

Visual Metaphors in Language of Advertising

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Visual

The term *visual* refers to a picture, piece of film, or display used to illustrate or accompany something. The development of photography, film, television, and internet has brought us to a platform where visuals have acquired an important part of our culture and day to day living. Therefore most of the advertising is visual, not verbal any more. Visual thoughts can be complex, but makes possible to easily absorb a large amount of information, if the proper use of metaphors are applied to further enhance its effect.

Metaphor

Everybody more or less is familiar with the term *metaphor*. According to Berger (2012) metaphor is a form of analogy. He defined it as *a mode of communication in which meaning is generated by making comparisons*.

According to www.dictionary.com, metaphor is a figure of speech comparison of one thing to another without the use of *like* or *as*.

For example, I say that that man is a fox. It is more or less apparent that the reference is not literal; rather it refers to the characteristics of that person who is clever and smart. These features originally belong to fox, or we can say that these are the qualities of fox.

For instance, if you say that your love is a rose then you are using a metaphor, so a rose is considered to be most beautiful flower and it stands for love. It means your love must be beautiful as well (Berger 2012).

Visual Metaphors

Visual metaphors are basically highly structured images that stimulate the viewers to understand one concept in terms of another concept. These images are commonly used in several fields in communication, in advertising, in social campaign, in political cartoons and so on.

Because of their popularity they have received attention in recent years from a wide variety of scientific communities such as linguists, psychologists, cognitive scientists, businessmen.

Arthur Suvillian (2008) suggests that you are able to do more with images than you can do with words.

A very popular Chinese proverb I am quoting here is as follows:

A good sketch is better than a long speech.

Actually a researcher from the University of Amsterdam researched this topic and found that we had thousand words in advertisement in the 1950's and now this decreased to half in the 20th century. On an average we can say that in 1950 there were only 100 words in an advertisement but now the count is only 50 because of the use of visuals. From this perspective people have become much more visually oriented than verbally oriented.

Advertising

Advertising and *Advertisement* are the two similar terms but these have some differences. Advertising is a process while advertisement is the complete message or the product (Marketing management by S.Chand).

Visual metaphors have a connection with advertising. The purpose is transferring one message to another. Therefore, advertisers pay attention to distinguish the same and different products and determine about what to apply in ads, accordingly to the culture and social values in terms of semiotic principles. Visual metaphors in language of advertising play a vital role for getting more attention of consumers. As we are discussing about advertising we must know a comprehensive definition of Advertising.

American Marketing Association has defined advertising as “any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods and services by an indentified sponsor”.

According to **Webster’s Dictionary**, “Advertising is to give public notice or to announce publicity.”

Advertising is considered to be the best tool for promoting any goods, services and ideas.

Features of Advertising:

1. Communication
2. Information
3. Persuasion
4. Profit maximization
5. Non-personal presentation
6. Identified sponsor
7. Element of creativity.

We are living in the advertising world or we can say that we are living in the era of globalization where metaphorical use in advertisements creates an identity in the mind of customers. Advertising tries to capture the mental ability of consumer by use of metaphorical language in advertisements.

Consumers try to understand visual metaphors in advertisements by adding their meanings and results. When visual metaphors are used in advertisements, consumers tend to acquire more positive effects and comprehend deeper meanings to unravel the complex parts of an advertisement.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Probably the most influential theory about metaphor today is **THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY** which has been proposed some 30years ago. It is also known as

cognitive linguistics, or cognitive metaphor. This was first extensively explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work *Metaphors We Live By*.

Conceptual metaphors are seen in language in our everyday lives. Conceptual metaphors shape not just our communication, but also shape the way we think and act. In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), we see how everyday language is filled with metaphors we may not always notice. It suggests that metaphors are matters of thoughts rather than figure of speech. This means that we think through metaphors. Our human way of thinking is structured through metaphors and abstract concept such as freedom, democracy, love, etc.

Abstract concepts are understood by human mind through metaphors. It comes from our culture, experience and education.

For example:

Life is a journey.

Time is money.

Birds have full freedom.

Love is life.

Some poets, singers, and lyricist basically use abstract concepts like love, freedom, life, honesty, etc.

Some Examples

Below I am going to make the analysis of few advertisements where visual metaphor plays a key role in explaining the characteristics of the product.

Animals are used quite often in advertising very effectively. They make an instant emotional connection with us as they remind ourselves and pets.

1. **Bull** The bull symbolizes fighting ability and male fertility. Therefore a bull was used in Hero Honda hunk advertisement in 2009 where a similarity was shown between a bull and the bike. Hero Honda hunk shows more fighting ability to defeat any other bike in speed and mileage or its muscular looks.



2. **Dogs** Dogs are often used in advertising because they represent loyalty, intelligence and man's best friend.



Hutch, which later merged with Vodafone, shows a dog which is used to focus on the loyalty and a man's best friend. Whatever you need for plans, where you are for networks, I will follow you.

3. **Elephant** Elephant is a symbol of power that's why cement products always prefer to use elephant in any advertisement for showing power, strength and long life term.



4. **Horse** The horse is a symbol for velocity, viability, strength, beauty, speed and stamina. A number of automobiles agencies use horses as a metaphor to convey the features of their vehicle.

For example, we can identify the logo of Ferrari car in which the middle of logo horse is inserted to convey the message perfectly.



5. **Parle-G** A small child with innocent face has shown on the package of this biscuit where metaphorical language is used to manipulate the audiences.



BACHPAN SE BADA KOI SCHOOL NAHI
CURIOSITY SE BADI KOI TEACHER NAHI

In the above tagline there is no discussion about the taste of this biscuit rather these present the qualities. Advertisers target the children by giving a large quantity at very low cost. If a small child eats this biscuit then it becomes more energetic and creative.

6. "Connecting People"



Nokia used this metaphor to convey the image of connecting people with their mobile phones instead of simply as a means of having a conversation. The message is that not only can you talk to someone who may be hundreds or thousands of miles away, you can also make an emotional connection with the person, which enhances the phone's value.

Context

Context means situation. Without context metaphors cannot be understood. If we say he has an angel face and if we don't know what conotates angels have in our culture, we can't understand this relation. It can only come from our culture experience and education. Everybody knows what a metaphor is in language. When we use a metaphor deliberately we basically want our listeners to see the world through our eyes.

Psycho-communicative theory is a tool whose goal is to always organize the possibilities for persuasion within a domain and to relate each possible stratagem to specific desired outcomes. Advertisers always try to observe the needs, demands and desires of consumers by using various methodologies and produce products according to them. Marketers use such a **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:10 October 2015
Md. Arfeen Zeeshan, M.A. (Language of Advertising, Media & Market)
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language and visuals to convince and persuade the maximum number of consumers and it creates the identity of a product.

For example:

THANDA MATLAB COCA-COLA



Thanda matlab coca-cola is the most popular tagline of a leading soft drink. Advertisers used metaphorical language to convey a perfect message. It means where you found cold drinks it's *Coca-cola*.

Fair and Lovely - Fairness Cream

GOREPAN ka ehsas sirf saaat dino me.



After the advertisement of this fairness cream everybody uses the term GOREPAN matlab fair lovely either you have used different fair cream but people will identify or recall you as a consumer of Fair and Lovely.

Conclusion

Use of pictorial element with respect to text is the best way to attract customers, as many studies have found it. I have come to this conclusion that use of visual metaphor in language of advertising has notably increased as reported by the *American Marketing Association, 2006*.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:10 October 2015

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