The Iconicity of Websites: Linguistic and Semiotic Perspectives

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá ikoničností webových stránek z lingvistického a sémiotického pohledu. Skládá se z teoretické části a praktické části.

Teoretická část popisuje znaky, rozdíly mezi arbitrárností a nearbitrárností, metafory, jazykovou ikoničnost a pojmovou metaofru. Dále se zabývá postupy, které byly aplikovány při analýze korpusu. Praktická část se poté obsahuje analýzu vybraných webových stránek z jazykového a kognitivního pohledu a take z vizuálního a grafického poheldu.

Klíčová slova: ikoničnost, metaofry, znaky, webové stránky, pojmové metaofry, představová schémata

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the iconicity of websites from the linguistic and semiotic perspective. The thesis consists of a theoretical and analytical part.

The theoretical part discusses signs, the difference between arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness, metaphors, language iconicity and an overview of conceptual metaphor theory. The methodology of analysis is also included. The analytical part involves an analysis of the selected websites from a linguistic and cognitive perspective as well as a visual and graphical perspective.

Keywords: iconicity, metaphors, signs, webpages, cognitive metaphor theory, image-schema

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The internet has become one of the main sources of information, entertainment, and advertisement over the past decade. With a few clicks, users can navigate through webpages and search easily for anything they need. For this reason, corporations try to create a positive image with their brand. Easy and quick navigation is a priority for a good website. Therefore a lot of companies put a great effort into creating the best possible website utilizing iconic structures and image schemas.

The aim of this thesis is to trace and analyse these iconic structures and image schemas based on the linguistic and semiotic perspective.

For this thesis, I selected five multinational companies from different fields to analyse the appearance of iconicity both in linguistic and visual form. These companies were chosen based on their bad reputation and controversies. The analysis is conducted on the websites of Nestlé, Facebook, Electronic Arts, Amazon and Bayer. This thesis aims to analyse and describe the linguistic and semiotics iconicity, their use and purpose on the website.

The first part of the thesis is dedicated to the theoretical framework. It includes an analysis of Saussure's and Peirce's model of sign, followed by the description of different types of signs and their use on the internet. Language iconicity, together with metaphors, is analysed next. Lastly, the theoretical part deals with a cognitive approach, focusing on cognitive metaphors, domains and spaces, image-schemas, and cognitive iconicity.

The second part of the thesis offers the analysis of linguistic and visual iconicity. The first part is dedicated to the linguistic and cognitive aspect of the "about us" section of the websites. The analysis is based on the theoretical framework. The second part of the thesis is concerned with the analysis of visual metaphors and iconic signs and their purpose on the website.

At the end of the thesis summary of findings is provided.

I. THEORY

1 ICONICITY IN SEMIOTICS AND LINGUISTICS

1.1 Types of signs

Human beings are driven by the idea of making sense and meaning in the world. For this reason, they created signs to help define and understand reality. Signs take a form of everything around us: images, sounds, flavours, smells, objects, and acts. However, these signs have no intrinsic meaning unless they are invested with meaning. For a sign to acquire meaning, it has to represent something different than what it stands for (Chandler, 1994).

Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce created two dominant models of what forms a sign. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, created a dyadic two-part model (Nöth, 1995, 59). Saussure described a sign as a bipartite unity consisting of *a signifier*, or the form shaping the sign, and *the signified* – the concept the sign represents. Only together, they form a sign (Chandler, 1994). As an example, consider the word "red." As a signifier in one context, it refers to a colour. However, in a different context, such as traffic lights, the same signifier ("red") calls for an action to stop.

In contrast to Saussure's theory, Charles Sander Peirce, an American philosopher, developed his triadic model that consists of three inter-related parts: *a sign*, also known as *the representamen*, *an interpretant*, and *an object*. The relation between these aspects is known as semiosis (Atkin, 2010). The sign, or representamen, is similar to Saussure's signifier in at least one aspect – it is a form capable of evoking a concept. In other aspects, such as its representational qualities, it would seem different. Peirce's sign often resembles the object, unlike Saussure's signifier (Silverman, 1983, 14-15). For example, consider a molehill. Only a few characteristics could indicate the presence of a mole. Colour and size are secondary roles since they vary depending on soil and the size of a mole. The connection between the concepts of moles and the mound in a garden is the most important factor (Atkin, 2010).

The interpretant is considered to be the "thought" created by the relation between the other two parts. Therefore the interpretant is considered synonymous with the signified. The interpretant can become a sign, thus producing a new interpretant – any interpretation can be re-interpreted (Silverman, 1983, 15). The sign refers to an object (not featured in Saussure's model) (Chandler, 1994).

1.1.1 Piercian triad

Everything described above shows that Peirce's model is triadic – it involves a relationship between a sign. Peirce furthermore divide signs into three trichotomies. Variants of Peirce's

triad are known as the semiotic triangle. The second trichotomy described a sign as a symbol and an icon (Buchler, 1955, 102). Piercian triad theory can be applied in many things, including a web interface because all the images used in the interface are signs (Mirsarraf et al. 2018, 21).

1.1.2 Icon

An icon is a sign that resembles its referent (Buchler, 1955, 102). Icons carry a physical resemblance to what is being represented (looks, sounds, feels, taste, and smell). For example, during the creation of user interfaces, most of the signs are an imitation of real physical objects. This was the first impulse in naming them icons (Bradley, 2016). Semioticians generally claim that no "pure" icon exists – there are always elements of cultural convention involved (Chandler, 1994). The icons are then further divided into *image*, *metaphor* and *diagram* (Freeman, 2009, 426). Image (i.e. portrait), achieves similarity by partaking some of the qualities from its object (person who is portrayed). This relationship is based on a monadic, simple mimetic or sensory resemblance. Diagrams (maps) shows a structure similar to the structure of their objects (i.e. territories or buildings) (Hiraga, 1994, 6-7).

Icons are considered to be the visual language of a culture, created from items people know and work with. On websites, for example, icons are used to communicate meaning; yet they can lead to cross-cultural confusion because the amount of visual information differs in different cultures. One icon can be perceived differently, or even be unknown, in different cultures. For instance, some cultures might find offensive a depiction of a certain human gesture. Hence, designers limit icons only to those that abstractly represent a meaning (Smart, 2000, 601).

According to Yvonne Rogers (1989, 110), icons are categorized into different types based on their use:

- **Resemblance icons** – underlying referent depicted through an analogous image – they depict the object they represent. The road sign for "rock falling" is an example used in practice.
- **Exemplar icon** – an exemplar icon is used to represent a general class of objects or an object that typically represents the concept. For example, the knife and fork sign used in public to represent restaurants.

- **Symbolic icons** – symbolic icons represent a higher level of abstraction than the image itself. For example, a picture of a wine glass with a small fracture on the top of the glass conveys the concept of fragility.
- **Arbitrary icons** – the association, must be learned because arbitrary icon bears no relationship to the referent. For example, the "Wi-Fi signal" sign bears no conceptual or physical resemblance to its functionalities.

1.1.3 Symbol

The signifier does not resemble the signified in a symbol. The connection between them is arbitrary. This means that in order to understand the symbol, the connections need to be learned (Chandler, 1994). Flags, for example, bear no physical connection to the country they represent – this connection has to be learned and becomes associated with the concept. Additionally, every alphanumeric character on a keyboard is a symbol (Bradley, 2016).

When creating a website, symbols are used to add visual interest and clarity to the design. They can break longer passages of text, resulting in keeping the reader interested (Nediger, 2020). Even though symbols could be easy to understand, their meaning might be different; it all depends on the audience. As an example, music symbols would make no sense on a restaurant's website since it has no relation whatsoever to the general sphere of use. For the website, two types of symbols are used. *Flat symbols*, which are 2-dimensional, all black and white, and *detailed symbols* (Hover, 2016).

1.1.4 Index

The function of an index, also known as an indexical sign, refers to some object or feature in the immediate environment of the interpretant. It is not possible for a signified to exist without the signified. A signifier is non-arbitrary, however, because it must be directly connected, either casually or physically, to the signified (Chandler, 1994). For example, the footprint in the snow is a direct index of an animal in the nearby vicinity.

The indexical representation can be diverse depending on the context and medium. Indexical representation and its design space can be described in a few parameters. The first criterion is the casual distance between the object and representation. In most cases, a short immediate distance is preferable. The semantic distance between the object and what it represents is the second criterion. Together, these two criteria's create a space in which the indexical qualities of different examples can be compared (Offenhuber, 2015).

1.2 Arbitrariness and Non-arbitrariness of Sign

Arbitrariness in linguistics refers to the absence of connection between the word's or sign's meaning and its sound pattern or form. The sound pattern does not stand for a real sound since it stands for something physical. Saussure described a sound pattern as a "hearer's psychological impression of the sound" (Saussure and Harris, 2013, 76). For example, the majority of words in every language in the world fall into the category of being arbitrary (APA Dictionary, 2019). Saussure and Harris (78) also mentioned that it is not only one characteristic but rather the first principle of linguistics. The vocabularies of spoken languages have many examples of arbitrariness: a dog is *chien* in French, *hund* in German, and *pes* in Czech. There is nothing that resembles the word dog to an actual object. The dog does not have a D shape which would bear a resemblance. It does not emit a sound similar to a dog. The connection has to be learnt manually.

However, even in language, some categories of words do resemble non-arbitrary properties (Dingemanse et al. 603, 2015). Onomatopoeic words such as *bang*, *meow* or *boom* resemble the sound and carry a non-arbitrary property.

1.2.1 Arbitrary Sign

As mentioned before, an icon is considered to be arbitrary as it resembles the object it represents. The arbitrariness of signs helps to determine the scope for interpretation. Since signs have more than one meaning, they usually have more than one link between signifier and signified. For example, in a pun, one signifier may refer to many signifieds as a pun refers to more concepts (Chandler, 1994).

Another example of arbitrary signs could be found in computer systems. Computers provided a new noteworthy environment for the use of icons. Previously, the system of icons has been mostly textual, their message one-dimensional sequences of icons in which everything was explicit. A new environment of computers provided much richer conditions. Icons in a computer environment need to be both representational and operational, i.e. in addition to asking what icon stands for, user can also wonder what happens when they click or double-click on them. The meaning of an icon is no longer only about what it resembles but also what happens when a user performs an action with it (Beardon et al., 1993).

1.2.2 Non-arbitrary Sign

Non-arbitrariness is on the opposite side of a spectrum. A non-arbitrary sign has a direct relationship to its sound pattern or form. An index is considered to be non-arbitrary. Without the connection, the index would make sense.

To better understand occurrence of non-arbitrariness, at least two types of non-arbitrariness must be distinguished – *iconicity* and *systematicity* (Dingemanse et al. 2015. 603).

- **Iconicity** – for something to be iconic, it has to bear a resemblance between the meaning and the form. This concept will be described in detail in the following chapter.
- **Systematicity** – systematicity focus on a relationship between sound patterns for a selected group of words and their use. For example, one word can be distinguished differently based on stress, duration, and voicing.

The origins of non-arbitrariness might be different, and it tends to form and constrain by a number of different cognitive, perceptual and communicative factors. (Dingemanse et al. 2015, 603- 604). Arbitrariness, together with iconicity, is often regarded as mutually exclusive properties of a linguistic system. This view derives from the assumption that iconicity requires full predictability, i.e., if a form is iconic, we should be able to predict its form from its meaning (Wilcox, 2004, 140).

1.3 Iconicity in Linguistics

In their article *Iconicity* (2018), Irit Meir and Oksana Tkachman described iconicity as a relationship between the form and meaning of a sign. Iconicity is a resemblance between linguistic or communicative form and affective or semi-motor parts of a corresponding referent (Perniss and Vigliocco, 2014, 2). Since iconicity is inherently linked with signs in general and not only with linguistics signs, iconicity is very important in semiotics. (Meir and Tkachman, 2018). Iconicity provides tools for expressing the world of senses before the conceptualising mind transports us towards an abstract (Freeman, 2009, 426). Iconicity tends to be less pervasive since only a small part of a vocabulary permits iconic correspondence between the form and meaning (Dingemanse et al. 2015, 607).

Iconicity and arbitrariness usually described as polar opposites. The icon is the natural sign, showing similarities to its object that is referring to. An arbitrary sign is a conventional sign, which bears no similarity to the object it refers to (Nöth, 2001, 2).

The appearance of sign languages added a new dimension to the understanding of arbitrariness and iconicity. In essence, sign language is a natural human language with complex and expressive structure, but it is expressed through manual-visual modality (Meir, 2010, 866).

1.3.1 Language Iconicity

Language structure has a considerable degree of iconicity. This theory embodies the idea that the form, length, and complexity of linguistic representation parallel the form, length, and complexity of elements in the concept (Newmeyer, 1992, 756). Haiman (1980, 515-516) claims that conceptual structure is an iconic reflection of grammatical structure. Non-binary properties of iconicity cause the creation of various types of iconicity (Dingemanse et al. 2015, 606). The conceptual structure can iconically reflect linguistic structures in two different ways. These are isomorphism and motivation (Newmeyer, 1992, 760).

The human mind works in analogy by creating connections between ideas, images, and entities. Isomorphism is the principle by which the mind creates these connections (Freeman, 2009, 428). The restriction of isomorphism lies within the boundaries of a linguistic utterance of form and meaning (Haiman, 1980, 515-516). In order to create an isomorphic structure, specific mapping and conditions need to be fulfilled, mainly the isomorphic principle of relating structures that enable the creation of analogy (Freeman, 2009, 430).

In linguistics, motivation and arbitrariness are opposites of each other. Motivation occurs when two or more signs are related either by analogy or by syntactic context (Freeman, 2009, 430-431). Acronyms, texting, and e-mail abbreviations are part of the language iconicity as well as they have a direct relation to its meaning (White, 2020).

1.3.2 Metaphors

The concept of the metaphors is that one object is compared to another based on various similarities that these objects share (Kövecses, 2010, 9). It is a complex and idea with many layers (Piquer-Píriz and Alejo-González, 2018, 26). An example of a metaphor is a sentence: "***The girl is a rose.***" The tenor in this example is **the girl,** and **a rose** is a vehicle. In its literal meaning, this sentence would imply that the girl is an actual flower, which does not make any sense. However, in such an example, "rose" implies stereotypical characteristics people assign to a rose: beauty, purity and grace.

In classical rhetoric, a metaphor is typically characterized by five most commonly accepted features. First, a metaphor is a linguistic property. In the example **the girl** and **a rose** are

both considered to be words. The second characteristic is that metaphor is used for an artistic and rhetorical purpose, meaning that it is emotionally pleasing. Third, the resemblance between two features is the base for metaphor. In the example above, it is a resemblance based on beauty, grace and purity. Fourth, to create and effectively use a metaphor, a person must have a special talent and feeling. The last aspect is the fact that metaphor as a figure of speech is only used on special occasions, meaning that a person can speak without a metaphor (Kövecses 2010, 9 – 10).

According to Judy Blume (2020), metaphors are divided into several types, each intended for a different purpose.

- **Standard** – standard metaphor is comparing two unlike things together.
- **Implied** – the type of metaphor where comparison of two things is not alike without describing one thing.
- **Visual** – visual metaphor compares one object to a visual image, this type of metaphor is commonly used in an advertisement.
- **Extended** – extended metaphor is a type of metaphor that extends over multiple lines or stanzas. Extended metaphors are commonly used in prose or poetry.

In an advertisement, metaphors are used to amplify description. They can make writing more interesting and intriguing and grab reader's attention. Metaphors are used to prevent the monotonousness and boredom of long chunks of texts. (Milano, 2020)

Metaphors are the result of language iconicity because they are a special kind of motivation both metaphor and iconicity are built on the mapping of two domains. Metaphor is built on the source and target domains and iconicity with form and meaning (Meir, 2010 865).

2 IMAGE SCHEMAS AND METAPHORICAL PROJECTIONS

2.1 Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT)

The Cognitive Metaphor Theory was created and presented mainly by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. The cognitive metaphor theory is based on the idea that verbal metaphor merely reflects mental processes and meaning of metaphorical words and expressions are considered to be a verbal representation of conceptual metaphors kept in the notional system of a human being organizing their perception, activity and mentality (Kartashova, 2010, 4). In other words, the basic assumption is that there is a set of standard metaphoric concepts – these are called conceptual metaphors – around which humans conceptualize the world (Romero and Soria, 2005, 3). The Cognitive Metaphor Theory looks at metaphors as something present in everyday use. The CMT implies that metaphorical forms where the target is abstract and the source is concrete. (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 20)

2.1.1 Conceptual Metaphor

The traditional view of metaphor, described in a previous chapter, was calledged by the Cognitive Metaphor Theory. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed that the conceptual system of human beings is metaphorical in its nature. This theory applies that the metaphors are present in every aspect of human life. Before this theory, most people thought that metaphors are used only as some stylistic property in poetry and prose (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 3 – 4). In cognitive linguistics, understanding one concept in terms of another is the metaphor. A conceptual metaphor consists of two domains. Conceptual domain B is projected on a conceptual domain A (Kövecses, 2010, 4). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) named the original concept a *source domain*, in this example, this is B, and the concept to which the meaning is transferred to as a *target domain*, which in Kövecses's example is A. Source domains are more concrete than target domains. (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, 253-254) As an example, humans describe their life or love life as a journey or time as a movement – *time is running out* or *falling in love*.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that metaphors are based on recurring patterns of experiences. They named these patterns "image schemas" (21-22). The concept of image schemas is that throughout experiences, certain patterns will emerge in people's minds, such as front-back, containment or balance. For example, Lakoff and Johnson found out that humans perceive argument as a battle or war. This means that when people talk about an

argument, they use a lot of vocabulary connected with war (22). We either win or lose arguments. We plan and use strategies and tactics. However, not all cultures perceive argument as a fight. In such a culture, people would view and experience arguments differently, and they would use different vocabulary, different metaphors. Therefore, we would not perceive this as an argument. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 4 – 5) Image schemas will be described in detail in the following sub-chapter.

2.1.2 Types of Conceptual Metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identified different types of conceptual metaphors. **Structural metaphors** provide a rich knowledge for the target domain. For example, the argument of war mentioned previously is a structural metaphor.

Ontological metaphors, also known as a figurative comparison, provide less cognitive structure for the target domain than structural metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 25-26). In this type of metaphor, a concrete object is projected on something abstract (Nordquist, 2019). Ontological metaphor is used for various purposes. For example, consider rising prices. Inflation is caused by rising prices. Because of the rising prices, inflation can be observed as an entity. Thanks to this noun, it is possible to refer to this experience. Ontological metaphors are crucial for dealing rationally with our experiences (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 25-26).

Orientational metaphors then provide even less conceptual structure for the target domain than ontological metaphors (Kövecses, 2010, 40). Most of these metaphors deal with spatial orientation for example, up-down, front-back, in-out, on-off, deep-shallow and central-peripheral. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 14) For example, the following sentences express being happy as movement up and being sad as movement down. *That boosted my spirit*. In this sentence, the movement is up. An upward movement in some languages tends to be connected with a more positive connotation. *I fell into a depression*. This is movement down. The downward movement is associated with a negative connotation. Spatial movements like this are created based on the fact that they

2.1.3 Metaphorical Mapping

Metaphorical mapping is systematic correspondence between the source and target domain. This means that the constituent conceptual element of the source domain correspond to the element of the target domain (Kövecses, 2010, 7). The strength of mapping lies in its mathematical clarity. This clarity enables us to model the mental space phenomena (Chilton, 2014, 6). Fauconnier (1997), in his work *Mappings in Thought and Language*, described

four types of mappings – projection mapping, pragmatic function mapping, schema mapping and mental-space mapping.

Projection mapping is the most basic form of mapping. This mapping projects part of one domain on another. Projection mapping uses the structure of one domain (the source domain) to interpret the structure of another domain (the target domain) with the corresponding vocabulary. Metaphors such as TIME IS SPACE are considered projection mappings (Fauconnier, 1997, 9). Pragmatic function mapping uses two corresponding categories of objects which are mapped together by a pragmatic function (Fauconnier, 1997, 11). For example, we refer to the books by their authors ("*I am reading Bradbury now*."). Another example is where we refer to the court system as "justice." Schema mapping uses one schema, model, frame or grammar to structure a situation in a context (Fauconnier, 1997, 11). For example, the word "drive" needs the subject (driver) and object (drivable vehicle). Culture is also a set of schemas. Projection mapping, pragmatic mapping and schematic mapping are important for understanding semantics, pragmatic and cognitive construction. Mental-space mapping links mental space set up in discourse and properties that are outside of the experience (Fauconnier, 1997, 12).

Mapping is closely related to the image schemas, which will be described in the next sub-chapter.

2.1.4 Domains and spaces

Domains are complex knowledge structures relating to the coherent aspects of the experience (Evans, 2007, 61). Domains are not analogue, imaginative patterns, unlike image schemas. They tend to be propositional in highly schematic areas. Domains consist of more parts than image schemas; therefore, they are richer in information (Kövecses, 2017, 325). Radden and Dirven in *Cognitive English* (2007) offered an example using a knife. Depending on a given situation, a knife can belong to the category of "eating" when used as a utensil. In a situation like a fight or self-defense, a knife would belong to the category of "weapon" (11). Conceptual domains are related to conceptual projection (Evans, 2007, 61). Abstract domains are not directly linked to embodied experience. Even though domains are derived from body experience, they are more complex (Gärdenfors, 2014, 46). Other domains are target and source domains, which were described in previous chapters.

Vyvyan Evans, in her book *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics* (2007), described space as a fundamental conceptual domain. The nature of space comes from a perception of the world around us that provides a sensory experience and therefore making it easier to understand

some physical aspects of the external physical environment (202). Mental spaces are the domains that discourse creates in order to provide a cognitive foundation for interfacing and reasoning with the world (Fauconnier, 1997, 34). They are constructed based on the generalised linguistic, cultural areas and pragmatic. Mental spaces are constructed "online". What is meant by the "online" construction is the fact that in speech or thought processes, it is possible to construct them by other, similar entities such as semantic frames, domains or cognitive models. This process is called schema induction (Evans, 2007, 134).

Conceptual space is based on the theory that the meaning used in social interactions is categorised and described in spatial structures. Spatial structures are expressed in terms of region, dimension, and distance (Gärdenfors, 2014, 20). Conceptual spaces are created out of quality dimensions such as temperature, weight, force, pitch, or size. These various dimensions are linked together (Zenker and Gärdenfors, 2015, 5). Some of these dimensions come in "bundles" – colour (brightness, tone hue) or taste (salt, sour, sweet). Nonetheless, there are also unique quality dimensions that are of an abstract character, such as time. Time is a one-dimensional structure, and it is isomorphic to real numbers (Gärdenfors, 2014, 20). The function of these dimensions is to represent the qualities of an object in the domain (Zenker and Gärdenfors, 2015, 5).

2.2 Image Schema in CMT

The idea of an image schema first appears in the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The assumption of image schema is that a subconscious form of human knowledge comes from basic human sensorimotor experiences. Image schema is an abstract representation of dynamic patterns of human interactions with an environment. These interactions are, for example, perception of reality, moving and touching of objects and movement of the body (Hurtienne, 2011, 6). They represent patterns such as *paths*, *containers*, *forces*, *links*, and *balance* (Clausner and Croft, 1999, 14).

Schemas create a form of representation that is connected to the memory, perception of the world and semantic meaning (Gärdenfors, 2007, 2). They are considered to be directly meaningful, preconceptual structures and are highly schematic (Hampe, 2005, 1). The use of image schema is not limited only to bodily experience but also to metaphorically project highly abstract domains, mainly metaphors. As a result of the metaphorical mapping, it is guaranteed that the source domain is in line with the target domain (Vernillo, 2018, 3). For example, because of gravity, an unsecured object will fall down to the ground. Asymmetry

of the human vertical axis ensures that in order to pick the object up, we have to bend over, look in one direction (down) and then look in another (up) for a rising object. This means that because of our physiology, the vertical axis interacts with gravity, which is the reason how humans interact with the environment (Evans, 2007, 106).

Thanks to metaphorical projection employing image schemas, we make use of physical experience in two ways: (1) our movements and interactions are structured, and this structure can be projected by using metaphors into abstract domains; (2) bodily experience constrains the input to the projections but also the projections themselves (Johnson, 1987, 75). There is a lot of different types of image schemes. These will be described in the next sub-chapter.

2.2.1 Types of Image Schemes

As mentioned above, image schemas are divided into several categories based on their representation and use. I will look into these categories and describe them.

Image schemas can fall into categories such as Space, Containment, Locomotion, Balance, Force Unity, Iteration, Multiplicity, Identity and Existence (Evans, 2007, 108). Many expressions in everyday life can be perceived as image schemas.

1. The Verticality Schema, or vertical-space positioning, is an abstract structure of verticality experiences, images and perceptions. It involves "up" and "down" movement, such as in the example with gravity in 2.2.
2. A Container. This particular schema consists of the elements of the interior, boundary and exterior. Parts of the lexical concept associated with the container are forms: *empty*, *in*, *out* Etc. (Evans, 2007, 107). Everything is either outside of the container or the inside (Lakoff, 1987, 272). An example of a container can be the human lungs. Inhaling and exhaling air from the lungs is considered to be part of the container schema. Because of this bodily experience, we create an image schema of a container in our minds. A container is in a "containment" category.
3. Another image schema is source-path-goal. The idea of this schema is a journey where the departure is from the starting point and at the end is the goal. We are able to tell where the starting and ending point is, its path and the direction. The main theme is passing along from a starting point to the ending point (Lakoff, 1987, 275). Therefore, metaphors like *kindness can go a long way* is are the perfect example of source-path-goal schema.
4. Part-whole is the next schema. We can find relations between a part and the whole almost everywhere. Our entire existence is spent with the knowledge of our

wholeness and our parts. Humans' basic-level assumption can distinguish the most important parts of a part-whole structure, which are necessary to function in a physical environment. Many metaphors, such as the concept of a family and a divorce, are based on this schema (Lakoff, 1987, 273).

5. Next on the list is the centre-periphery schema. This schema works on a principle of distinction between central and peripheral parts of the schema (Santibáñez, 2002, 194). For example, a car is considered a central part of the schema and a steering wheel or wipers as a peripheral part. The periphery depends on the central part, but not the other way around. The centre is associated with importance, while peripheral parts are less important (Santibáñez, 2002, 194-195).
6. The link image schema is created with two entities that are linked by a device (Santibáñez, 2002, 194-188). For example, the stream of consciousness could be considered to be a part of the link-image schema.
7. A balance schema is created with two related entities and a fulcrum. Balance schema provides a connection between counteracting physical forces (Risch, 2008, 7).

Image schemas can be used in the design of graphical and multimodal interfaces by capturing and reflecting mental models. Due to the metaphorical extensions of image schemas, designers can transfer abstract meanings in the user interface. (Hurtienne, 2011, 7)

2.3 Cognitive Iconicity

Sherman Wilcox (2004) defined *cognitive iconicity* as a connection between two conceptual spaces. (122) In order to understand how cognitive iconicity works, two concepts have to be explained first. The first concept is the construal. The construal is the way the speaker, or language user in general, decides how to present a concept. (Evans, 2007, 41) In cognitive iconicity, iconic relation is between the construal of real worlds and the construal of the form. (Wilcox, 2004, 123) This is a different approach than linguistic iconicity, where the relation is between the form and meaning of a sign. The second concept that needs to be described is the fact that metaphors can create brand new, previously non-existent, iconic mapping. (Wilcox, 2004, 123) This is because of the fact that metaphor can reshape the symbolic structure to a different conceptual space. (Wilcox, 2004, 123)

The key idea of conceptual iconicity is that arbitrariness and iconicity are not mutually exclusive. The assumption that these concepts were mutually exclusive comes from the fact that iconicity has to be predictable. This assumption does not take into consideration

construal. Cognitive iconicity acknowledges that the construal is present on both sides of symbolic structures; therefore, some degree of arbitrariness will always be present, even if the sign is iconic (Wilcox, 2004, 140).

3 MATERIAL AND METODOLOGY

3.1 Material

This thesis aims to analyse the iconicity on selected websites. For this thesis, I created a corpus of webpages belonging to five multinational companies. Every company in the corpus is considered controversial or unethical. Each company is selected from a different sector of industry.

The first company is Nestlé S.A. Nestlé is a Swiss multinational food and drink conglomerate which is the largest in the world (Britannica, 2021). Nestlé faces many serious controversies such as child labour, unethical promotion of their products, price-fixing, mislabelling, and manipulation of uneducated mothers (Mihai, 2021).

Facebook, Inc. is an American provider of social networking services. Facebook is the biggest provider of social media in the world (Britannica, 2021). The company is known for many controversies, such as tax avoidance, censorship policies, real-name user policies, or illegally squashing competition (Kang and Issac, 2020). However, by far, the biggest controversy surrounding Facebook is the Cambridge Analytica data scandal in 2018, in which Facebook had a massive breach of personal data of 87 million users (Wong, 2019).

Electronic Arts Inc., or in short EA, is an American developer and creator of video games. It is one of the largest gaming companies in the world (Britannica, 2021). EA has been accused of anti-consumer practices, bad treatment of employees, false advertisement, releasing of unfinished products and many more (Chia, 2019). EA has been voted as "Worst Company in America" in 2012 by *The Consumerist*.

Amazon.com, Inc., is an American multinational technology company with a focus on e-commerce, retail and manufacturing of electronic book (Britannica, 2021). Amazon has mostly faced allegations of anti-competitive behaviour, tax avoidance and mistreatment of employees (LeGuin, 2021).

Bayer AG is a German pharmaceutical, agricultural and chemical company and one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world (Britannica, 2021). This company has been involved in the controversy regarding their drug products. However, the biggest controversy of the company was the acquisition of the American agrochemical corporation Monsanto. Monsanto is heavily criticized for the production of genetically modified organisms, bad treatment of the environment and the abuse of local farmers (Seipel, 2016).

3.2 Steps of Analysis

The analysis was conducted in two parts. The first part deals with linguistic and cognitive perspectives. For this part, I created a corpus of 46 samples from the "About Us" section of five selected websites. The corpus was analysed for the use of metaphor, image schemas and additional language iconicity featuring the use of acronyms and abbreviations. The majority of the features are described in the theoretical part; however, thorough analysis of corpus can address new issues not described in theory. The data used in this part of the analysis were gathered through the AntConc software. This software provided information regarding the use of specific vocabulary, lexical surrounding, and word clusters. AntConc software is freely available on the Internet.

The second part of the analysis aims to describe the visual and graphical perspectives of iconicity. I selected five visual metaphors from the company's websites. Analysis was conducted based on their use and what message they convey to the reader based on their composition, colour pallet and general message. For the last part of the analysis, I traced 8 examples of signs. I analysed their usefulness and ability to quickly convey a meaning based on Peirce's theory of signs.

II. ANALYSIS

4 LINGUISTIC AND COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE OF ICONICITY

The following chapter aims to analyse iconicity from linguistic and cognitive perspectives. It focuses on the verbal and conceptual metaphors traces in the verbal messages on the websites. I also traced additional linguistic iconicity such as iconicity of motivation, isomorphism, abbreviation and acronyms.

4.1 Metaphors

As mentioned in chapter 1.3.1, metaphorical iconicity is one of the types of iconicity. I traced 25 metaphoric fragments from the "about us" section of the analysed websites. Each company is represented by five selected samples. Every company follows a different approach to the description of itself. For instance, Nestlé and Bayer share some similarities in their description; both want to create a better world for the future, both are encouraging hard work and dedication in order to create a better and healthier society. Facebook and EA are more focused on themselves, describing their hard work and the effort they put in their products. Amazon's "about us" is about serving and satisfaction of the customer. However, even with the different approaches to self-presentation, all companies shared similar source domains. CONSTRUCTION AND CREATION were the most commonly used domains. JOURNEY was also present in almost all of the samples. In 2 out of 5 samples, Amazon also used elements of exaggeration, which are present only in their examples.

"About us" page typically should inspire trust, comfort readers and engage them in company's activities and plans (Chandra, 2017). Below I will look at how metaphors contribute to this goal.

4.1.1 Metaphor Analysis

The metaphoric language of Nestlé is indicative of movement, creation, and exploration. The implication of these five metaphors is that Nestlé is always trying to build a better future for themselves and the world. The orientational metaphors in these five examples are present in samples (1) and (2). As described in theory, these metaphors involve a spatial movement. The purpose of these orientational metaphors is to create a sense of action and dynamic. The ontological metaphor is used in sample (3) and (4) as they project something concrete on the abstract. For example:

(1) Good food **brings us together**. (Nestlé)

This statement is an orientational metaphor, as it contains elements of movement. "*Bringing us together*" implies that because of good food, people tend to be nicer and friendlier to each

other. ”*Us*” can also imply that it strengthens the relationship between the company and the customer based on their production. The “Bring us together” metaphor projects a concept of COMMON SPACE, where the customers and the producer could meet. The movement here is inside SPACE that the company represents through its products. At the same time, the movement outside SPACE could imply that the company’s expansion and innovation. For example:

(2) […] we constantly **explore and push the boundaries** of what is possible with foods […] (Nestlé)

This claim explores the fact that Nestlé is working tirelessly on innovation and new ways to produce store, and process food. It points to the company expansion through the projection onto the domain of SPACE that can be expanded. The movement is outside SPACE as the company is exploring. The CONSTRUCTION domain is also present as Nestlé builds and creates innovations.

(3) […] where **unlocking the power of food** can make the greatest difference […] (Nestlé)

Nestlé used this metaphor when describing how food can improve the quality of life for everyone, especially third-world countries and future generations. The use of “*unlocking*” in this context means that Nestlé is working on new, yet to be seen technologies and products. The metaphor projects the domain of CONSTRUCTION as it is working on new technologies. The GREAT CHAIN OF BEING is also present. This domain allows understanding basic human traits in terms of non-human attributes (Kiełtyka and Kleparski, 2005, 24). Therefore, this domain could be applied here since the human trait of making a difference relates to the characteristics of non-human “*food*”.

(4) […] we want **to shape a better and healthier world** […] (Nestlé)

“*Shaping a better world*” is a common statement used in promotion. This kind of metaphor is a description of an abstract action that is projected into the physical world. This process is part of a CREATION and CONSTRUCTION category of metaphors. This type of metaphor typically uses verbs such as “to shape”, “to forge”, or “to create” to convey the meaning.

(5) **Guided by** our values **rooted in** respect, rooted in respect […] (Nestlé)

Nestlé used this metaphor when describing the values of the company. This metaphor implies that Nestlé developed a strong sense of their values, and the values are interchangeable, strong and grounded in reality. Since they specifically used the phrase “rooted in”, they are creating a natural SPACE, linking Nestlé even more to the environmental cause.

The implication of these samples is that Nestlé never stops in their research on new and improved methods of food development. Based on their values, they respect the world and tradition created by their founder Henri Nestlé. However, many controversies surrounding Nestlé proving otherwise.

Facebook samples are indicative of the creation, construction and empowerments of its users. Facebook metaphors focus on the future, uniting people through social media and creating better services. Orientational metaphors were used in the (6) and (8). These samples create a positive connotation with Facebook and focus on unity and empowerment. Ontological metaphors are present in (7), (9), and (10).

(6) […] bring the world closer together. (Facebook)

Unlike the one used on Nestlé website, this metaphor can have two meanings. As a metaphor used on a website about social media, we can assume that "*bringing the world closer together*" means easier connection with people all around the world. This movement also could imply a similar meaning as in (1) – that social media promotes a friendly and relatively safe environment for the users. Just as (1), this is an orientational metaphor. Another shared similarity is the projection of COMMON SPACE.

(7) […] helps us **make better decisions**, **build better products** and **create better experiences** for everyone. (Facebook)

Facebook applied here the CREATION and CONSTRUCTION concept. Here, the creation of a better future, experiences and building a better future imply that Facebook is always trying to push boundaries with their products and services. Nevertheless, it is also possible that Facebook is attempting to learn from their mistakes and create better and safer services for their 3 billion users.

(8) **Our products empower** more than 3 billion people around the world […] (Facebook)

This sample indicates that Facebook is giving people the power to connect and reach all 3 billion users. It could also indicate that Facebook promotes equality, as no matter what gender, race, age, or orientation the user is, they are given the power to connect with others. Achieving power, or empowering in this example, is the movement up; therefore, this sample creates a positive message. This is why this metaphor belongs to the CONSTRUCTION and CREATION category.

(9) Our principles are what **we stand for**. (Facebook)

Facebook implied that their values and principles are the core of their business practices and that no matter what, they will never abandon them. This sample uses the domain of SPACE where the company rally behind their principles.

(10) […] we are and always have been builders. (Facebook)

What this sample suggests is that every employee contributes to the greater good of the company. It implies that every employee, new or senior, has the power to build something great. This is a type of construction and creation metaphor. It gives employees hope and pride in their work. This sample uses the domain of PHYSICAL STRUCTURE as the organization is built by its employees.

Unlike the metaphors used in the examples of Nestlé, Facebook is more focused on the appeal to emotion toward their users.

Electronic arts samples are indicative of metaphors centred on the emotions such as pride and determination. The orientational metaphors used in the sample (12), (14) and (15) indicate the movement forward, creating the idea of better products.

(11) **Striving to bring** imagination, original ideas and excitement to everything we do. (EA)

This metaphor is the first analysed metaphor of Electronic Arts. Use of the verb "*striving*" added stress to the fact that EA is working hard on creating new and original ideas, especially against all the odds. This metaphor can create hope and excitement. It is also possible that EA tries to show pride and integrity about their work. The PHYSICAL STRUCTURE is present in this sample as the employees are part of a social group that works on bringing the imagination to the work.

(12) **Thriving on the journey** and being motivated to achieve excellence. (EA)

By this metaphor, EA wanted to remind us that it is not only the final destination that matters but also a journey and overcoming the obstacles on the way. This metaphor is based on movement and momentum. Again, it is shown here that EA is proud and wants the best for their customers and shareholders. Positivity and determination are key factors of this metaphor. This is an orientational metaphor as there is a movement forward. The journey always has a starting point, process and destination. EA implied here that the journey, despite all the challenges, is the best part of the process.

(13) Bringing focus, drive and conviction to our actions. (EA)

This metaphor is similar to the (12) in the sense that it contains a movement. Determination and drive are also present. In this case, "*conviction*" is meant as a strong and deep belief and

morals rather than being found guilty of something. EA themes and schemas of the metaphors are very similar – determination, movement forward, hard work, integrity, and overcoming obstacles. Samples (1), (6) and (11) shares a similar structure with the "bring to" element that creates a COMMON SPACE for the interaction.

(14) We are at our best when we pursue what we love […] (EA)

In this metaphor, EA implies that they are passionate and determined in their work and production. "We are at our best" could also imply that EA is describing itself as the finest and the biggest company in their respective field. This metaphor also creates a sense of pride and joy in the work of EA. This metaphor is a JOURNEY – it is the pursuit of something important to EA.

(15) […] **we push technology forward** to deliver the future of play […] (EA)

This metaphor is similar to the (2) example. "*Pushing*" indicates the constant development and improvement of technology. The use of the word "*pushing*" could also imply that EA is aggressive with the development and wants to be the leading factor in the development of new gaming technology. As in (2) it creates the idea of expansion through the domain of SPACE.

Hard work and development of new technologies is often in the link with CREATION and CONSTRUCTION metaphors. Electronic Arts is focused solely on themselves, their work and dedication. Emotions will come from our understating of the journey and how the journey typically is.

The application of Amazon metaphors is that "about us" page, and the metaphors in it are very client-oriented. Unlike the other companies, they describe how best they can serve and help a client. Their metaphors are more focused on emotion and creating a sense of trust by providing a connotation to a family (19) and making sure that the customer is central to its decision (17), (18) and (20)

(16) Amazon **is guided by** four principles […] (Amazon)

This metaphor is the first to be analysed by the Amazon. From the beginning, Amazon is very customer-oriented with its metaphors. This metaphor implies a movement towards the principles of the company. This metaphor could also imply that Amazon is rooted in their principles and values. Amazons "about us" section is mostly about customer satisfaction rather than promoting the hard work of the company. Through the use of JOURNEY, Amazon progresses on the path to satisfy a customer while staying true to its key principles.

(17) **Amazon strives to be** Earth's Most Customer-Centric Company […] (Amazon)

This sample is very similar to the (11). The verb "striving" in this example indicates added stress to the fact that Amazon is working tirelessly towards their goal. This metaphor contains the elements of a JOURNEY as it pushes itself to reach its goal of becoming the best customer-centric company.

(18) […] we keep the customer **at the centre of our decisions** […] (Amazon)

In this case, the assumption is that the customer is a vital factor in decision-making. Everything is about customer and customer satisfaction – the movement towards the centre implies that customers are at the centre of attention. The domain of CONSTRUCTION is present as the customer is the component of building the final decisions of the company.

(19) […] we **foster a culture** where inclusion is the norm […] (Amazon)

Here, Amazon is creating familiarity. "*Fostering*" is usually connected with children and raising a family. In this case, metaphor affects emotions, creating a sense of familiarity, family and connection. It also implies that Amazon is trying to create a new type of working environment where everybody, no matter their skin colour, gender, orientation, or disabilities, is on the same level, as long as they are capable of doing their job. This metaphor implies that the company is a baby that needs special care and attention in order to grow and become strong.

(20) […] keep our customers' trust is the **single biggest driver** […] (Amazon)

This metaphor implies that Amazon is moving because they want to satisfy customers and create a good relationship between them. "*Driver*" suggests that it is an ongoing process. Much like in the EAs metaphor (12), it is a JOURNEY type metaphor, where the destination is not the only objective but rather the whole journey.

Amazons description is the complete opposite of EA. EAs description is how they are the best in the field, while Amazon describes what they do best for the customers.

Bayer metaphors used a lot of emotional language to inspire people, create hope and excite readers about the future they are creating. Many of their metaphors were built upon this emotional element and construction of a better future.

(21) […] we are **contributing to finding solutions** to some of the major challenges of our time. (Bayer)

The first metaphor by Bayer implies the fact that they always work on new ideas and technologies to improve the world. A lot of pride and integrity comes from this statement. This metaphor consists of the CONSTRUCTION domain as they are created and find

solutions for problems. This could also mean that Bayer sees itself as dominant in the pharmaceutical and agricultural field.

(22) And we believe **science is the key**. (Bayer)

Bayer used a similar metaphor here as Nestlés (3) only in reverse. Nestlé is describing unlocking the power of food, while Bayer describes science as the key to the greater good. This metaphor was used when depicting that Bayer wants to make the world a better place through the use of science. That means that science is the most crucial factor in our future. CONTAINER is present in this sample, as science is depicted as a container in which a better future is created.

(23) […] **we must strive** for a better tomorrow […] (Bayer)

With this metaphor, Bayer hints that they put a great effort into their work in order to secure a better future for everyone. Just as in (11), using the word "*strive*" puts stress on the fact that Bayer is dedicated to their work. Metaphors like this create joy, excitement and hope for a better future for everyone. In this sample future is a destination. Future is seen as something exciting, new, and unknown.

(24) Every day **we put our knowledge and skills to work** […] (Bayer)

This sentence is used when talking about creating a better future every day. Every day Bayer is pushing the boundaries of human well-being by working on new products. As in previous examples by Bayer, emotions are the driving force of this metaphor – hope, pride and excitement. Knowledge and skills are seen as objects. This could imply the presence of the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING as the inanimate objects are given human traits. Interestingly even that the sample consists of the movement down, it does not carry a negative connotation. This is because it does not project negative emotion but rather an action toward a goal.

(25) We **put ourselves to the test day in, day out.** All together. All over the world. (Bayer)

Comparing to the other examples by Bayer, this one follows a similar pattern like the rest. Creating a metaphor with a strong emotional element to it, Bayer wanted to show that the company is intertwined with the world and improving it. This metaphor implies that Bayer is testing their limits every day and pushing the boundaries of what they are capable of doing. Similarly to (24), this sample has movement down but with no negative connotation.

4.2 Image Schemas

This part is dedicated to the analysis of image schemas and their use in the website. I selected 15 samples of statements where the mapping of image schemas is traceable. Each company is represented by three samples.

4.2.1 Image Schema Analysis

Table 1 Types of image schemas on selected websites

Image Schema	Number of this type
CONTAINER	4
LINK	2
PART-WHOLE	1
SOURCE-PATH-GOAL	6
CENTER-PERIPHERY	2
TOTAL	15

The most used image schema is the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. Out of 15 samples, six of them were SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. These results prove that the "about us" part of a webpage is the presentation of a company, showing its goals and purpose through the use of movement and journey. Its purpose is also to create a first impression on the reader and create the most positive connotation as possible. The second most used schema was CONTAINER with four samples. For example:

(26) We're continuing the legacy of our founder Henri Nestlé […] (Nestlé)

There is a movement forward present within this sample. This could indicate the presence of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The source is the "*legacy*" from which Nestlé carry on forward into the future.

(27) We have defined three overarching ambitions for 2030 which guide our work (Nestlé)

The journey is present in this fragment as it contains a movement forward. This fragment contains SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. From the "three overarching ambitions", Nestlé is working on fulfilling these ambition through their work.

(28) We have more than 2000 brands ranging from global icons to local favorites, and are present in 186 countries worldwide. (Nestlé)

(29) This image schema is PART-WHOLE as all of the brands from all over the world are parts of one whole company – Nestlé.

(30) Hiring people with different backgrounds and points of view helps us make better decisions, build better products and create better experiences for everyone. (Facebook)

This claim made by Facebook is a SOURCE-PATH schema. It implies construction as a process; hiring employees from different backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicities and sexual orientations will help Facebook understand the broader audience, creating a better and more immersive experience for all.

(31) We build technologies that help people connect with friends and family, find communities, and grow businesses. (Facebook)

Here Facebook used LINK schema. "*Growing businesses*, *connection with friends and family*", and "*finding a community*" are three elements connected and intertwined thanks to technology, aka social media. CONSTRUCTION is also present in this sample as Facebook is creating new ways of connection.

(32) Building a diverse team where everyone belongs is crucial […] (Facebook)

This statement all about how important is diversity in the tam. This sample could be considered a CENTER-PERIPHERY as the diverse team is central to understanding and succeeding of the company.

(33) Our Purpose & Beliefs motivate us. Unite us. Inspire Us. (EA)

The LINK schema is present in this sample. Electronic Arts purpose and beliefs connect the customer and the company. It implies that the company is trustworthy, inspiring and the customers should unite under their rule.

(34) Listening, having humility and being open to new ways of thinking. (EA)

This sample is a CONTAINER image schema. Every action that is described is done within the boundaries of the company. Therefore the company is the CONTAINER for new ideas and listening. The company then takes actions based on the feedback from the customers.

(35) Being part of a gaming community should be positive, fun, fair, and safe for all. (EA)

Here the CONTAINER is the gaming community and the rules EA applies to it. All outside sources must behave according to their rules and conditions. EA is promoting positivity, fair game and safety for all gamers.

(36) The 14 principles guide our discussions and decisions every day. (Amazon)

In this sample by Amazon, there is a clear indication of the journey. Amazon is moving forward every day by following the 14 principles that they created. This could be CENTER-PERIPHERY as every aspect of Amazon is based on their principles. Movement forward is also present in this sample. This could indicate that this sample also contains elements of JOURNEY.

(37) Working to earn and keep our customers' trust is the single biggest driver of Amazon's Day 1 approach. (Amazon)

A CONTAINER schema is present in this example, as everything described here is within boundaries of the *Amazon's Day 1 approach*. Within a single day, Amazon is trying to create customers trust and create a bond between them. There are no outside sources mentioned here. This sample also provided JOURNEY, as there is a forward movement.

(38) Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. They are curious about new possibilities and act to explore them. (Amazon)

This sample has a lot of movement. It creates a path that every leader of the company follows. They are constantly improving themselves by learning and exploring new ideas and new methods of leading. Therefore this could be a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

(39) […] we improve quality of life for a growing population by focusing our research and development activities […] (Bayer)

PATH-SOURCE-GOAL schema is present here. The company's goal is to improve the quality of life to create a better life for everyone through research and development activities.

(40) Science for a better life

The implication in this statement is that the company's goal is to create a better and healthier life through the use of science and its components. Therefore the word "science" implies that Bayer used this as a sort of CONTAINER. Within the boundaries, a science, better and improved world is created.

(41) Our ambitious targets for 2030 are fully in step with the United Nations' Sustainable Development […]

This sample is very similar to the Nestlé example (27). This example constrains a movement forward based on the ambitions created for 2030. This sample is SOURCE-PATH-GOAL as the ambitions defined the source that Bayer will try to fulfil.

4.3 Language Iconicity

This section of the analysis is dedicated to iconicity, its different types and uses. Selected websites do not contain any onomatopoetic words since they would not appear professional on a corporate website. Onomatopoetic words are mainly used in poetry and literature, most commonly focused on children. Abbreviations and Acronyms are part of the language iconicity as they have a direct relation to the meaning. I traced six examples of abbreviation and acronyms and analysed them.

4.3.1 Abbreviations and Acronyms

(42) Our continued work with the **IFRC** […] (Nestlé)

The abbreviation in this sample stands for *International Federation of Red Cross*. In this article, Nestlé is describing their contribution to the fight against the COVID-19. The source domain could be considered HEALTHCARE linking the abbreviation to the article about fighting a pandemic.

(43) Nestlé supports the **LEAF** Coalition […] (Nestlé)

LEAF Coalition acronym stands for *Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance Coalition*. This article posted by Nestlé described how the company joined the LEAF to protect the tropical forest and increase the quality of the global climate. The source domain for this sample is the ENVIRONMENT form which the iconicity is created.

(44) Five Years of **VR** (Facebook)

In this sample by Facebook, VR stands for *virtual reality*. Facebook took a memory lane into the creation and best moments of their VR. This article creates the connection between TIME and TECHNOLOGY as Facebook is looking into the past.

(45) Redwood City, **CA** 94065, **USA**. (EA)

The abbreviations are commonly used for the locations and addresses. CA, in this sample, stands for *California*, a state on the west coast of the USA. USA stands for the *United States of America.* This location is the place where the headquarters of the EA is. These abbreviations create a link to a real place on Earth.

(46) Amazon joins hands with various industry partners and **NGOs** […] (Amazon)

The acronym NGO stands for *non-governmental organizations*. The title of this article suggests that Amazon is working with a non-governmental organization to help the fight against the second wave of COVID-19. This sample is similar to (41) as it creates a link between the source domain HEALTHCARE and

(47) The Consumer Health division markets mainly non-prescription (OTC = over-the-counter) products in the dermatology […] (Bayer)

Interestingly, Bayer provided an explanation for OTC abbreviation. With this statement, Bayer described how the consumer health division works and sells its non-prescription products over-the-counter to the customer. Bayer is the only company on this list that tends to avoid abbreviations and always giving full name or description.

The majority of the abbreviations and acronyms are used when companies are describing the collaboration with other companies or foundations to help the world. In today's crisis, a significant number of those are in connection with COVID-19. This is another example that these companies are trying to work and affect the reader's emotions, making the companies more likeable.

5 VISUAL AND GRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

This part of the analysis is dedicated to the analysis of visual and graphic elements that participate in a metaphoric reading. I decided to analyse visual metaphors used on the websites, image schema employed in the creation of webpages.

5.1 Visual Metaphors

As mentioned in 1.3.2, visual metaphors, also known as pictorial metaphors, compare one object (target) to a visual image (source). Visual metaphor uses analogy or association to create a visual representation of a concept (Pop, 2021). This type of metaphor is commonly used in an advertisement, thus, the visual metaphor is crucial for today's marketing (Nordquist, 2020). The human brain processes visual objects faster than texts; therefore, visual communication can boost the effectiveness of an online advertisement (Pop, 2021). Since websites are means of advertising, visual metaphors are used as a descriptive tool to link real objects to the pixels on the website. It helps to make the design of the website memorable and interesting (Turnbull, 2011).

5.1.1 Analysis of Visual Metaphors

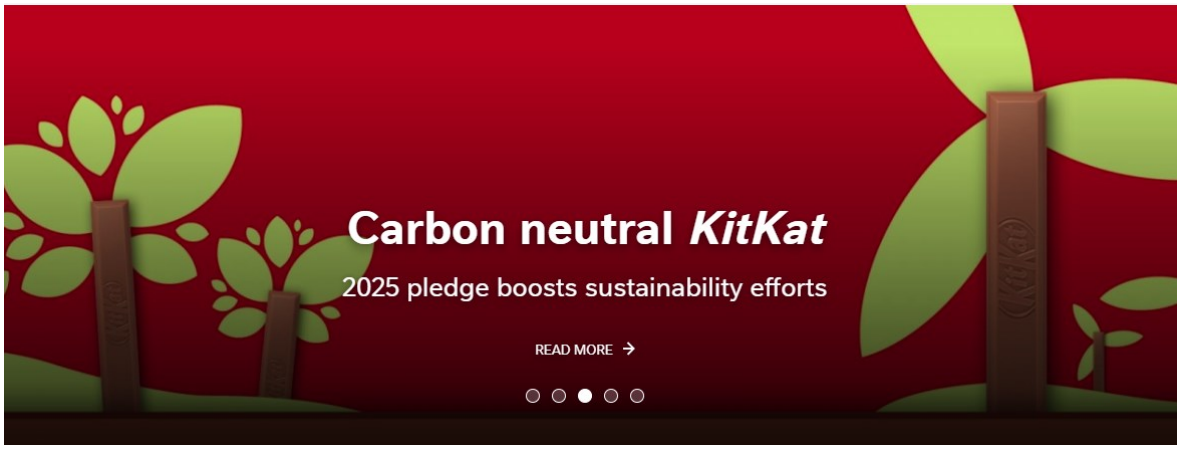

Figure 1: Nestlé's Carbon neutral KitKat article

The first visual metaphor I picked was from the Nestlé website. This is the title of the article about the KitKat brand aiming to reduce carbon emission by the year 2025. Most of the emissions occur when producing ingredients for the KitKat bar.

The source domain for this metaphor is ENVIRONMENT. Everything about this metaphor is central to the idea of creating a better and healthier environment for the future. The tree trunks are represented by the chocolate bar to indicate that the quality of the environment will naturally increase by lowering carbon emissions in the production of these chocolate bars. The two trees on the right have a similar shape to the wind power plant. This is another

indicator that KitKat focuses on using more green energy such as wind, water or solar energy in their production. The colour red is the signature for the packaging. The red could also indicate that it is vital for KitKat to reduce their carbon emission. The green then represents the eco-friendly environment and the green energy. Green is also a big reminder of the recycling logo (Kramer, 2020), which is important for this example. Overall this metaphor directly links the KitKat brand to the environment and lowering their emissions.

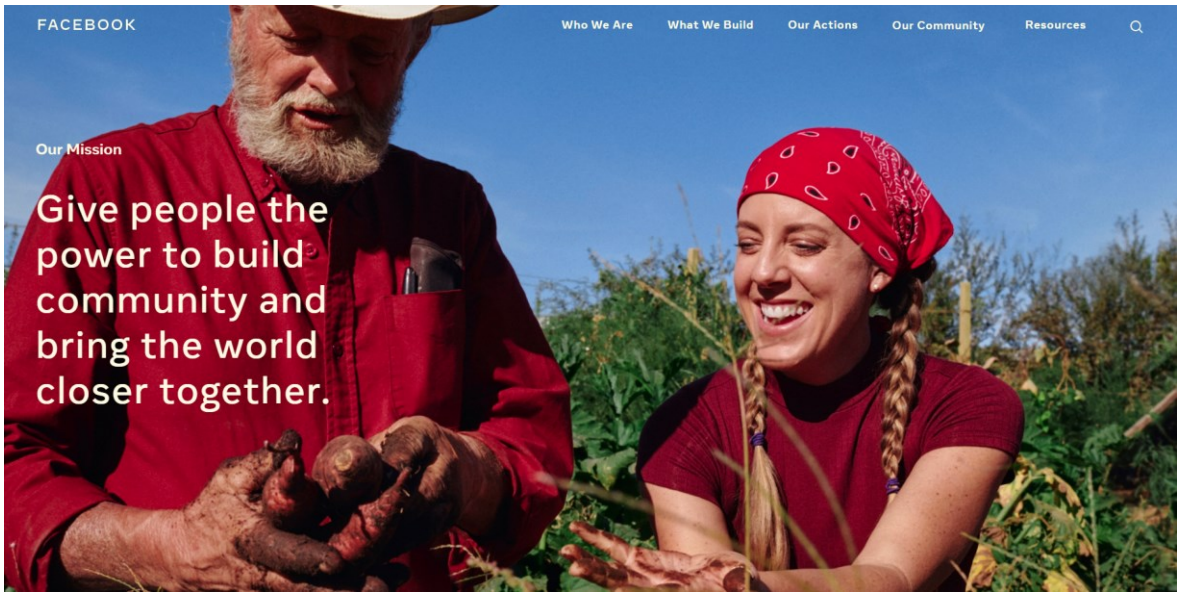

Figure 2: Facebook visual metaphor in "about us" part of their website

This visual metaphor was selected from the "about us" part of the website. The SOCIAL domain is the main domain in this visual metaphor, and it has several layers to it. The two participants in this picture are of different age. This implies that not only is Facebook brings people together from around the world, but also people of a different generation, background and history. Another layer is the "building a community" bit. In the picture, the couple is harvesting a vegetable. The implication could be that they are "growing" a community, despite their differences. They both are dressed in the same colour. This is another implication, that even though they are very different from each other, they have one thing in common, that one thing that will help them build and grow community together. The metaphor visually represents the idea it carries; creating a community and bringing different people together.

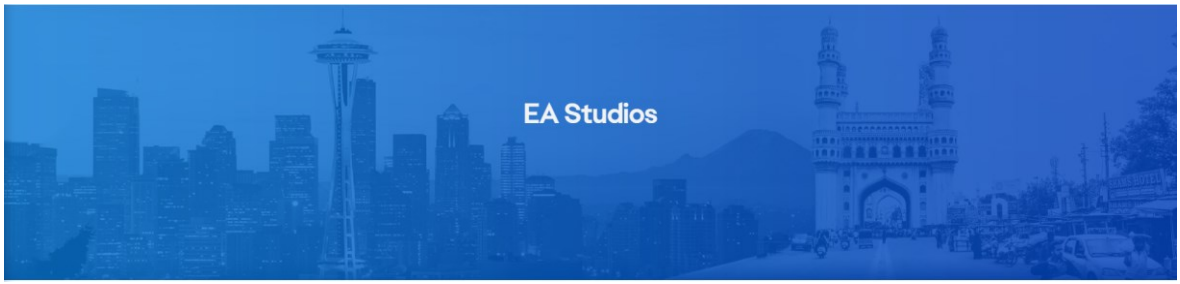

Figure 3: Electronic Arts article about their studios

Electronic Art's example of visual metaphor is taken from their page, introducing company studios. This visual metaphor is based on the idea that EA has studios all around the world. In the picture, you can easily see the two cities from two different continents. At the same time, one site is ancient-looking, and the other one is futuristic. These cities imply that the EA studios are spread across the entire world. Another implication is that because they have studios worldwide, they employ people from different cultures, religious beliefs and backgrounds. The blue colour is also important here. Blue colour represents trust, loyalty and stability. (Kramer, 2020) Because of these characteristics, EA used blue. It represents that EA is strong, stable, international and vital.

Figure 4: Amazons article about lending spare compute power to fight against COVID-19

The article from Amazon describes how Foding@home Company runs millions of simulations on the coronavirus and provides scientists with those data. Amazon is asking the public to provide spare computing power to help the company fight against the coronavirus.

The visual metaphor implies that the house has many electronic devices that can spare computing power. Each of these devices can help with the fight against the coronavirus without any work from its users. The small devices up top could be considered indexes as they represent the computing power. The colour scheme for this metaphor appears to represent professionalism and renewal with green and its shades. Renewal is important here as it means the fight against the coronavirus. The orange represents affordability, as it is very easy to help. (Kramer, 2020) This metaphor might be a bit harder to understand at first glance, but I still consider it to be iconic as it still directly represents the concept.

Figure 5: Bayer's article about strategy and progress

These two visual metaphors are very similar to each other. That is why I included both of them. As mentioned in the analysis of Bayer's language metaphors, this company emphasises the future they are creating. Similarly to Nestlé's metaphor, the domains at play are ENVIRONMENT and FAMILY. These visuals show families in a natural environment. The top left image with the title "Sustainability" implies that Bayer is working hard on a better future for our children and future generations. The environment they are in suggest that healthy and prosperous conditions are a priority for Bayer. The picture on the right represents a similar concept — a prosperous and happy future for the children. Unlike the previous example, Figure 4, iconicity is quite evident here. The pictures directly represent a healthy, happy and prosperous environment for families in a green environment.

5.2 Iconic Signs

This part of the analysis focuses on signs such as icons, their use and purpose on the website. The iconic signs are used for describing the function of the website. They add variety to the interface and create a visual explanation of the message (Wand, 2018). As described in theory, they are universally understood because they are the abstract representation of the meaning.

5.2.1 Iconic Signs Analysis

For Nestlé, I traced five iconic signs that are used on their websites. One icon is in Figure 6 and, four are in figure 7. For example:

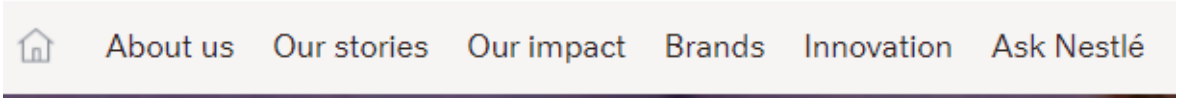

Figure 6: A House icon used by Nestlé

In this example, the icon of a little house will always return the user to the main page, no matter where they are on the website. This sign is clearly iconic as it represents an action — the house icon will take the user back to the main page. The CONSTRUCTION

In general, the purpose of the house icon is to mark a path back to the home page of a website. Because the home signs as icons are a universal symbol, it is vital for every page to have one. Other universally recognised signs are a magnifying glass for search and a printer for printing (Hahn, 2016).

However, apart from these universal symbols like a home, magnifying glass or a printer, Nestlé uses unique icons. For example:

Figure 7: Nestlé articles tags

Nestlé used these icons in order to separate their articles. Small icons represent each category. Family&Friends tag is represented by small figures of mother and daughter, two houses represent Communities, and a tree and Planet has a small illustration of two trees. There is no need for a user to learn what these means; there is a clear connection between them reinforced by the verbal clues. Such a combination of text and icon is used to further amplify the meaning that the icons are trying to convey. The colours also add another layer of iconicity.

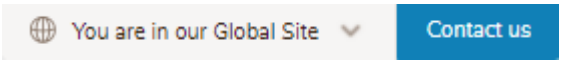

Figure 8: Global Site- Nestlé

The icon of a globe is a clear indication that this part of the website is international and not regional. In this section, Nestlé talks about a company as a whole instead of focusing on a particular region. The globe carries iconicity because there is a clear connection between the sign (the globe) and its referent (the world). This could also be a container, as the global site could be within the bounds of the globe icon.

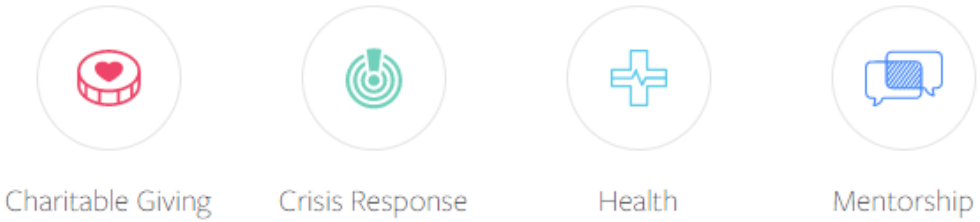

Figure 9: Facebook icons referring to new information

This example (see fig. 9) is featured on the Facebook social impact page. This page is devoted to raise and spread of awareness about various social issues within a society. It provides a variety of information on the topics and even offering donations to charities. Since all of the signs directly represents the subject, the reader will instantly know what they mean. These icons are containers are they represent their message within the boundaries of a specific image.

The first icon represents charities and possible donations. The coin with a heart represents the money a reader can donate to raise awareness for various causes, from UNICEF to local issues. The colour red then represents the human heart, evoking kindness, compassion and humanity. The heart is also a direct link to Facebook itself as it has red hearts as an emoji.

The green crisis response icon is a radar emitting pulses. This icon is used to help non-profit organisations to reach relevant people in need. Kramer (2020) described the use of the colour green to represent calmness in professional brands. Therefore we can assume that Facebook used the green to emphasise those traits.

The Health icon is probably the most recognisable in the reader's mind. The cross with the vital signs will immediately create a link between the icon and the health. Unlike *Figure 3*, the blue represents calmness, tranquillity and peace.

On the other hand, the mentorship sign is probably the least recognisable out of these four examples. The intertwining message icons represent connection, communication and

building a relationship. This means that users can seek advice and support from people with experiences.

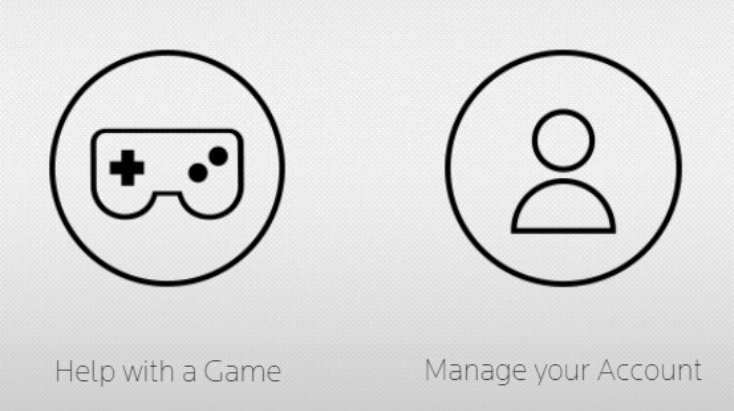

Figure 10 Electronic Arts account and games.

I selected these icons from the EAs account section. This part of the website helps users with their account, its settings and policies. The "Help with a Game" icon creates a list of EAs games and information about them, from technical parameters and update news to a game order. Similarly to Figure 8 and 9, these icons are containers. The gamepad on the left is a container for the catalogue of the games offered by EA. The icon on the right is a container for a personal account.

The icon on the left is a representation of the gamepad. Gamepads are inherently linked with video games. Even the users who do not use a gaming console, like PC players, will immediately recognise this icon. Therefore this icon creates a relation between a gamepad and the game section. By clicking on this icon, EA will provide a list of their games.

The icon on the right is a representation of an account and the account settings. This icon resembles a personalized, private space that is unique for every user. From the different picture to a different name, each account is private ownership of the user. This icon resembles that.

Figure 11: Amazon signs

These icons were selected from the Amazon online shop. Each represents unique information that is necessary to the buyer's satisfaction. Because these signs are present on Amazon online shop, they are more materialistic as they focus on money, credit card and package. The icons from other websites are more abstract. As mentioned in the analysis of language metaphors on the Amazon website, they heavily rely on customer services on their website. All the icons are orange, indicating the affordability of their products. (Kramer, 2020)
The first icon is a representation of money. This icon represents the idea that customers can shop on Amazon with over 60 different currencies. The iconicity here is provided by the link between the money icon and the different currencies. The second icon is based on the idea that the payments on Amazon are secure. The lock in front of the money and credit card represents the idea that the payments are safe and secure. In readers mind, this creates the impression that they can trust Amazon's payments. The third icon could be considered a symbolic icon as it represents the higher level of abstraction. This icon represents the calculation of fees. The arrow up could represent the fees as they will inevitably increase the price of the package.

The signs used by Bayer are not very creative or innovative. They tend to be more simple and easier to understand. To balance the simplicity of the icons, Bayer used pink colour for almost all of their interactive signs.

Figure 12: Calendar icon on the Bayer website

The first icon provided by Bayer is the icon of a calendar. Bayer uses this icon when announcing the meetings, workshops, seminars, Etc. This icon provides a year calendar of 2021 with planned events. The calendar icon is very similar to the house icon. By clicking on it, a calendar will appear. Interestingly, Bayer used the colour pink or magenta on almost all of its icons. Pink is usually used to create a delicate and peaceful environment. It could also imply that the brand is fighting for equality (Kramer, 2020).

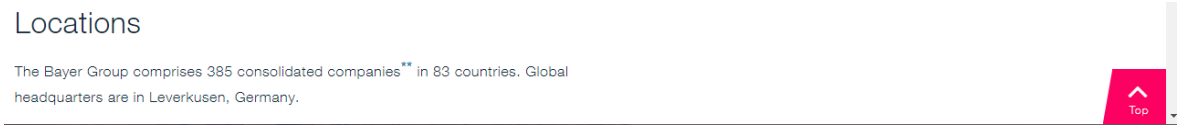

Figure 13: Icon representing movement to the top of the page.

The top arrow is the last example of the iconic sign. This icon is unique as it is used only by Bayer – no other selected website has this kind of icon. The top arrow appeared every time in the right down corner of the website when the user scrolled down. Therefore, by clicking on this icon, the website will always return to the top. As with all of the icons used by Bayer, this one is also pink; however, it changes its colour when it is on the background that would be difficult to see.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to characterise and analyse iconicity such as conceptual metaphors, image-schemas, language and visual iconicity on five selected websites from both linguistic and semiotic perspective. I selected five multinational companies were selected based on the negative reputation and connotation they have. Every company is from a different sector. The analysis was performed on 46 linguistic samples and 13 visual samples chosen from the webpages.

In order to identify what makes these samples iconic, an analysis was done. The analysis was divided into two parts. The first part focused on linguistic and cognitive perspective. The analysis focused on metaphors, image schemas and additional language iconicity such as abbreviation and acronyms. For easier analysis, the AntConc software was used. This software tracked frequently used words and, lexical surroundings, and word clusters.

Firstly, I analysed the metaphor based on the conceptual metaphor theory that states that metaphors are not used only in poetic or artistic texts but are present in every aspect of human life. The analysis was performed on 25 samples from the "about us" part of the websites. Every metaphoric expression was used to express a positive message about the company, create hope for a better future or inspire people with brand new innovation the company is working on. Based on the analysis, I traced six source domains. The majority of these metaphors utilized the CONSTRUCTION, SPACE AND JOURNEY domains as they described the company and what is its purpose. The CONSTRUCTION was used 9 times, SPACE 7 times and JOURNEY 5 times.

For the next part of the analysis, I traced image schemas different from the metaphor samples. This part aimed to determine how and what types of image schemas are used in the description of the company. I traced 15 samples that utilize image schema. Five image schemas were identified. Out of 15 samples, 6 were the part of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. As described in theory, this schema focuses on a journey departing from the source and working towards a goal. This indicates that image schemas in the samples tried to convey a message about the presentation of a company, showing its goals and purpose through the use of movement and journey and create familiarity. The second most used schema was CONTAINER.

Lastly, in the linguistic part of the analysis, I traced 6 samples of acronyms and abbreviations. These acronyms and abbreviations were used when describing collaboration with other companies. Out of six examples, two were describing the collaboration in order

to help fight the COVID-19. This shows that the companies are taking an active role in dealing with crisis and shaping the future of the world.

The second part of the analysis focused on the visual part. For the analysis, I traced 5 samples of visual metaphors that were found on the selected webpages. All of the samples represented something different. Two of these samples were photographs, and three were created artificially. I analysed their meaning, composition, colour, and what was the purpose on the website.

For the last part of the analysis, I traced 17 samples of iconic signs. The analysis did not focus on the general signs, like the icon of a printer or magnifying glass used on every website but rather on unique signs that specific only to that website.

To summarize, the iconicity on the website is present from both linguistic and semiotic perspective. Even though every selected company is from a different sector and has a different point of view, they all shares similarities. These similarities showed in metaphors, image schemes, and abbreviation, acronyms and similar iconic signs. Every company described their role, what future they are shaping and what their journey towards that future is. Even though these companies have a bad reputation, there is no denying that they will play a big role in shaping the world.

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APPENDIX: CORPUS OF SELECTED SAMPLES FOR ANALYSIS

1. Good food brings us together. (Nestlé)
2. […] we constantly explore and push the boundaries of what is possible with foods […] (Nestlé)
3. […] where unlocking the power of food can make the greatest difference […] (Nestlé)
4. […] we want to shape a better and healthier world […] (Nestlé)
5. Guided by our values rooted in respect, rooted in respect […] (Nestlé)
6. […] bring the world closer together. (Facebook)
7. […] helps us make better decisions, build better products and create better experiences for everyone. (Facebook)
8. Our products empower more than 3 billion people around the world […] (Facebook)
9. Our principles are what we stand for. (Facebook)
10. […] we are and always have been builders. (Facebook)
11. Striving to bring imagination, original ideas and excitement to everything we do. (EA)
12. Thriving on the journey and being motivated to achieve excellence. (EA)
13. Bringing focus, drive and conviction to our actions. (EA)
14. We are at our best when we pursue what we love […] (EA)
15. […] we push technology forward to deliver the future of play […] (EA)
16. Amazon is guided by four principles […] (Amazon)
17. Amazon strives to be Earth's Most Customer-Centric Company […] (Amazon)
18. […] we keep the customer at the centre of our decisions […] (Amazon)
19. […] we foster a culture where inclusion is the norm […] (Amazon)
20. […] keep our customers' trust is the single biggest driver […] (Amazon)
21. […] we are contributing to finding solutions to some of the major challenges of our time. (Bayer)
22. And we believe science is the key. (Bayer)
23. […] we must strive for a better tomorrow […] (Bayer)
24. Every day we put our knowledge and skills to work […] (Baye)
25. We put ourselves to the test day in, day out. All together. All over the world. (Bayer)
26. We're continuing the legacy of our founder Henri Nestlé […] (Nestlé)

27. We have defined three overarching ambitions for 2030 which guide our work (Nestlé)
28. We have more than 2000 brands ranging from global icons to local favorites, and are present in 186 countries worldwide. (Nestlé)
29. Hiring people with different backgrounds and points of view helps us make better decisions, build better products and create better experiences for everyone. (Facebook)
30. We build technologies that help people connect with friends and family, find communities, and grow businesses. (Facebook)
31. Building a diverse team where everyone belongs is crucial […] (Facebook)
32. Our Purpose & Beliefs motivate us. Unite us. Inspire Us. (EA)
33. Listening, having humility and being open to new ways of thinking. (EA)
34. Being part of a gaming community should be positive, fun, fair, and safe for all. (EA)
35. The 14 principles guide our discussions and decisions every day. (Amazon)
36. Working to earn and keep our customers' trust is the single biggest driver of Amazon's Day 1 approach. (Amazon)
37. Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. They are curious about new possibilities and act to explore them. (Amazon)
38. […] we improve quality of life for a growing population by focusing our research and development activities […] (Bayer)
39. Science for a better life
40. Our ambitious targets for 2030 are fully in step with the United Nations' Sustainable Development […]
41. Our continued work with the IFRC […] (Nestlé)
42. Nestlé supports the LEAF Coalition […] (Nestlé)
43. Five Years of VR (Facebook)
44. Redwood City, CA 94065, USA. (EA)
45. Amazon joins hands with various industry partners and NGOs […] (Amazon)
46. The Consumer Health division markets mainly non-prescription (OTC = over-the-counter) products in the dermatology […] (Bayer)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMT Cognitive Metaphor Theory

EA Electronic Arts

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