![emerald**insight**]

European Journal of Marketing

Figuratively speaking: of metaphor, simile and metonymy in marketing thought
Stephen Brown, Roel Wijland,

Article information:

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

Figuratively speaking: of metaphor, simile and metonymy in marketing thought

Stephen Brown

Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing, Ulster University, Newtownabbey, UK, and

Roel Wijland

Department of Marketing, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

Abstract

Purpose – Much has been written about metaphor in marketing. Much less has been written about simile and metonymy. It is widely assumed that they are types of metaphor. Some literary theorists see them as significantly different things. If this is the case, then there are implications for marketing theory and thought.

Design/methodology/approach – In keeping with literary tradition, this paper comprises a wide-ranging reflective essay, not a tightly focussed empirical investigation. A combination of literature review and conceptual contemplation, it challenges convention by "reading against the grain".

Findings – The essay reveals that, far from being part of metaphor's supporting cast, simile and metonymy are stars in themselves. With the aid of three concise cases-in-point – relationship marketing (RM), the consumer odyssey (CO) and Kotler's generic concept (GC) – the authors present an alternative interpretation of their conceptual contribution and continuing importance.

Practical implications – Marketing management is replete with metaphorical speculation (positioning, warfare, myopia and more). The shortcomings of such figures of speech are rarely spelled out, much less foregrounded. By raising figurative consciousness, marketing practice is furthered.

Originality/value – As similes and metonymies are rarely spoken about in marketing scholarship, the study starts a much-needed conversation. It raises the issue of marketing's figurative foundations and, in so doing, offers further scope for future debate.

Keywords Metaphor, Figurative language, Literary criticism, Marketing thought

Paper type General review

> Criticism should consist of a sensitive but dauntless search for the most productive or provocative metaphors in the material to hand. An account of the world that fails to draw from it all its figurative potential is therefore incomplete. Dillon (2017, p. 106)

Theodore Levitt, former poet laureate of marketing scholarship (Aherne, 2006), once claimed that "the metaphor makes the sale". Dating from an era when hard-core marketing science held sway, Levitt's (1981, p. 96) statement was designed to provoke, to unsettle and to throw a figurative spanner in the works. By making the point that metaphor, simile and similar literary devices have an important part to play in marketing principles and practice, he was suggesting that our field suffers from multivariate myopia, a misplaced belief in the significance of statistics.

Although Levitt's irreverent remarks predated the "paradigm wars" (Kavanagh, 1994) of the "postmodern turn" (Sherry, 1991), they were a whisper on the wind of marketing thought. Nowadays it is widely accepted that metaphor is central to marketing

understanding, that rhetorical devices, figurative language and literary criticism are an integral part of our discipline (Miles, 2010, 2014). According to Kitchen (2008), viral marketing, the PLC, marketing-as-warfare, portfolio matrices, globalisation, segmentation, relationship marketing, the marketing mix, integrated marketing communications, marketing planning models, buyer behaviour models, hierarchy-of-effects models and several other stalwarts of the standard textbooks are rock-solid proof of marketing's metaphorical foundations.

And Kitchen's not the only one or the most recent. From Arndt (1985) and Rosenberg's (1984) early analyses, through the combative interventions of Hunt and Menon (1995a, 1995b), via Zaltman's (1997, 2003) patented, packaged and premium-priced ZMET method, to Rojas Gaviria's (2016) putative programme of "poetic projection", a steady stream of metaphor-oriented articles has flowed into marketing's ever-deepening conceptual reservoir (Belk *et al.*, 2003; Bouillé *et al.*, 2016; Capelli and Jolibert, 2009; Cornelissen, 2003; Fillis and Rentschler, 2006, 2008; Henry, 2005; Hirschman, 2007; Joy and Sherry, 2003; O'Malley *et al.*, 2008; Rentschler *et al.*, 2012; Sundar and Noseworthy, 2014; Tuominen, 2007; von Wallpach and Kreuzer, 2013).

When, however, this figurative water-feature is plumbed from a literary perspective – and the metaphor has long been regarded as the fountainhead of literary creativity (Raine, 2016) – it is clear that the well, if not exactly contaminated, is tainted to some extent. It is sullied by the widespread assumption that metaphors, similes, metonymies, synecdoches and suchlike can be amalgamated for analytical convenience. Zaltman and Zaltman (2008) maintain that metaphor and metonymy are much of a muchness. Stern (1990), the prime mover of literary approaches to marketing understanding, posits that metaphors and similes are all of a piece. Bode and Kjeldgaard's (2017) recent review of branding concepts identifies four primal metaphors, namely, brand-as-object, brand-as-culture, brand-in-the-mind and brand-relationships-as-performances. However, three of these are similes, not metaphors, plus the entire paper is predicated on a metonym, as is Levitt's (1981) claim about metaphors making the sale. And while some might wonder whether such distinctions are significant, or have meaningful implications for marketing thought, the aim of this reflective essay is to find out.

To do so, we adopt Walter Benjamin's antithetical approach to literary criticism (Eagleton, 1981, 1986), an approach that "reads against the grain" and thereby challenges conventional understandings, received wisdom[1]. Our article not only considers the preponderance of "metaphor" in marketing thought but, with the aid of apt conceptual instances, it reconfigures figuration for good measure. Contrary to the widespread assumption that simile, synecdoche, metonymy and so on are minor planets around the "star that is metaphor" (Dancygier and Sweetser, 2014, p. 2), we seek to show that there are intelligent lifeforms on them.

We begin with a potted summary of metaphor's ever-mounting academic legitimacy and paramount place in marketing thought. Discussion then turns to the pros and cons of metaphor, simile and metonymy. With the aid of concise cases-in-point – relationship marketing (RM), the consumer odyssey (CO) and Kotler's generic concept (GC) – we compare and contrast the figures' respective strengths and weaknesses and corresponding impact on marketing understanding. This is followed by a general discussion, which not only answers the inevitable "so what?" question, but also sets out several figurative research foci for future consideration. We conclude with a timely return to the late Ted Levitt (1969) and his characteristically hyperbolic conceit that consumers buy quarter-inch holes not quarter-inch drills. But do they? Do they really?

Metaphor breeds

Much like academic analyses of nostalgia, attitudes to metaphor have undergone a radical transformation. Just as the former was once regarded as a potentially fatal illness and is now seen as a sign of good mental health (Routledge, 2015), so too metaphor is not what it used to be (Landau *et al.*, 2014). Figures of speech in general and metaphors in particular were considered unnecessary rhetorical flourishes that polluted plain prose once (Orwell, 1962). As Ortony (1979, p. 2) observed at the time, they were widely believed to be "deviant and parasitic". Nowadays, analogies of all sorts are assumed to be central to the human condition, an ineradicable element of inter-personal communication, one of the mainsprings of innovation, and the taproot of creative ingenuity (Pollack, 2014). In the exuberant words of Geary (2014, pp. 3-4):

> Our understanding of metaphor is in the midst of a metamorphosis. For centuries, metaphor has been seen as a kind of cognitive frill, a pleasant but essentially useless embellishment to "normal" thought. Now, the frill is gone. New research in the social and cognitive sciences makes it increasingly plain that metaphorical thinking influences our attitudes, beliefs, and actions in surprisingly hidden and often oddball ways.

Oddball or otherwise, there is no doubt that metaphor production, processing, packaging and promotion is now a major academic industry, with many busy manufacturing facilities. These, most commentators agree, owe their existence to a landmark act of intellectual disruption. In their ground-breaking book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated the pervasiveness of metaphorical reasoning and contended that humankind's understanding of the world is metaphor mediated. Even the most common-or-garden prose, they showed, is predicated on "conceptual" metaphors like argument-is-war, time-is-money and love-is-a-container (thus we *attack* others' arguments, *squander* time on frivolous things, *fall* in and out of love, etc.).

To be sure, the study of metaphor long predates Lakoff and Johnson. Aristotle, for starters, sang the figure's praises to high heaven (Stern, 1990). It played a critical role in medieval and early modern rhetoric (Leith, 2011). It was reinvigorated in the 1930s by influential literary theorist I.A. Richards (1936). And its sheer ubiquity was described and deconstructed by de Man (1979) in several salient papers prior to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) decisive intervention. Yet for all that, and notwithstanding manifold critiques of conceptual metaphor theory – to say nothing of copious competitor conceptualisations, such as structure-mapping theory, property attribution theory, perceptual stimulation theory and conceptual integration theory (Richie, 2013) – *Metaphors We Live By* brilliantly demonstrated that where there's life there's trope[2].

This liberation of figuration has likewise impacted upon marketing academia and managerial activity (Fillis and Rentschler, 2006, 2008; Rentschler *et al.*, 2012). As Hirschman's (2007) cogent review of the literature reveals, metaphor abounds in marketing theory and thought, principles and practice. Metaphor-reliant empirical studies range from analyses of logo design (Sundar and Noseworthy, 2014), advertising rhetoric (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004), new product development (Durgee and Chen, 2006) and retail store atmospherics (von Wallpach and Kreuzer, 2013), to the wild and woolly world of anthropomorphised brand mascots (Brown 2008). Conceptual analyses are equally wide-ranging, be they root-and-branch critiques of long-established concepts such as marketing warfare (Rindfleisch, 1996), relationship marketing (O'Malley *et al.*, 2008), services marketing (Goodwin *et al.*, 1996) and the marketing mix (van den Bulte, 1995) or newly created conceits that pertain to marketplace pursuits including marketing-as-jazz (Dennis and Macaulay, 2003), marketing-as-dance (Granof, 2012), brands-as-underdogs

(Paharia *et al.*, 2011), brands-as-Russian-dolls (Diamond *et al.*, 2009) and the allegedly "rhizomatic" character of contemporary consumer desire (Kozinets *et al.*, 2017).

Perhaps the most high-profile work is Zaltman's (1997) proprietary "metaphor elicitation technique", which has spawned two bestselling textbooks, numerous learned articles and a busy US consultancy practice with licensees in eight countries including Brazil, Turkey, Australia and Japan (Geary, 2014). A visually focussed variant of Lakoff and Johnson, ZMET peers into the deep conceptual metaphors embedded in client-assembled collages, then transforms the tropes thus identified into actionable corporate strategies (Zaltman, 1997, 2003). These, they claim, facilitate "Workable Wondering", bridge the "Say-Mean Gap" and, bravely blending their metaphors, help reduce the deeply disturbing "Depth Deficit" (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008).

Moving metaphors

The ubiquity of metaphor is incontestable; its utility too (Paprotté and Dirvan, 1985). If not quite holy writ, and therefore beyond rational discussion, it has come a long way from Strunk and White's (1959) decree that fancy figurative language is best avoided by aspiring writers. "Metaphor", a recent commentator contends, while artfully alluding to the word's original locomotive meaning, "is the way the human mind travels" (Hustvedt, 2017, p. 57).

The naysayers, though, are not completely Neanderthal. Apart from the much-mocked metaphors that comprise managers' cliché-ridden conversations – pushing the envelope up the flagpole of out of the box thinking going forward to the next level of the learning curve, etc. – excessive veneration of metaphor is unhealthy. According to Fillis and Rentschler (2006, p. 50), "there is a danger of seeing metaphor everywhere so that their use becomes overinflated and their impact devalued". Hunt and Menon (1995a, p. 81) concur: "misuse and confusion over metaphorical transfers have led to [. . .] potentially premature conclusions". Tynan (2008, p. 10) too recommends caution. "Just as we launch a new product, describe a product as a cash cow, or watch innovative new services diffuse across the landscape", analogies get launched like cruise ships, diffuse across the landscape like epidemics, and can end up like cash cows that flesh out our ever more engorged introductory textbooks. The outcome is a morbidly obese discipline, bloated with trite tropes, fattening figures of speech and indigestion-inducing "mixed" metaphors.

When considered, nevertheless, from a Benjaminian literary perspective (Eagleton, 1981), an approach that is not so much deconstructive as dissident, three things are clear about marketing's metaphor repertoire, and metaphorical thinking full stop. First, there are more than a few meaningful marketing concepts that are *not* metaphors (Hunt and Menon, 1995a). The unique selling proposition (USP), for example, is not obviously metaphorical. True, it nowadays carries connotations of ignorance and reductionism. Those who know nothing about marketing know about the USP. But the notion of a USP is literal by and large. Ditto Differentiation. The word is polyvalent, admittedly, with topological, mathematical and heraldic meanings[3]. It is often used in conjunction with STP, a triple-whammy of divergent allusions (physical subdivision, military activity and spatial orientation, respectively). However, it is antithetical to metaphor, as analogies are predicated on identifying similarities not amplifying differences (let alone being different for the sake of it). Disruption, meanwhile, may be the biggest buzzword in the management lexicon, that of IT start-ups especially. It is not a metaphor, though. Yes, Christensen's (1997) concept owes much to a golden-oldie marketing trope, McNair's (1958) wheel of retailing theory, and the word carries connotations of Schumpeter's (1942) celebrated oxymoron, "creative destruction". However, the noun itself is unremarkable, flat and factual not fat and fanciful[4].

Second, metaphors tend to become increasingly idiomatic through time. That is to say, they cease to become recognisable figures of speech and, to all intents and purposes, function as literal expressions of what they once artfully articulated. Initially poetic, they are denuded through overuse and progressively rendered prosaic. Often termed "dead" metaphors, itself a metaphor, this is formally known as the Career of Metaphor theory (Bowdle and Gentner, 2005). Not unlike the product life cycle, it describes how "A figure of speech that starts off *striking* soon becomes *standard*, then increasingly *stale* and, in the fullness of time, a *stiff* or deceased metaphor" (Brown, 2008, p. 8). The elephant's graveyard of management clichés, from dead cat bounce to opening the kimono, is testament to this tendency. And testament, moreover, to the fact that the more striking a metaphor is, the more ubiquitous it becomes, and the shorter its shelf-life. They end up, Donoghue (2014, p. 55) despairs, as:

A part of common speech, like the heart of the matter, in the fullness of time, the legs of the table, the heel of the hunt, comfort zone, brass tacks, the leaf of the book, picture of health, a wild-goose chase, presence of mind, creature of habit, towering oaks, wolf in sheep's clothing, Freudian slip, no-win situation, toxic assets, push comes to shove or any of the thousands of such phrases – most of them metaphors – that were once in high repute.

The third thing about metaphors is that they are partial. As Morgan (1980) made clear many years ago, when one domain is mapped onto another in a metaphor (e.g. organisations-are-organisms) only certain features of the latter "source" domain are transferred to the former "target" domain. These features are never stated explicitly and are left for the reader to infer (Raine, 2016). This can lead to a degree of misunderstanding and, in managerial contexts, inadvertent errors of judgement (van den Bulte, 1995). The metaphor that marketing is war diverts attention from co-operative aspects of business life (Rindfleisch, 1996). Dramaturgical metaphors of services marketing contribute to the scripted inauthenticity of customer encounters (Beverland, 2009). When independent coffee bar brands are construed as "doppelgängers" rather than, say, "guardian angels" that keep Starbucks on the straight and narrow, very different interpretive frames are activated (Thompson *et al.*, 2006).

Concise case-in-point: RM
The strengths and weaknesses of metaphor are clearly evident in relationship marketing (RM), a construct that emerged in the 1980s, attained paradigmatic status in the 1990s and, despite a series of trenchant critiques at the turn of the millennium, is an integral part of marketing's mother tongue, the conceptual vernacular. Once magical, now mundane, RM is a metaphor that, if not exactly on the slow train to oblivion, is a lot less expressive than before.

Read today, perhaps the most striking thing about Berry's (1983) inaugural article is that relationship marketing's metaphorical premises do not feature. At no point does he mention that relationship is a figure of speech (a powerful personification, to be precise), nor does he parse, much less explicate, the conceit in any way, shape or form. In fairness, Berry was writing before the paradigm wars precipitated qualitative and literary research-reliant interventions (Kavanagh, 1994), interventions that heightened scholars' sensitivity to figurative things in general. Nevertheless, it is evident from definitional statements like "Relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and – in multi-service organisations – enhancing customer relationships" (Berry, 1983, p. 61) that RM is literal as far as the author is concerned. There's nothing metaphorical about it.

According to leading literary critic de Man (1979), metaphors are more tenacious than facts and more persuasive too. The most powerful metaphors, he says, are those that seem

literal, natural, true and therefore come across as incontestable. They arrest, they overwhelm, they enrapture, they ravish the reader (Kövecses, 2010). They, in Allen's (2002) artful simile, seem to fit-like-a-glove. Little wonder that RM swept all before it, as marketing scholars succumbed to Grönroos (1994) and Gummesson's (1996) eloquent arguments and Sheth and Parvatiyar's (1995) authoritative genealogies. The movement arguably attained its apogee with Fournier's (1998) bravura articulation of consumer-brand relationships, which came, she claimed, in 15 personified forms ranging from secret affairs to committed partnerships. It was only when O'Malley and Tynan (2000) raised questions about the implied marriage metaphor – first introduced by the ever-imaginative Ted Levitt (1981) – that relationships' figurative lustre started to fade. Forcefully arguing that "individuals cannot and do not have interpersonal relationships with organizations" (Tynan, 2008, p. 22), they demonstrated that metaphors, no matter how natural or arresting, are partial. They obscure as much as they reveal. They move and mask, disclose and disguise, simultaneously. Akin to the duck-rabbit figure beloved by Wittgenstein, we see one or the other, not both at the same time (McManus *et al.*, 2010). Even today, there are those who swear by relationships, as well as those who foreswear them[5].

Similes sell

There's an old joke, once popular with schoolteachers, that a simile is like a metaphor. And, figures of fun notwithstanding, it really is. Simile, akin to metaphor, relates one thing to another. But it does so by the use of *like* ("shaking like a leaf") or *as* ("as smooth as silk") or *than* ("faster than a speeding bullet"). Similes are a commonplace of advertising slogans ("Run Like a Deere", "Cool as a Mountain Stream", "You Can't Fit Quicker than a Quik-Fit Fitter") and, as the Zaltman and Zaltman (2008, p. 12) ZMET excerpts reveal, are a significant feature of informants' reflections on, reactions to, and ruminations about their Rorschach-ish collages "chewing breath mints is like throwing a party for your mouth", "a rewards program is like we are mercenaries in a marketing war" (p. 56), "life without an iPod is like an emergency exit door got blocked" (p. 92), "when the treatment worked, I felt like a knight slaying a dragon" (p. 68).

Yet for all their ubiquity, similes are overshadowed by metaphors. In the world of figurative language, Grothe (2008, p. 14) complains, "similes have long taken a back seat to the more glamorous metaphor". Indeed, he blames Aristotle's famous observation in the *Poetics* – "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor" – for this iniquitous state of affairs, arguing that not only does "simile" predate "metaphor" etymologically, but that similes are much more common in everyday speech (Cameron, 2008).

At one time, indeed, similes occupied the front seat – the driving seat – of figurative language. In the ancient literary genre called *epic*, similes comprised their rhetorical centrepiece (Abrams, 1993; Hirsch, 2014; Sutherland, 2010). Epic similes, as the name implies, were long, elaborate and highly creative flights of figurative fancy that punctuated the narrative of an epic poem. They often ran to 12 or more lines where the initial comparison (e.g. Milton's angelic host as a swarm of bees) was expanded, extended and extrapolated to such an extent that audiences were awestruck, dumbfounded, and blown away (Nimis, 1987)[6]. But not anymore. Nowadays, similes are regarded as the runt of the literary litter. According to Pinker (2008, p. 261), the celebrity linguistics scholar, "turning a metaphor into a simile drains it of life and verve". They're "bo-ring", he adds in a simulated sing-song voice (p. 262).

Subordinate it may be to metaphor, in marketing especially (Cornelissen, 2003; Hunt and Menon, 1995a, 1995b), but simile is not devoid of defenders. Wainwright (2011), for instance, concedes that Burns' legendary line "my love is like a red, red rose" counts as a simile

grammatically. Yet it contains, he contends, considerably more figurative vitality than "love is a red rose", its metaphorical equivalent. The same is true of Chevrolet's classic slogan Like a Rock, or Winston Tastes Good Like a Cigarette Should, which are far from demonstrably inferior to the metaphors Let Your Fingers Do the Walking or Red Bull Gives You Wings. Indeed, for every commentator who describes simile as a "metaphor with the scaffolding still up" (Geary, 2014, p. 8), or regards simile and metaphor as the respective beat cop and plainclothes detective of the figurative police force (Leith, 2011), there are literary theorists who contend that they are fraternal twins who work their wonders in different ways:

> Similes are comparable to metaphors, but the difference between them is not merely grammatical, depending on the explicit use of *as* or *like*. It is a difference in significance. Metaphor asserts an identity. It says A equals B and in doing so relies on condensation and compression. By contrast, the simile is a form of analogical thinking. It says A is like B and thereby works by opening outward. There is a digressive impulse in similes that keeps extending out to take in new things (Hirsch, 2014, p. 538).

In addition to similes' ability to take in new things – metaphors, by comparison, are static; about being not becoming – they possess three especially attractive features. First, similes have a longer figurative shelf life than metaphors. Whereas metaphors become ever more fragile through time, and eventually end up as lexical conventions, literal in all but name (Gentner and Bowdle, 2008), that is *not* the case with similes. Similes always signal their figurative standing thanks to inescapably appended words like "like", "as" or "than". True, similes can and do become idiomatic too, part of the vernacular ("spread like wildfire", "sharp as a tack" and "faster than a speeding bullet"). But the predicate and copula remain in place, like a hi-visibility jacket on Leith's (2011) figurative police officer. Similes, to put it another way, are metaphors with an extended warranty.

A second and closely related factor is that similes not only take in new things but can help revive the old. In their career-of-metaphor conception, Bowdle and Gentner (2005) maintain that as tropes slide inexorably towards lexicality, the process can be slowed – or even reversed – by recasting the metaphor as a simile. Instead of, for example, dismissing the wheel of retailing trope as flat or punctured or a conceptual equivalent of the penny-farthing, it is better to pause, reflect and assess the extent of retailing's *similarity* to wheels or accordions or orchestras or whatever. Marketing myopia may have seen better days but there are all sorts of optical conditions, such as hyperopia, presbyopia, astigmatism and scotoma, that are *like* myopia and could be considered meaningful metaphors for marketing managers (Brown, 2008). Tynan (2008, p. 17) similarly suggests that the seemingly moribund Boston Matrix could be rejuvenated by treating dogs and cows, not as things to be kicked or milked, but *as if* they are man's best friend or breeders of brand extensions, respectively. She terms this "flexing the metaphor". But she's bending it into a simile.

The third salient thing is that similes are metaphors with wriggle room. They are not all or nothing. By their very nature, metaphors are assertive, pre-emptory and non-negotiable. They say, in effect, this-is-that, X-is-Y, life-is-a-journey, bureaucracy-is-red-tape, Coke is the real thing, McDonald's meals are happy. Metaphor demands compliance, that we take it or leave it (Donoghue, 2014). And while this is generally seen as a strength of metaphor, a signifier of power and persuasiveness, it can also be construed as bullying. My way or the highway. Similes, by contrast, are up for discussion. They are conjectural rather than assertive, propositions not proclamations, closer to suggestions than statutes (Raine, 2016). And while this property can be considered "weak", every marketer knows that the soft sell works as well as the hard sell. Gentle persuasion, furthermore, is surely the scholarly way, which progresses step-by-step, through constructive discussion and respectful debate, in a nothing if not collegial manner (Hunt, 1994). In theory at any rate...

Concise case-in-point: CO

Whatever else is said about the Consumer Odyssey (CO), there's no doubt that it was a mighty academic effort whose quasi-Homeric quest disrupted a discipline previously devoted to quantification, managerialism and positivistic philosophical perspectives (Bradshaw and Brown, 2008). As Belk (1991) recounts at length, during the summer of 1986, a 24-strong team of qualitative researchers travelled the "highways and buyways" of American consumer society in an enormous recreational vehicle. Stopping at swap meets, art shows, souvenir shops, grocery stores, riverboat cruises, county fairs and pedigree goat pageants, to name but a few, the Odysseans interviewed, observed, photographed and video-recorded consumers' "naturalistic" behaviour. The resultant data set (consisting of 4,000 still photos, 40h of videotaped interviews and 1,000 single-spaced pages of field notes) was subsequently studied, sifted, sorted and synthesised in accordance with interpretive research best practice. Then submitted for publication. A monumental 38-page co-authored article appeared in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, three years later. The CO still resonates, to the tune of 5,000 citations and counting, 30 years later (Belk *et al.*, 1989).

Studied from a literary perspective, the most striking thing about Belk *et al.*'s prodigious paper is that it is built on a simile not a metaphor. At no point do the authors claim that consumption is a religion. More than a few follow-up studies do indeed make that metaphorical leap, not least those targeting the managerial market (Atkin, 2004). But the Odysseans confine themselves to an assertion that consumption is *akin* to religion, that certain aspects of religiosity are apparent in contemporary consumer behaviour and, conversely, that religion is becoming ever more like a commodity. Granted, the paper is full of clever literary conceits, to say nothing of rich empirical detail, admirably adroit storytelling and remarkable rhetorical acumen, such as the striking chiasmus in the opening sentence of the abstract ("the secularisation of religion and the sacralisation of the secular"). However, the central claim of the CO's signature article never goes beyond the posited proposition that "consumer behaviour exhibits certain aspects of the sacred" (p. 2). They highlight "parallels between religious experience and the broad range of places, times, tangible things" (p.12). Is sacredness, they ask, "something that is acquired with the object, as power steering is acquired with an automobile?" (p.14). Their overriding aim, they claim, is to escape the "constraining nature" of metaphor (p. 31). Simile, it seems, suits them better.

Simile suits scholars better too. Unlike the relationship marketing metaphor, the Odysseans' consumption-as-religion comparison has not been subject to righteous indignation or systematic refutation. If anything, the opposite is the case. As innumerable derivations attest (e.g. brand auras, mantras, cults, evangelists, etc.) – it is becoming something of a sacred cow (Rinallo *et al.*, 2013). Be that as it may, Belk *et al.*'s suggestive, speculative, simile-led approach to spirituality helped ensure its initial acceptability and subsequent longevity.

Mini-me metonymy

The Odyssey, indeed, is more than an illustration of simile-shaped scholarship. It is arguably the academic equivalent of an epic simile, a virtuoso demonstration of qualitative research, the entire interpretive paradigm in miniature (Bradshaw and Brown, 2008). As such, the Odyssey operates in a metonymical manner. Succinctly defined as "the use of an aspect or attribute for the thing itself" (Arvatu and Aberdein, 2016, p. 254), metonyms substitute the part for the whole. When car-owners refer to their "wheels", or dandies boast about their "threads", or retail managers ruminate on "bricks, clicks and flips", they are making use of metonymy. Much-cited instances include *crown* for the monarchy, *jocks* for

sportspersons, *Wall Street* for financial services and *Madison Avenue* for the advertising industry as a whole (Abrams, 1993).

If simile is a skeleton in the cupboard of marketing thought, a hidden figure that some seem hesitant to mention, metonymy is a ghost in the machine, quietly plying its trade and pulling the levers of power. It is not so much a beat cop or plainclothes detective (Leith, 2011) as marketing's secret policeman. And, although more than a few marketing articles refer to and make use of metonymy (Brownlie, 1997; Borgerson *et al.*, 2006; Cochoy, 2015; Hershey and Branch, 2011; Kates, 2002), the trope's pervasiveness is not fully appreciated. It rarely features in EJM (6 papers out of 2,750) and, even then, it's usually alluded to in passing, as one among many rhetorical devices. Yet marketing is heavily reliant on metonymical postulates. Namely, the notion of the universal-in-the-particular, of the all-in-each, of the world, as romantic poet William Blake puts it, "in a grain of sand" (Holbrook, 1995; Twitchell, 2004).

Every sample survey, for example, represents a much bigger population. Every case study contains lessons, implicitly at least, that can be applied, adapted or extrapolated to analogous situations. Every management bestseller, from *In Search of Excellence* to *The Entertainment Economy*, extracts a list of universally applicable how-to-do-its from a limited number of empirical instances. Every study of consumer tribes or similar social groups is characterised by metonymical compression into neat, tidy and appropriately holophrastic categories such as "bikers", "hipsters", "skinheads", "rednecks", "slummy mummies", "Sloan Rangers" and suchlike (Cova *et al.*, 2007). Every brand that aspires to iconicity (Holt, 2003), an inherently metonymical precept, stands for something bigger than itself, an abstract entity as often as not. Virgin is irreverence, Apple equals creativity, Nike means athleticism, Harley bespeaks rebellion, Corona connotes relaxation, Body Shop encapsulates eco-friendliness, Toblerone suggests the mountain peaks of Switzerland and Coca-Cola expresses refreshment, effervescence, the USA[7].

Metonymy, however, doesn't practise what it preaches. As figures of speech go, it is far from a model citizen. It stands for something all right, but not in a good way. As with metaphor and simile, there's a down side to metonymy that extends beyond its comparative neglect by marketing academics. This comes in the form of synecdoche, its closely related twin figure. Metonymy and synecdoche are routinely confused, or treated as one and the same (Goatly, 2011), despite literary critics' insistence that they are very different animals (Abrams, 1993). Synecdoche, which pertains specifically to the part-whole relationship noted earlier, is only one among many forms of metonymy including metalepsis, polysemy and antonomasia. But the subtleties of the distinctions are often difficult to decipher – not to say downright baffling – and rather less obvious in practice than they appear in principle[8]. The idea of the extended self, for instance, fuses the two, as once separate yet contiguous objects like cell-phones (metonymy) are increasingly regarded as part of our selves (synecdoche).

Definitions, furthermore, are intrinsically metonymical. They seek to capture the whole in compact form. But marketing is beset by a congenital inability to agree definitions for its big-picture constructs, be it "value" or "involvement" or "authenticity" or "branding", which boasts at least 20 different definitions (Brown, 2016), or "relationship marketing" which once ran to more than 50 (Saren, 1999). Even the most seemingly specific notions suffer from metonymy's notorious "slipperiness" (Barnden, 2008). The "flagship store" construct seems fairly straightforward, as flagships allegedly represent the acme, the essence, the showcase of and prototype for, outstanding retail organisations (Kozinets *et al.*, 2004). They are metonymic epitomes of the entire chain.

Yet, as numerous analyses of the flagship format reveal, the idea of one store to rule them all – a mothership flagship, so to speak – is conspicuous by its absence. "When Admiral Lord Nelson was satisfied with a single flagship for his fleet", Webb (2009, p. 20) comments, "it is not clear why so many brands require multiple examples". The designation "flagship", Kent (2009) further avers, variously refers to the largest stores in a chain, the oldest stores in a chain, the most technologically advanced stores in a chain, the stores that occupy the most prestigious locations, the first stores in a hitherto untapped city or country or, in some cases, either every single store in the chain (à la Oger), or the only store in the chain (such as Harrods). Hotels, museums, corporate headquarters, tourist attractions and urban regeneration projects are also increasingly granted "flagship" standing. This proliferation has precipitated a plethora of typologies – four-cell matrices for the most part – that are supposed to bring clarity to the concept, only to further complicate the issue. How exactly does a "flagship brand store" differ from a "themed flagship brand store" (Kozinets *et al.*, 2004)? If the latter closes its restaurant does it revert to the former category or become something else entirely? The only thing that is missing thus far is an array of metonymical alternatives to flagships. Retail fleets? Flotillas perhaps? Armadas? Convoys? Squadrons? The merchant marine?

None of this slipperiness detracts from the trope's significance. Metonymy is the everyman of marketing thought, a generic figurative form. Genericity, in fact, is yet another instance of the figure in action (Cova, 2014). When consumers talk about "Googling", meaning a web search, or "Xeroxing", with reference to photocopying, or using "Louis Vuitton" as an insult, as they do in Italy, they are making use of metonymy. When a brand aspires to be the Amazon of armchairs, the Apple of analgesics, the Ann Summers of accountancy or whatever, they are taking advantage of metonymy's poetic projection. When tabloid newspapers employ Enron as shorthand for corporate malfeasance, take a swipe at Generation Wii, refer to repetitive strain injury as Tinderitis, or attribute Marmite status to a brand, meaning to divide opinion, they are turning metonymy to good account. When learned scholars coin nugatory neologisms like McDonaldisation, Disneyfication and Starbuckisation, they are letting metonymy do the heavy lifting, as the alleged characteristics of McDonalds and the others are deemed indicative of many corporate entities. Genericity isn't just a legal matter, it's a rhetorical matter as well (Schroeder, 2008). Ditto the generic concept of marketing.

Concise case in point: GC
Some people's names are bigger than themselves. They bespeak something beyond the person concerned such as Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Nelson Mandela, Muhammad Ali, Coco Chanel, Marilyn Monroe, Margaret Thatcher, Genghis Kahn and Karl Marx. Icons one and all (Holt, 2003), they are the embodiment of – and stand in metonymical relation to – scientific achievement, literary creativity, peaceful reconciliation, sporting excellence, haute couture, female pulchritude, political ambition, mass murder and anti-capitalism, respectively.

Philip Kotler is a metonym for marketing. As far as non-marketers are concerned – or the compliers of Great Management Guru rankings – he is marketing incarnate. For academicians, he represents a particular approach to marketing understanding. The mainstream approach. The analysis-planning-implementation-and-control approach. The "Kotlerite" approach. Whether it be his introductory textbook, which established the template for all subsequent introductory textbooks, or his latter-day role as a tribal elder, commenting sagaciously on matters of global import, Philip Kotler is the presiding spirit of marketing, its alpha and omega.

More than that, he's metonymical all the way down. The three papers that made his name – all of which won JM's top annual award, a metonym for academic marketing excellence – attempted to broaden, deepen and demonstrate that a generic concept of marketing exists (Brown, 2002). A concept, moreover, that not only applies to everything under the sun but evolves through time in addition. "Marketing", our oracle authoritatively announces, is nothing less than "a category of human action" on a par with voting, loving, consuming or fighting (Kotler, 1972, p. 49). It lies somewhere, he adds, "between coercion on the one hand and brainwashing on the other" (emphasis in the original).

Forty-five years on, Kotler's once futuristic, all-encompassing generic article comes across as rather old-fashioned and too narrowly focussed. There is absolutely nothing about relationships (transactions are venerated); it lacks any kind of critical sensibility (marketing is everything, simply the best); and its passing remarks on womankind do not reflect well on the author ("If a housekeeper is paid for domestic services, this is a market transaction; if she is one's wife, this is a nonmarket transaction"). The italicised inventories of ambiguous axioms (4 in total) and abstract corollaries (16, all told), as well as the article's heavy reliance on Reich's *Greening of America* (a bestselling paean to the hippie ethos of the 1960s, which posited a progressive evolution through three "stages of consciousness"), suggest that Kotler's signature paper is less a general theory of marketing than a metonym for the simultaneously scientist and countercultural epoch that spawned it (stats rock, man!). This, in turn, raises questions about the nature of, and future for, figurative thinking in marketing thought.

Tally rally

In a celebrated essay, "AIDS and its Metaphors", Susan Sontag (1991) acknowledges that humankind cannot function without metaphor. She wonders, though, whether there are certain figures of speech we can do without. The trope she has in mind is illness-as-war, the widespread belief that deadly diseases must be "fought", ideally "defeated", and those who succumb only have themselves to blame for cowardice in the face of the enemy. Some readers, analogously, may be wondering why marketers need to know about similes, metonymies, synecdoches and suchlike. Do the differences between them really matter? Treating all tropes as "metaphors" hasn't hindered marketing in the past. Zaltman's ZMET consultancy doesn't seem to have lost business for omitting to mention that its informants use similes as a matter of course. The metonymical tangle that confronts flagship store aficionados is less significant, surely, than the competitive threat from augmented reality e-commerce (Bradshaw, 2017).

EJM readers are right to wonder. If marketing scholars ignore the foregoing figurative issues, they'll likely manage perfectly well. But marketing, despite its long-felt desire to become a hard science, remains a deeply literary discipline (Brownlie, 1997). Our articles and books and anthologies and case studies and research reports and student hand-outs and so on are works of literature, illustrated works of literature for the most part. Career paths, furthermore, are predicated on publication records, by academics' rhetorical prowess, by words on a page (Brown, 2003). Accordingly, we need to be aware of, and familiar with, the tools of the literary trade. And, just as we expect quantitative researchers to be acquainted with the latest statistical methods – even when chi-square and multiple regression might suffice – so too qualitatively inclined scholars should have some appreciation of the rhetorical devices that are available to them (Miles, 2010). Especially in light of the growing realisation, largely attributable to latter-day advances in cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory (Richie, 2013), that figures of speech work their word magic by multifarious means.

One for the money

On top of academics' need-to-know, there are three rather more debatable matters arising from the imperative "go figure" (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2008). The first of these concerns metaphor. It is often said that marketing needs new metaphors, better metaphors, different metaphors, so that the discipline can continue to develop and advance (de Chernatony, 2009; Fillis and Rentschler, 2006; Stern, 1990, 2006). If metaphors make the sale, as Levitt's (1981) metonymy suggests, then we need more of them to maintain our margins and keep the customer satisfied. But do we? As Kitchen (2008) demonstrates, marketing is replete with all manner of metaphors from cookery to carnality. We suffer, if anything, from a surfeit of soggy bottomed analogies. There are so many incompatible conceits for branding alone that the customer is more likely to be confused than contented. Is a brand an iceberg, a pyramid, a prism, a ladder, an umbrella, an amoeba, an assemblage, an opus, a mosaic, a symphony (Bastos and Levy, 2012) or, for that matter, "everything that people know about, think about or feel about anything" (Fanning, 1999, p. 4)? According to de Chernatony (2009, p. 13), one of the biggest challenges facing brand managers "is finding a suitable metaphor to ensure common understanding". Will adding to the list assist?

Two for the show

A second debatable matter is metonymy's insidious influence. Although metaphor is the star attraction for scholars (Dancygier and Sweetser, 2014), metonymies operate by stealth, surreptitiously shaping how we understand the world and marketing's place in it. Metonymy encapsulates, crystallises and stereotypes, with all the potentially negative consequences. Consider the stereotypical view of marketers – rapacious, unethical, devious, untrustworthy (Tadajewski, 2015) – which remains in place despite decades of demonstrations to the contrary by socially responsible and critically minded thinkers. Of course, there's not much that marketers can do about metonymy, other than to be aware that it often sails under the flag of linguistic convenience called "exemplar". The word carries connotations of both excellence (as in exemplary, the best of the best) and typicality (as in example, one among many of the same type). Taken together, these imply that the chosen exemplar is a model, a benchmark, something that is worthy of imitation. They carry normative overtones and, accordingly, are everywhere in management bestsellers and academic articles alike. Levitt's myopia, Berry's relationships, Kotler's generics and Holt's iconicity are exemplary examples of exemplars in action. Forewarned is forearmed.

Three to get ready

Simile, third, might offer a solution to such debatable concerns. Although simile is seen by some as "the most familiar of all literary embellishments, in a class with a wedge of lemon or a sprig of parsley" (Grothe, 2008, p. 17), there is more to it than a decorative garnish. The best way to distinguish between metonymy and metaphor – which is often easier said than done, because many metaphors are built on metonyms (Goatly, 2011) – is the "as-if" test (Kövecses, 2010). That is, rephrasing the intractable trope as a simile. If it makes sense, it is a metaphor. If not, it is a metonym. Gentner and Bowdle (2008) likewise maintain that resurrecting near-dead metaphors as similes gives them a whole new lease of life. Requiring marketing's metaphor-makers to *spell out* the ways in which brands are like (and unlike) ladders, lighthouses, boomerangs, bananas or whatever they are proposing, means that there is less chance of academics falling for "the lure of metaphor" (Scott, 2005, p. 212). As Hirsch (2014) shows, powerful metaphors' ability to invade, overpower and ravish their readers can give rise to acceptance by acclamation rather than analysis. RM might have benefited from this figurative due diligence back in the day. Contemporary advocates of

actor-network theory would also do well to reflect on ANT's plethora of unexplicated tropes such as translation, enrolment, entanglement, overflow, topology, agency, hybridity, materiality, stabilisation, flattening, black boxes, territorialisation, deterritorialisation, coupling, decoupling, punctualising and relationships (Bajde, 2013).

Catachresis – a.k.a. "runaway metaphors" – is the technical term for this kind of figurative overkill. And marketing, arguably, is particularly prone to it. Similes may be mere beat cops in uniform, as Leith (2011) suggests, but they can help marketing academics with their enquiries going forward.

Now go cat go

To be sure, our three tropes debate is just the tip of a rhetorical iceberg. Burke (1945) observes that there are in fact four master tropes, namely, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Bloom (1975) maintains that there are three masters more, specifically, hyperbole, litotes and metalepsis. Gilroy (1988), meanwhile, contends that several "slave" tropes exist in addition, including aporia, chiasmus and catachresis. All are worthy of future investigation by marketing scholars who feel that figures of speech are the new frontier (Miles, 2010, 2014).

Explorers of figurative language, furthermore, ordinarily distinguish between tropes and schemes. The former refers to a situation where there's a (metaphorical) departure from the (literal) meaning of words (e.g. "kill the competition!"). The latter pertains to a situation where "word order provides the special effects" (Knowles and Moon, 2006, p. 123). Rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, apostrophe, assonance and, above all, alliteration are our preeminent figurative schemes. Long associated with epic poetry, where it helped bards remember thousands of lines and flaunt their vaunted verbal virtuosity, alliteration is a marketing management standby. The 3Cs, the 4Ps, the 7Ss and the 30Rs of relationship marketing attest to alliteration's continuing importance and helps explain why they refuse to go gently into that good night, despite decades of derision, denunciation, disparagement and disruption by aspiring alliterative alternatives and analogous acronyms (van Waterschoot and van den Bulte, 1992).

Another unsung P that is part of marketing's figurative repertoire is parataxis. Parataxis is the technical term pertaining to lists and listing. Also known as *enumeratio*, it is a firm favourite with textbook writers, bullet point-partial presenters and academic article authors who like to signal the structure their papers with "first", "second", "third" and so forth. Parataxis, Dillon (2017, p. 24) recounts, is one of the oldest modes of reportage (Biblical genealogies, merchants' tallybooks, chronologies of historical events, kings, etc.) and one of the most striking. "It introduces, more or less violently, a sudden verticality into the horizontal flow of text [...] it feels as though a verbal midden has been dumped on the page". Parataxis, he adds, is easy to disparage or disregard. But, by their very nature, lists are incomplete. And being incomplete, they invite reader contemplation, participation and extrapolation. They stimulate user-generated contributions.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that every one of our concise cases-in-point makes adroit use of lists as well as tropes. So too does marketing's foremost twenty-first century essay. With more than 10,000 citations and counting, "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing" culminates in a list of eight foundational premises (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). A list, furthermore, that was progressively expanded to 11 FPs – as a consequence of ample reader feedback, input, etc. – and subsequently compressed into five foundational axioms (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Lists within lists are more persuasive than lengthy lists alone, Dillon hypothesises and Kotler's generic concept attests. When it comes to speaking figuratively, Kotler is king. Figuratively speaking.

Drilling denouement

For Zaltman and Zaltman (2008), and many other scholars, "metaphor" is the driving force of marketing thought. Or, rather, that the differences between metaphor, metonymy, simile and suchlike are so insignificant they can be safely ignored for marketing research purposes. However, as Arvatu and Aberdein (2016, p. 254) put it in their explication of less lauded tropes, "If rhetoric is a toolkit, then metaphors are screwdrivers. But, as with screwdrivers, some metaphors have specialist applications". Inspired by Benjamin's revolutionary literary criticism (Eagleton, 1986), this essay has examined three key devices within marketing's figurative toolkit, noting their strengths, weaknesses and all-round utility. Our appropriately figurative conclusion is that Levitt's (1969, p. 8) legendary claim "customers buy quarter-inch holes not quarter-inch drills", ignores a crucial fact. Namely, that there are many different types of drill bit – masonry, twist, tile, screwdriver, *etc.* – whose suitability depends on the material being drilled, be it wood, concrete, plastic or whatever. A hammer drill can be used on a sheet of glass, but the result is ruinous. If, analogously, marketing scholars wish to master their craft, they need to know what tools are available and when they're fit for figurative purpose.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, it must be stressed, was not a conventional literary theorist. Influenced by the Surrealists, his critiques were gnomic and ambiguous. He was always ready, able and willing, however, to challenge conventional wisdom (Eagleton, 1981). To adapt a latter-day buzzword, Benjamin was a disruptor of discourse.

2. Although Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory looms large in marketing thought, it's important to appreciate that CMT is just one among many conceptualizations of figurative language (Gibbs, 2008; Richie, 2013).

3. In mathematics, differentiation refers to the algebraic method of finding the derivative for a function. In biology, it means the process where cells change from one type to another. In heraldry, it pertains to figures on coats of arms that distinguish the lineages of noble families.

4. Committed advocates of conceptual metaphor theory might argue that USP, Differentiation and Disruption are ultimately reliant on metaphor, as figurative thinking permeates human thought processes. The reductionism of CMT is a bone of contention with many scholars, not least those who contend that literary metaphors are markedly different from everyday metaphors (Shen, 2008). For present purposes, the salient point is that USP and so on are much less obviously metaphorical than "myopia", "life cycle", "viral marketing" and the like. They aren't so much dead metaphors as fossilised metaphors, if that.

5. Tynan (2008, p. 21) unequivocally concludes as follows: "The crucial difference between the metaphor and the reality is that... marriages exhibit intense, positive and cooperative relationships with compatible goals, but even the most intense commercial relationship is unlikely to display similar emotional bonding and nurturing behaviour". Note also that, in his retrospective commentary on "Relationship Marketing", Berry (1992) doesn't mention metaphor either, nor does he modify his original position (Berry, 1983).

6. Also known as Homeric similes, on account of their profusion in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, these are the epic poem's virtuoso equivalent of rock music's stupendous drum solos, face-shredding guitar breaks and analogous feats of crowd-pleasing musicianship (Hirsch, 2014).

7. Metonymy can also operate in a negative manner. Consider how the BP brand now stands for environmental pollution in the wake of Deepwater Horizon or how Volkswagen epitomises corporate deception in the aftermath of the emissions scandal, or how formerly high-flying British Airways is currently a byword for couldn't care less customer service (Arlidge, 2017).

8. As literary theorists Knowles and Moon (2006, p. 48) dryly observe: "it is often difficult to distinguish between metonymy and synecdoche [. . .] many scholars do not use synecdoche as a category or term at all".

References

Abrams, M.H. (1993), *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth.

Aherne, A. (2006), "Exploit the Levitt write cycle", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 77-87.

Allen, D.E. (2002), "Toward a theory of consumer choice as sociohistorically shaped practical experience: the fits-like-a-glove (FLAG) framework", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 515-532.

Arlidge, J. (2017), "We're Flying ABBA: Anyone but British Airways", *Sunday Times Magazine*, July 23, pp. 20-26.

Arndt, J. (1985), "On making marketing science more scientific: role of orientations, paradigms, metaphors and puzzle solving", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 11-23.

Arvatu, A. and Aberdein, A. (2016), "Rhetoric", in Martineau, J. (Ed.), *Trivium: The Classical Liberal Arts of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric*, Wooden Books, Glastonbury, pp. 235-291.

Atkin, D. (2004), *The Culting of Brands: When Customers Become True Believers*, Penguin, London.

Bajde, D. (2013), "Consumer culture theory (re)visits actor-network theory: flattening consumption studies", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 227-242.

Barnden, J.A. (2008), "Metaphor and artificial intelligence: why they matter to each other", in Gibbs, R. W. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 311-338.

Bastos, W. and Levy, S.J. (2012), "A history of the concept of branding: practice and theory", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 347-368.

Belk, R.W. (1991), "The history and development of the consumer behavior odyssey", in Belk, R.W. (Ed.), *Highways and Buyways: Naturalistic Research from the Consumer Behavior Odyssey*, Association for Consumer Research, Provo, pp. 1-12.

Belk, R.W., Ger, G. and Askegaard, S. (2003), "The fire of desire: a multisited inquiry into consumer passion", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 326-351.

Belk, R.W., Wallendorf, M. and Sherry, J.F. Jr (1989), "The sacred and the profane in consumer behavior: theodicy on the odyssey", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 1-38.

Berry, L.L. (1983), "Relationship marketing", in Berry, L.L, Shostack, G.L. and Upah, G. (Eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, pp. 25-28, Reprinted, with retrospective comments, in *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 1992, pp. 59-70.

Beverland, M.B. (2009), *Building Brand Authenticity: Seven Habits of Iconic Brands*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Bloom, H. (1975), *A Map of Misreading*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bode, M. and Kjeldgaard, D. (2017), "Brand doings in a performative perspective: an analysis of conceptual brand discourses", in Sherry, J.F. Jr and Fischer, E. (Eds), *Contemporary Consumer Culture Theory*, Routledge, London, pp. 251-282.

Borgerson, J., Schroeder, J.E., Blomberg, B. and Thorssen, E. (2006), "The gay family in the ad: consumer responses to non-traditional families in marketing communications", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 22 Nos 9/10, pp. 955-978.

Bouillé, J., Basso, F. and Robert-Demontrond, P. (2016), "The embodied rhetoric of consumer activism through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory: an exploratory study and research perspective", *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 81-104.

EJM

Bowdle, B.F. and Gentner, D. (2005), "The career of metaphor", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 112 No. 1, pp. 193-216.

Bradshaw, A. and Brown, S. (2008), "Scholars who stare at goats: the collaborative circle cycle in consumer research", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 42 Nos 11/12, pp. 1396-1414.

Bradshaw, T. (2017), "AR Touted as Decisive Advance after Boost from Apple", *Financial Times*, p. 18.

Brown, S. (2002), "Vote, vote, vote for Philip Kotler", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 313-324.

Brown, S. (2003), "Writing marketing: the clause that refreshes", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 20 Nos 3/4, pp. 321-342.

Brown, S. (2008), "Are marketing's metaphors good for it?", *The Marketing Review*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 209-221.

Brown, S. (2016), *Brands & Branding*, Sage, London.

Brownlie, D. (1997), "Beyond ethnography: toward writerly accounts of organising in marketing", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31 Nos 3/4, pp. 264-284.

Burke, K. (1945), *A Grammar of Motives*, Prentice-Hall, New York, NY.

Cameron, L. (2008), "Metaphor and talk" in Gibbs, R.W. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 197-211.

Capelli, S. and Jolibert, A. (2009), "Metaphor's validity in marketing research", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 26 No. 12, pp. 1079-1090.

Christensen, C.M. (1997), *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

Cochoy, F. (2015), "Myriam's 'adverteasing': on the performative power of marketing promises", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 31 Nos 1/2, pp. 123-140.

Cornelissen, J.P. (2003), "Metaphor as a method in the domain of marketing", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 209-225.

Cova, B. (2014), "Re-branding brand genericide", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 57 No. 3, pp. 359-369.

Cova, B., Kozinets, R.V. and Shankar, A. (2007), *Consumer Tribes*, Routledge, London.

Dancygier, B. and Sweetser, E. (2014), *Figurative Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

de Chernatony, L. (2009), "Foreword", in Heding, T., Knudtzen, C.F. and Bjerre, M. (Eds), *Brand Management: Research, Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London, p. 13.

de Man, P. (1979), *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Dennis, N. and Macaulay, M. (2003), "Jazz and marketing planning", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 177-185.

Diamond, N., Sherry, J.F., Jr, Muñiz, A.M., Jr, McGrath, M.A., Kozinets, R.V. and Borghini, S. (2009), "American Girl and the brand gestalt: closing the loop on sociocultural branding research", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 73 No. 2, pp. 118-134.

Dillon, B. (2017), *Essayism*, Fizcarraldo Editions, London.

Donoghue, D. (2014), *Metaphor*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Durgee, J.F. and Chen, M. (2006), "Metaphors, needs and new product ideation", in Belk, R.W. (Ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 291-302.

Eagleton, T. (1981), *Walter Benjamin or towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, Verso, London.

Eagleton, T. (1986), *Against the Grain: Selected Essays*, Verso, London.

Fanning, J. (1999), "Tell me a story: the future of branding", *Irish Marketing Review*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 3-15.

Fillis, I. and Rentschler, R. (2006), *Creative Marketing: An Extended Metaphor for Marketing in a New Age*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

Fillis, I. and Rentschler, R. (2008), "Exploring metaphor as an alternative marketing language", *European Business Review*, Vol. 20 No. 6, pp. 492-514.

Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 343-373.

Geary, J. (2014), *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY.

Gentner, D. and Bowdle, B. (2008), "Metaphor as structure-mapping", in Gibbs, R.W. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 109-128.

Gilroy, H.L. Jr (1988), *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Goatly, A. (2011), *The Language of Metaphors*, Routledge, London.

Goodwin, C., Grove, S.J. and Fisk, R.P. (1996), "Collaring the Cheshire cat: studying customers' services experience through metaphor", *Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 421-442.

Granof, P. (2012), "Marketing Needs a New Metaphor", *Harvard Business Review*, available at: www.blogs.hbr.org (accessed 15 July 2014).

Grönroos, C. (1994), "Quo Vadis marketing? Toward a relationship marketing paradigm", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 347-360.

Grothe, M. (2008), *I Never Metaphor I Didn't like*, HarperCollins, New York, NY.

Gummesson, E. (1996), "Relationship marketing and imaginary organisations: a synthesis", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 31-34.

Henry, P.C. (2005), "Social class, market situation and consumers' metaphors of (dis)empowerment", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 766-778.

Hershey, L. and Branch, J. (2011), "*Lexicon Rhetoricae*: the narrative theory of Kenneth Burke and its application to marketing", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 174-187.

Hirsch, E. (2014), *A Poet's Glossary*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston.

Hirschman, E.C. (2007), "Metaphor in the marketplace", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 227-248.

Holbrook, M.B. (1995), *Consumer Research: Introspective Essays on the Study of Consumption*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Holt, D.B. (2003), "What becomes an icon most", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 81 No. 4, pp. 43-49.

Hunt, S.D. (1994), "On rethinking marketing: our discipline, our practice, our methods", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 13-25.

Hunt, S.D. and Menon, A. (1995a), "Metaphors and competitive advantage: evaluating the use of metaphors in theories of competitive strategy", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 81-90.

Hunt, S.D. and Menon, A. (1995b), "Is it 'metaphor at work' or is it 'metaphors, theories and models at work'?" in Laurent, G., Lilien, G.L. and Pras, B. (Eds), *Research Traditions in Marketing*, Kluwer, Boston, pp. 426-432.

Hustvedt, S. (2017), *A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex and the Mind*, Sceptre, London.

Joy, A. and Sherry, J.F. Jr (2003), "Speaking of art as embodied imagination: a multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 259-282.

Kates, S.M. (2002), "AIDS and community-based organizations: the marketing of therapeutic discourse", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 Nos 5/6, pp. 621-641.

Kavanagh, D. (1994), "Hunt versus Anderson: round sixteen", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 26-41.

Kent, T. (2009), "Concepts of flagships", in Kent T. and Brown, R. (Eds), *Flagship Marketing: Concepts and Places*, Routledge, London, pp. 8-19.

Kitchen, P.J. (2008), "Marketing metaphors and metamorphosis: an introduction", in Kitchen, P.J. (Ed.), *Marketing Metaphors and Metamorphosis*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 1-9.

Knowles, M. and Moon, R. (2006), *Introducing Metaphor*, Routledge, London.

Kotler, P. (1972), "A generic concept of marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 46-54.

Kövecses, Z. (2010), *Metaphor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kozinets, R.V., Patterson, A. and Ashman, R. (2017), "Networks of desire: how technology increases our passion to consume", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 659-682.

Kozinets, R.V., Sherry, J.F., Jr, Deberry-Spence, B., Duhachek, A., Nuttavuthisit, K. and Storm, D. (2004), "Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: theory, practice, prospects", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 78 No. 1, pp. 17-29.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980), *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Landau, M.J., Robinson, M.D. and Meier, B.P. (2014), "Introduction", in Landau, M.J., Robinson, M.D. and Meier, B.P. (Eds), *The Power of Metaphor: Examining Its Influence on Social Life*, American Psychological Association, WA, pp. 3-16.

Leith, S. (2011), *You Talkin' to Me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama*, Profile, London.

Levitt, T. (1969), *The Marketing Mode: Pathways to Corporate Growth*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Levitt, T. (1981), "Marketing intangible products and product intangibles", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 59 No. 3, pp. 94-102.

McManus, I.C., Freegard, M., Moore, J. and Rawles, R. (2010), "Science in the making: right hand, left hand, the duck-rabbit figure", *Laterality*, Vol. 15 Nos 1/2, pp. 166-185.

McNair, M.P. (1958), "Significant trends and developments in the post-war period", in Smith, A.B. (Ed.), *Competitive Distribution in a Free, High-Level Economy and Its Implications for the University*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, pp. 1-25.

McQuarrie, E.F. and Phillips, B.J. (2008), *Go Figure: New Directions in Advertising Rhetoric*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk.

Miles, C. (2010), *Interactive Marketing: Revolution or Rhetoric*?, Routledge, London.

Miles, C. (2014), "Rhetoric and the foundation of the service-dominant logic", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 27 No. 5, pp. 744-755.

Morgan, G. (1980), "Paradigms, metaphors and puzzle solving in organization theory", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 605-622.

Nimis, S.A. (1987), *Narrative Semiotics in the Epic Tradition: The Simile*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

O'Malley, L., Patterson, M. and Kelly-Holmes, H. (2008), "Death of a metaphor: reviewing the 'marketing as relationships' frame", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 167-187.

O'Malley, L. and Tynan, C. (2000), "Relationship marketing in consumer markets: rhetoric or reality?", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34 No. 7, pp. 797-815.

Ortony, A. (1979), "Metaphor, language and thought", in Ortony A. (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-16.

Orwell, G. (1962), "Politics and the English language", *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, Penguin, London, pp. 143-157.

Paharia, A., Keinan, A., Avery, J. and Schor, J.B. (2011), "The underdog effect: the marketing of disadvantage and determination through brand biography", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 37 No. 5, pp. 775-790.

Paprotté, W. and Dirvan, R. (1985), *The Ubiquity of Metaphor: Metaphor in Language and Thought*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Phillips, B.J. and McQuarrie, E.F. (2004), "Beyond visual metaphor: a new typology of visual rhetoric in advertising", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 113-136.

Pinker, S. (2008), *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*, Penguin, London.

Pollack, J. (2014), *Short Cut: How Analogies Reveal Connections, Spark Innovation and Sell Our Greatest Ideas*, Gotham, New York, NY.

Raine, C. (2016), *My Grandmother's Glass Eye: A Look at Poetry*, Atlantic, London.

Rentschler, R., Jogylu, U., Kershaw, A. and Osborne, A. (2012), "Extending the theory of metaphor in marketing: the case of the art gallery", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 28 Nos 11/12, pp. 1464-1485.

Richards, I.A. (1936), *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, London.

Richie, L.D. (2013), *Metaphor*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rinallo, D., Scott, L. and Maclaran, P. (2013), *Consumption and Spirituality*, Routledge, London.

Rindfleisch, A. (1996), "Marketing as warfare: reassessing a dominant metaphor", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 3-10.

Rojas Gaviria, P. (2016), "Oneself for another: the construction of intimacy in a world of strangers", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 1, pp. 83-93.

Rosenberg, L.J. (1984), "The pervasive use of metaphors in marketing science", in Anderson, P.F. and Ryan, M.J. (Eds), *Proceedings of the 1984 Winter Educators' Conference*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, pp. 74-77.

Routledge, C. (2015), *Nostalgia*, Routledge, London.

Saren, M. (1999), "Marketing theory", in Baker, M.J. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Marketing*, Thompson, London, pp. 794-809.

Schroeder, J.E. (2008), "Brand culture: trademarks, marketing and consumption", in Bently, L. Davis, J. and Ginsburg, J.C. (Eds), *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 161-176.

Schumpeter, J. (1942), *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Routledge, London.

Scott, L.M. (2005), *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Sherry, J.F. Jr (1991), "Postmodern alternatives: the interpretive turn in consumer research", in Robertson, T.S. and Kassarjian, H.H. (Eds), *Handbook of Consumer Research*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, pp. 548-591.

Sheth, J.N. and Parvatiyar, A. (1995), "Relationship marketing in consumer markets: antecedents and consequences", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 255-271.

Sontag, S. (1991), *Illness as Metaphor: AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Penguin, London.

Stern, B.B. (1990), "Beauty and joy in metaphorical advertising: the poetic dimension", in Goldberg, M. E. and Gorn, G. and Pollay, R.W. (Eds), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 17, Association for Consumer Research, Provo, pp. 71-77.

Stern, B.B. (2006), "What does *brand* mean? Historical-analysis method and construct definition", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 216-223.

Strunk, W. and White, E.B. (1959), *The Elements of Style*, Longman, New York, NY.

Sundar, A. and Noseworthy, T.J. (2014), "Place the logo high or low? Using conceptual metaphors of power in package design", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 78 No. 3, pp. 138-151.

Sutherland, J. (2010), *Fifty Literature Ideas You Really Need to Know*, Quercus, London.

Tadajewski, M. (2015), "The Compleat English Tradesman: business relations, trust and honesty, or let's rethink the history of relationship marketing", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 407-422.

Thompson, C.J., Rindfleisch, A. and Arsel, Z. (2006), "Emotional branding and the strategic value of the doppelgänger brand image", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 50-64.

EJM

Tuominen, P. (2007), "Emerging metaphors in brand management: towards a relational approach", *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 182-191.

Twitchell, J.B. (2004), "An English teacher looks at branding", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 484-489.

Tynan, C. (2008), "Metaphors and marketing: some uses and abuses", in Kitchen, P.J. (Ed.), *Marketing Metaphors and Metamorphosis*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 10-25.

van den Bulte, C. (1995), "Metaphor at work", in Laurent, G., Lilien, G.L. and Pras, B. (Eds), *Research Traditions in Marketing*, Kluwer, Boston, pp. 405-425.

van Waterschoot, W. and van den Bulte, C. (1992), "The 4P classification of the marketing mix revisited", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56 No. 4, pp. 83-93.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2004), "Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp. 1-17.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2016), "Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 5-23.

von Wallpach, S. and Kreuzer, M. (2013), "Multi-sensory sculpting (MSS): eliciting embodied brand knowledge via multi-sensory metaphors", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66 No. 9, pp. 1325-1331.

Wainwright, J. (2011), *Poetry: The Basics*, Routledge, London.

Webb, B. (2009), "A classification approach to flagship stores", in Kent, T. and Brown, R. (Eds), *Flagship Marketing: Concepts and Places*, Routledge, London, pp. 20-31.

Zaltman, G. (1997), "Metaphorically speaking", *Marketing Research*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 13-20.

Zaltman, G. (2003), *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

Zaltman, G. and Zaltman, L. (2008), *Marketing Metaphoria: What Deep Metaphors Reveal about the Minds of Consumers*, Harvard Business Press, Boston.

Further reading

Levitt, T. (1960), "Marketing myopia", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 45-56.

Shankar, A. and Patterson, M. (2001), "Writing the past: interpreting the future", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 17 Nos 5/6, pp. 481-501.

Corresponding author

Stephen Brown can be contacted at: sfx.brown@ulster.ac.uk