very simple tools/food/drinks that we all use, eat and drink every day to very sophisticated devices that the modern world brings altogether. That is why it is impossible to analyze all advertisements and divide them into different categories. So, in this article a specific brand name Red Bull and its advertisements are chosen. Even under this brand name, Red Bull, there are lots of advertisements. So advertisements have been chosen in a method from present (the new ones) to past (the previous ones) for the analysis.

The analysis is to apply to around 66 people. The selected advertisements will be divided into two groups. Every seven or eight participants will be given one text from each advertisement group. All the advertisements will be applied to the same participant group. After excluding the details that refer to the product and the brand name, only the text in the first group will be given to the participants with no visuals. Participants will be given the texts only, they will try to identify the characters, setting and the product. (It is assumed that they will refer to different characters, settings and products). The same process will be applied to the second group advertisements, but the participants will see only one screenshot/image (not the whole movie) with the text which also excludes the details that refer to the product and the brand name and they will be asked to identify the characters, settings product or the brand name. The data gathered will be used in a descriptive way to identify and explain how the images in commercials affect the audiences by guiding them to a single intertextual reference that makes it different from other text types.

Different from other researches, open-ended questions are chosen to be able to analyze the deviation or similarities in answers to better understand how visual elements in advertisements intertextually affect the references that the audiences give to the chosen products and how advertisements are different from other literary text types and require new sort of approaches for the analysis. For each advertisement pair, the same (except the fifth) five open-ended questions were asked, and participants were asked to answer them with at most one or two words or a short phrase.

The chosen questions<sup>2</sup> for the analysis:

1. Have you seen the advertisement before?
2. Who do you think the conversation in the advertisement is between?
3. Where do you think the advertisement takes place?

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<sup>2</sup> The questions initially were asked in Turkish and they were translated into English later as the participants know no or little in English.

4. What do you think the commercial product is?
5. Would your answers to the questions above have changed if the text had been accompanied with visuals?
5. Would your answers to the questions above have changed if the text had not been accompanied with visuals?

The limitations of the study are as follow:

- Only one company, Red Bull, and its six advertisements were chosen for the analysis. Different products may require different analysis and may have different results.
- The analysis was conducted among young people aged 18 to 22. Different age groups may give different answers to the chosen questions for the same products.
- The chosen advertisement will be a part of past so if the same analysis is to be conducted twenty or thirty years later to the same age group, they may also give different answers to the questions.
- Because of time limitation, the study was conducted among around sixty-six people. The expansion of the group would be better.

### 3.1 Findings and Analysis

The main purpose of advertisements is to attract audiences' attention to the marketed product. To do so, famous characters, familiar settings, simple but a catchy language, visuals and many more features are included in the creation process of commercials. The Red Bull advertisements chosen for intertextual analysis include these features to make intertextual connections in the audiences' minds both in the creation process and in the perception process. The analysis will be conducted by using six advertisements which are divided mainly into two groups (as the text and the text with visuals), and three pairs to make the findings grounded.

The First Pair (Aladdin and Impala Advertisements):

	Advertisement A (no visuals)					Advertisement B (with visuals)				
	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.1	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.2.
1	No	Wizard-Child	Forest	Telephone	Yes	No	Rabbit-Turtle	Forest	Drink	Yes
2	No	Animal-	Forest /	Medicine	Yes	No	Two	Forest	Bicycle	Yes

		Human	Outside				Friends			
3	No	Teacher - Student	TV	Ice-cream	Yes	No	Two Brothers	TV	Shoes	Yes
4	No	Genie-Human	Forest	Drink	Yes	No	Two Gazelles	Forest	Drink	Yes
5	No	Holy Soul - Child	Forest	Food	Yes	No	Two Friends	Forest	Shoes	Yes
6	No	Animal-Human	Forest	Drink	Yes	No	Two Deer	Forest	Drink	Yes
7	No	Genie-Human	Forest	Drink	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Drink	No
8	No	Genie-Man	Forest	Lamp	Yes	Yes	Two Gazelles	Forest	Drink	Yes
9	No	Genie-Child	Kid's Room	Junk food	Yes	No	Two Gazelles	Forest	Junk food	Yes
10	No	Two Brothers	Park	Vitamin	Yes	No	Two Gazelles	Forest	Drink	Yes
11	No	Genie-Child	Desert	Something for the child	Yes	No	Two Deer	Forest	Drink	No
12	No	Genie-Child	Street	Vitamin	Yes	Yes	Two Deer	Forest	Drink	Yes
13	No	Human-Aladdin	Outside	Car	Yes	No	Two Animals	Outside	Car	Yes
14	No	Child-Animal	Forest	Wishing Stone	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Drink	No
15	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Vitamin	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Drink	Yes
16	No	Genie-Human	Forest	Drink	Yes	No	Two Gazelles	Forest	Drink	Yes
17	No	Father-Son	Home	Dress	No	No	Two Animals	Forest	Wood	Yes
18	No	Genie-Human	Home	Supernatural power	Yes	Yes	Two Deer	Forest	Beat the Opponent	No
19	No	Two Friends	Forest	Medicine	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Medicine	Yes
20	No	Genie-Man	Forest	Drink	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Pill	Yes

21	No	Genie-Child	TV	Knowledge	Yes	No	Two Animals	Forest	Knowledge	Yes
22	No	Two Friends	Coast	Drink	Yes	Yes	Two Friends	Forest	Drink	Yes

This pair includes ‘Aladdin and Impala’ advertisements. The plot of the first commercial, ‘Aladdin’, covers the dialog between Aladdin and the fictional genie. The story starts when Aladdin rubs the lamp, and the genie comes out of the lamp and asks Aladdin for his three wishes. He wishes to be as cunning as a fox, as strong as a lion and to be able to fly like an eagle. There are no clear details about the setting in the text. The impala advertisement takes place in a wild environment and starts with a conversation between two impalas when they see a lion approaching them. Some details can be inferred except the product itself.

All the participants state that they have not seen the advertisement A (Aladdin) before. And for the second question ‘Who do you think the conversation is between’, the responses vary such as ‘genie & child, mother & daughter, genie & man, wizard & child, or animal & human’. The common same or similar answers include ‘genie & child’. The answers concerning the third question on ‘the setting’ also differentiate such as ‘park, home, forest, TV, desert, street’; the common response is ‘forest’. Similarly, the responses to the fourth question on ‘the possible product’ vary such as ‘medicine, drink, car, ice-cream or lamp’. And 21 participants state that their responses would be different if the visuals had been given.

Contrary to the advertisement A, the same participants have given same or similar responses to the second, third and fourth questions of advertisements B, although only four of them have seen it before. They commonly state the conversation is between ‘two animals, two deer or two friends’ (which can also be accepted as same) in ‘a forest’ with 20 responses. The answers also show that the common answer to the fourth question on ‘the possible product’ is ‘a drink’. Moreover, 18 participants state that without visuals, their answers would be different.

The analysis of the first pair of advertisements shows that when a text is given with no-visuals, the intertextual references differentiate compared to the text with visuals as the answers to the latter one have high frequency of similarities.

The Second Pair (Witches and Santa Advertisements):

	Advertisement C (no visuals)					Advertisement D (with visuals)				
	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.1	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.2.
1	No	Mother-Son	Kitchen	pot	Yes	No	Santa-Deer	Pole	Gift	No
2	No	Teacher-Student	School	Computer	Yes	No	Father-Son	Home	*	Yes
3	No	Seller & A friend	Street	Food	Yes	No	Santa-Deer	Empty Zone	Chocolate	Yes

4	No	Seagull - Selena	Laboratory	medicine	Yes		Yes	Santa-Deer	Garden	Gift	Yes
5	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Oil	Yes		No	Two Animals	Outside	Santa	Yes
6	No	Two Friends	Market	Drink	Yes		No	Two Animals	Pole	Gift	Yes
7	No	*	Mother-Daughter	Egg	Yes		No	Two Deer	Garden	Drink	Yes
8	No	Wizard-Girl	Kitchen	Medicine	Yes		No	Two Deer	Outside	Drink	Yes
9	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Hip dust	Yes		No	Two Deer	Outside	Gift	Yes
10	No	Mother-Daughter	Kitchen	Natural Drink	Yes		No	Santa-Deer	Outside	Gift	Yes
11	No	Actor	Cellar	Drink	Yes		No	Santa-Deer	Home	An Item	Yes
12	No	Husband - Wife	Mother-Daughter	Detergent	Yes		No	Two Deer	Outside /Mountain	Christmas decoration	Yes
13	No	Selena-Hades	Street	Pot	Yes		No	Santa-Deer	Pole	Gift	Yes
14	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Cleaning Material	Yes		No	Two Deer	Outside	Gift	Yes
15	No	Father-Son	Garden	Axe	Yes		No	Two Deer	Pole	toy	No
16	No	Mother-Daughter	Kitchen	Medicine	Yes		No	Two Deer	Garden	Car	No
17	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Cleaning Material	Yes		No	Friends	Outside	medicine	Yes
18	No	Mother-Daughter	Home	Game Console	Yes		No	Husband-Wife	Home	Car	No
19	No	Husband - Wife	Home	Drink	Yes		No	Santa-Deer	Pole	Drink	Yes
20	No	Two Friends	Forest	Soup	Yes		No	Two Deer	Outside	Drink	Yes



2 1	No	Two Sisters	office	Chewing Gum	Yes		No	Two Cousins	Home	Toy	No
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This second pair includes ‘Witches and Santa’ advertisements. In the first commercial, there are two witches: one is the daughter, and the other one is the mother. They are in a kitchen-like place and have a conversation next to a cauldron on how to make a bewitchment to fly. And the story ends with the young witch’s advice to her mother to drink the product instead of bewitching. The second advertisement takes place somewhere near the North Pole. Santa gets prepared for the delivery of presents for Christmas. Upon drinking the Red Bull, Santa starts flying with the gifts leaving the reindeer behind. It covers the dialogue between Santa and the reindeer.

In these advertisement pairs, all the participants have stated that they have not seen the commercials before. The answers to the second question of the first advertisement clearly show that the intertextual references that the text creates in participants’ minds differentiate compared to the second responses of the second commercial. In the first commercial, the common answer concerning the possible characters varies such as it is between ‘two sisters, mother & daughter, two friends, teacher & student or husband & wife’, though we have 7 ‘mother and daughter’ answers. No responses were detected that ‘these people are witches, and they are trying to make a bewitchment’. But on the other hand, in the second advertisement, the answers are more similar, and we can put them mainly in three or four categories as the conversation is between ‘Santa & deer (7 answers), between two deer (7 answers), or two animals (2 answers)’. This categorization is not much possible in the first ad: it requires to make a categorization for nearly every single answer.

The participants have given 9 different answers to the question on the setting such as it is in ‘house, school, garden, forest, laboratory, street or kitchen’ for the first ad. On the other hand, the same participants have given 5 different answers such as it takes place in ‘North Pole, a house, garden, field and somewhere outside’ for the same question as to the text with visuals.

When we analyze the answers to the fourth question in these ads, it is clear that nearly all the participants have given different answers in the first ad although there are some similarities compared to the second one. Moreover, all the participants in the first ad state that their answers would be different if the visuals had been given. And 16 participants out of 21 state that their answers would be different if the visuals had been excluded from the text in the second ad.

The Third Pair (Pisa Tower and Mother Advertisements):

Advertisement E (no visuals)						Advertisement F (with visuals)				
	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.1	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5.2
1	No	Architect-A Noob	Infront of a Tower	Tower	Yes	No	Mother-Child	In a Car	Drink	No

2	No	Mayor-Citizen	Street	Construction Industry	Yes	evet	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Car	No
3	No	President-Worker	company	Tower	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Car	Yes
4	No	Company Members	Office	Market	Yes	No	Mother-Son	Highway	Drink	Yes
5	No	Mayor-Architect	Empty Zone	Paint	Yes	evet	Mother-Son	Street	Drink	Yes
6	No	A Man-Builder	Amerika	Tower	Yes	evet	Mother-Son	Outside	Drink	evet
7	No	Principal General-Manager	Office	Residence	Yes	evet	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Drink	No
8	No	Architect-Engineer	Italy	Construction	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Car	Yes
9	No	Two Bosses	Office	Estate	Yes	No	Two Friends	In a Car	Drink	Yes
10	No	Architect-King	Women's Room	Location of the tower	Yes	evet	Couple/Lovers	In a Car	Drink	Yes
11	No	Mayor-Vice Mayor	Field/Room	Project	Yes	No	Mother-Child	Road	Drink	Yes
12	No	Architect-Assistant	Worksite	Architectural service	No	evet	Mother-Son	In a Car	Drink	Yes
13	No	Architect-Citizen	Ankara	Drink	Yes	evet	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Drink	No
14	No	Architect-Engineer	Worksite	Building	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	Road	Drink	Yes
15	No	Architect Engineer	Outside	Residence	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	Road	Drink	Yes
16	No	Two Friends	Classroom	Building Products	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	Road	Dress	Yes
17	No	Worker-Engineer	Workplace	Tower	Yes	No	Mother-Son	In a Car	Drink/Car	Yes
18	No	Worker-Boss	Office	Tower	Yes	No	Husband-Wife	In a Car	Drink	No
19	No	Sales Consultant-Landholder	Store/Shop	Market	Yes	No	Mother Child	Traffic	Drink	Yes
20	No	Seller-	Street	*	Yes	No	Mother	In a Car	Drink	No

0		Buyer			s		Child			
21	No	Architect-Employer	Outside	Architectural Project	Yes	No	Mother-Son	Road	Laundry Detergent/ Drink	Yes
22	No	Pilot-Tower	Plane	Drink	No	Yes	Husband-Wife	Car	Drink	No

Advertisement E takes place in front of the Town Hall between the mayor and an architect. The architect proposes to build a tower for the city, but the mayor does not like the drawings. Upon it, the architect drinks a Red Bull to change his point of view. The second advertisement covers the dialogue between a mother and her son in a car in the traffic. The mother is not much happy the way the son drives the car and starts talking. Tired of the conversation, the son drinks a Red Bull at the traffic lights and starts flying leaving everything behind.

All participants, similar to previous pairs, have stated that they have not seen the ad E before. They also state that this ad is between ‘mayor & architect, architect & king, pilot & tower, seller & buyer’, or etc. Although the guesses on one character commonly involve ‘architect’, the guesses on the second character differentiate a lot. Additionally, it is difficult to categorize the answers. The participants also have weak guesses on the setting and the possible marketed product. They state it takes place, for example, in an ‘office, plane, Italy, room, shop’ or etc. Among the guesses for the product are a ‘project, market, tower, residence, building, drink’ or etc. And only 5 participants state that their answers would not change even there were the visuals with the text.

Contrary to the ad E, 8 participants have seen the ad F before. They commonly state that the conversation is between a ‘husband & wife, and mother & child/son’. There are only two different answers as it is between two ‘lovers or friends’. ‘Two lovers’ can also be included in ‘house and wife’ group. Moreover, the answers about the setting can be divided into mainly two groups as in a ‘car and road’. There are only three different answers and two of them can be included in the ‘road’ category. Among the answers to the possible product are ‘drink (16 answers), car (4 answers), clothe and detergent’. Although there are no details about the product, the participants have strong guesses on it. And 15 participants state that their answers would be different if the visuals were not given.

The detailed analysis conducted in advertisement pairs has showed that the same participants have different tendencies toward the characters, setting and possible marketed product when they come across the texts with and without visuals. In the advertisements A, C and E which do not have visuals, the text, sentences, and the words are able to make various new intertextual references in participants’ minds; they refer to individual specific events that the participants have experienced before. Nearly each individual has given different answers to the questions, and it is not possible to categorize them. (Categorization refers to same/similar answers.) This is what is natural in terms of intertextuality: when a text is read by different people, they should be able open new intertextual dimensions to the readers. But, on the other hand, the answers to the advertisements B, D and F with visuals have interesting results. Although the participants commonly state that they have not seen the advertisements

before, they have same or similar answers for the questions referring to the characters, setting and the possible marketed product as we see, for example, in the ad F. The participants are not given any information or clue for the product, but they commonly state that it is a 'car or drink'. (We can categorize the answers in two main groups although we have some minor different answers) The results are also true for other questions and other advertisements. How can it be intertextually natural for readers to make similar references as everybody has their own individual experiences. Moreover, it is intertextually expected that when a text is read at different times even by the same person, it should be able to make different references to different texts or events. The participants who state that they have seen the ads before make similar guesses about the characters, settings and the possible product (although we have few different answers).

Judging from the data gathered from the analysis, it can be inferred that the visuals in a text behave against the commonly known feature of intertextuality that stands for the multivalence effect it creates in reader's mind, and intertextual analysis of advertisements requires new perspectives that focus on intertextual perception with visuals rather than the intertextuality which is used in literary texts.

#### 4. Conclusion

Intertextuality, by its nature, covers the relations a text has with other texts. In the creation of a text, a text may have various intertextual elements that refer to others. Besides, words and sentences in a text also constitute a text's multivalence: different people give different references, or when a text is read some time later, the same text may create different connotations and different references. Another important feature of intertextuality is its ability to create different connotations in the readers' minds in the perception process of the text. It has been noticed that the visuals used in a text, particularly in advertisements, have changed these characteristics of intertextuality by guiding different readers to the same or similar points. Judging from the analysis, it can be stated that intertextuality has gained a new form in advertisements, so an intertextual analysis of ads requires a new concept as 'advertextuality' that refers to its guiding effect on the reader to a single point, that is, the product itself. This new term can also be used in Translation Studies; as visuals, like words, can be borrowed in the translation process. And its relations and effects in different literary genres may create new dimensions to intertextuality.

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