

## Significance of the Text in Visual Metaphor Advertising

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to examine the application of visual metaphors in advertising, specifically by analyzing the interaction of the text and the image in communicating metaphorical meaning. Relying on existent theories of rhetoric and metaphor, the paper identifies three main categories of ads based on the usage of visual metaphors. Further, by analyzing several cases of sample advertisements, the authors explore the role of visual metaphors in simplifying complicated concepts and increasing audience interest. Additionally, the researcher demonstrated that visual metaphors reinforce the verbal message, provoke the necessary emotions, and enhance the cognitive and emotional aspect of the message. Thus, this study provides an overview of the significant role of visual metaphors in advertising communication. Visual metaphors combined with verbal messages can produce stronger visual impressions to strike out emotionally and establish a deeper connection with the viewer. This paper offers valuable insights into the powerful role that advertisements play nowadays through improvements made possible by images.*

Key Words: Text, Visual Metaphor, Advertising, Meaning

To Cite: Tabbasum, R. (2024) Significance of the Text in Visual Metaphor Advertising, 5 (1), 1-21.

## INTRODUCTION

A visual metaphor is a type of visual statement or manifestation that describes or conveys one idea, thought, or object using visual elements that indicate or call attention to another concept, thought, or object. It establishes a connection between the visual element and the subject to which it refers, setting up a relationship, or correlation, that can be used to aid comprehension or communication. For instance, a broken chain in a painting might connote the concept of independence or liberty from oppression. Alternatively, a clock with its hands whirling at high speed in a graphic design might connote the concept of time slipping away from us or that certain situation has become haywire. In photography, a solitary tree in the middle of no other plant life or flora might connote the concept of resilience or loneliness. It takes advantage of the viewers' pre-existing experience and recollection to convey a sense of specialness and meaning on a different subject. Visual metaphors can make intricate visual features or sentiments. People today live in a visually-rich environment with an abundance of captivating visuals. Every day, they are inundated with a systematic and never-ending flow of visual stimuli from all forms of media. More frequently than not, people view mediated pictures instead of reading text. Since creativity necessitates distancing familiar objects from one another in novel ways and utilizing objects in unusual contexts to draw the spectator in and effectively deliver a message. We are surrounded by images all the time—at work, at home, in magazines, on the subway, and on television. Images have historically been crucial to the growth of consciousness and the self's interaction to the environment (Helmets, 2004).

A visual metaphor is a powerful instrument that can be used to express ideas that are difficult to put into words in a foreign language, ideas that are taboo in that culture, ideas that have strong emotional overtones, or abstract ideas that are difficult to explain in words at all. For these reasons, various methods for visual metaphor identification and analysis will be presented and discussed, along with an understanding of how these pictures are created. (Messaris, 1997). Visual metaphor is widely researched nowadays. Some investigations are dedicated to visual metaphor in specialized language (e.g., Caballero 2009, El Refaie 2003, 2009; Rojo & Orts 2010 Velasco-Sacristán & Fuertes-Oliver 2006a, 2006b) and developing a method for recognizing and analyzing visual metaphor in advertising (e.g., Forceville 1994, 1996, 2008; Phillips 2003; Gziouzepas & Hogg 2011) in which the meaning of the images is metaphorical, implicitly or explicitly, and

identified based on their formal and conceptual characteristics. I herein aim to explore the role of text in establishing and realizing visual metaphors. In other words, an image may be quite self-sufficient, but there may be some non-visual circumstances and what they mean for realizing its overall meaning and its metaphor city. Several studies have addressed the interaction between text and image in the case of visual genres. Barthes 1973 regards the text as ‘dominant signifier’ over the image z Metz 1999; Peters, 1981. Barthes 1973 writes that the task of the text is to “fix” the meaning of the image, which he claims is never determined with sufficient accuracy. He differentiates between two types of relations between text and image: extension and elaboration. Some scholars claim that the image is a message organized in its own right that can function independently of text Kress and van Leeuwen 2006. Nonetheless, the question of the role of text in the realization and perception of visual metaphor is underexplored. Forceville 1996 deals with the issue of the combination of words and images semantically in advertising from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. He develops the concept of verbal-pictorial metaphor, which deals with the ways and processes of the manifestation of the conceptual metaphor. He defines verbo-pictorial metaphor as a metaphor that is at any one time encodes pictorially and sometimes verbally. The notion of visual metaphor then encompasses cases where the metaphorical meaning is based solely on the image and where the metaphoric image is accompanied by the text. Through examining several ads, I would like to shed light on the different functions of the text and the image within advertising, and we will see that the image has various roles depending on the context.

As it stands, a research gap exists in evidence regarding the contribution of textual elements to the process of identifying and making meaning of the visual metaphor in an advertising context. Although textual role in message processing has been explained, little is known about how it interacts with this form of imagery. An explanation of this interaction is crucial in establishing the place of textual cues in the influence of making meaning in advertising-related metaphorical images. The aim is to comprehend and see to what extent textual elements contribute the identification and interpretation of visual metaphors in advertising. Researcher believes that textual elements help to identify and understand visual metaphors in advertising, both by providing context cues reinforcing meaning. Another significant aspect is that depending on such conditions as the clarity of visual imagery or complexity of metaphor it may be easier for textual elements to serve this role effectively.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetoric is a concept with established heritage, reaching all the way back to ancient Greece and Aristotle thought. Even though traditionally utilized in literature and politics research, rhetoric devices, and principles in advertising have been gaining consumer and marketing researchers' attention only recently. Metaphors, as one of the rhetorical devices, have become a primary goal for marketing studies and publications. Verbally formulated rhetorical figures have been systematized and studied in numerous ways in the past; however, this work focuses on the world of visual metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson 1980 describe metaphor as our understanding and experience of one thing in terms of another. In consumer science, metaphor is a comparison of two unrelated things or concepts, emphasizing the similarity between them despite their literal difference. So, in order to be a metaphor, two conditions are required: the existence of two objects or concepts, one of them being understood as another by way of a rhetorical device. This is achieved by transferring one's attributes to another, allowing them to be described and created similar on account of these attributes. One of the most important aspects of a metaphor is this element of surprise: unexpected association makes the metaphor truly rhetorical. Rhetoric uses metaphor to illuminate ideas by twisting expression from the standard, feasible level of thought to the illustrative and creative one. This transformation proceeds on the stylistic level: style is adopted without altering core sense. Creative-thinking is of great importance in advertisement: advertisers themselves, such as (Ogilvy 1983), as well as advertising professionals such as (Zinkhan 1993), have all acknowledged this fact. Not only do creative advertisements catch the attention of potential consumers, but they also sway their choice. According to Ang & Low 2000, creative-thinking in advertising can be measured in terms of novelty and meaningfulness, both of which are crucial for advertising impact on attitude.

For decades, scholars have passionately debated the essence of metaphor, moving beyond its mere linguistic usage in literature to view it as a basic cognitive operation. This shift has been impacted by seminal works such as Ortony (1979) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980), who suggested that metaphor is profoundly embedded in human thought processes. Notably, Richards (1936) contended that thought itself is metaphorical, proceeding through evaluation, with language deriving its metaphors from this cognitive mechanism. Lakoff and colleagues introduced the conceptual theory of metaphor, proposing that human cognition acts through conceptual schemas

imbued with metaphorical elements, which are continuously molded by interactions with the environment (Lakoff, 1993).

This conceptualization emphasizes that metaphor is fundamentally conceptual rather than purely linguistic. It implies that while verbal metaphors are the visible manifestations of these cognitive schemas, metaphorical thought can extend beyond language into non-verbal and multimodal realms. In this thesis, the focus lies on visual metaphors, which serve as the pictorial equivalents to verbal expressions such as "The sky is weeping" or "The man is a wolf." Visual metaphor, as a non-verbal manifestation of metaphorical thought, poses intriguing questions about its generation and distinctions from verbal metaphors. The presentation of these metaphors, whether through text or images, also raises inquiries into perceptual processing. Studies in psychology have demonstrated differential processing pathways for text and images (Paivio, 1989; Schnotz & Bannert, 1999), with the right hemisphere of the brain specialized for visual information (Bryden, 1982; Ellis et al., 1988) and the left hemisphere primarily handling linguistic information (Binder et al., 1995; Howard et al., 1992).

The exploration of metaphor comprehension involves examining two pivotal issues: the function of perceptual qualities and the effect of perceptual similarity between the source and the target. Past research has suggested perceptual elements, whether imagined or objectively present, play a crucial role in metaphor comprehension, regardless if they are visual, auditory, or other sensory qualities (Walsh, 1990). In parallel, examinations on perceptual likeness have indicated its facilitative consequence on grasping novel metaphors (Gibbs & Bogdonowich, 1999; Van Weelden et al., 2012).

In the context of visual metaphors, the concrete existence of perceptual qualities permits experimental manipulation and deeper investigation into their role in comprehension. Experimental findings propose that priming participants with perceptual qualities heightens metaphor comprehension, and the unconscious recognition of perceptual resemblance assists in the formation of novel conceptual connections.

## **RESESRCH PROCEDURES**

The images analyzed were collected through a manual online search of advertisements available on the Internet. Two stages of data selection are proposed; In the first stage, ads in visual formats, such as newspapers, and strong commercial impacts, such as billboards, will be automatically discarded due to a strong political bias and the influence of strong commercial effects, respectively.

In the second stage, online ads from various websites have been collected, and eight ads were chosen using three criteria:

1. Ads present both visual and verbal information;
2. Include a visual metaphor,
3. Utilize different modes to play the same role in conveying meaning.

The researchers utilized content analysis to analyze the interaction between text and image and identify the role of text in the identification of visual metaphors. Thematic coding will be used to identify the way through which text and image play a role in selected ads. Comparative analysis will be done using a table and generate insights about the difference and similarity in the target fields and the roles identified. It has ensured that ethical norms are fulfilled while conducting the study and that data collection and analysis methodologies follow ethical guidelines. Written consent has obtained from the copyright holder for any copyrighted works employed in the paper.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

Having analyzed the sample ads closely, Researcher suggest forming three categories based on the interaction between the image and the text:

1. The first category is characterized with the image of a metaphor and the text that backs it up. Importantly, both the source and target of the metaphor are visually presented.
2. The second category is the ads where the image of the metaphor and the text-based one are presented together. These may be of two types: the first type displays the source metaphor and describes the target, while the other one describes the source and displays the target.

3. The third category is the ads where the image itself does not represent any metaphorical meaning; in this case, the text depicts a metaphorical sense of the source and the target are also provided.

The following sections have explained the specifics of how the image and the text function in terms of generating visual metaphors.

Fig 1: The apple in a visual metaphor when drawn on an eye of someone literally could depict the metaphor of “apple of my eye,” which is a widely used expression for indicating something or someone who is highly valued or loved. The apple on an eye could be viewed as indicating the apple of one’s eye” literally, as the apple is on the eye, meaning one keeps it near and dear as one would with their eyes, being careful and attentive not to lose or harm it. Hence it would indicate a particular liking or regard for the apple that represents something or someone.

Source: When apple is drawn on an eye of someone in this visual metaphor can be literally shown that metaphor of “apple of my eye,” an expression frequently used to denote something or someone who is greatly cherished or adored. Target: While apple is on an eye may denote the apple of one’s eye” literally; the apple is on the eye, which means it is kept close to one’s eyes, which means one is concerned and cautious about not letting it slip or get damaged. Hence this would represent a preference or a kind of love for the apple that represents something or someone.



*Figure 1 AN APPLE OF MY EYE*

Fig:2 The next image shows an innocent, dirty vegetable, which appears to be a usual potato. However, the visualization shows the vegetable as a little bomb with a fuse and a pin. This bomb symbolizes how small, unnoticeable things can become actual danger if they are disregarded. If a vegetable is not washed in time, it accumulates harmful bacteria and becomes a bomb of the disease. This idea is represented within a metaphor, showing how disregarding small details or keeping basic hygiene can lead to an unpredictable, theoretically harmful result. The image of this ad is the source text, such as the statement “an unwashed vegetable can become a deadly weapon”, displayed right at the head of the ad, which is the verbal component of the ad because it is conveying and communicating the central message directly to the audience. The target text is the visual representation, accompanying the image and statement. The ad is showing an innocent, dirty vegetable, looking like a miniature carrot or a potato, converted into a bomb having a small head or dots of a reddish hue, with a fuse and a pin. This is a visual metaphor, which is translating the verbal message of the source text into an image, and demonstrating to the viewer that if one is not careful enough, that killing weapon can detonate. Specifically, the visual metaphor nearby the statement is serving as a gruesome, striking example, as if to say that food hygiene is essential to take to keep food-related illnesses at a minimum. This ad is visualizing this metaphor easily because some small and harmless objects and edibles can be killing weapons and which analogically proving that food-related unwashed bacteria can kill. Thus, juxtaposition of the source and target text is working well in articulation in order to prove that food hygiene should not be neglected.



*Figure 2 an unwashed vegetable can become a deadly weapon*

Fig 3: Ad campaign for Heinz "No one grows ketchup like Heinz" is an easy example of a visual metaphor used by advertising. People are now looking for healthier choices because of a trend toward healthier living. This image is a metaphor for the fact that the whole bottle contains only the freshest and healthiest ingredients. People are made to think of words like "fresh" and "healthy" when they see the sliced tomato in the shape of a bottle. The source text of the advertisement for Heinz: "No one grows ketchup like Heinz" is the line that communicates the message that Heinz ketchup is made from the freshest, healthy ingredients in words. The target text is the visual representation of a sliced tomato in the form of a ketchup bottle. This image becomes a visual metaphor of the source text; that is, all the ingredients in the Heinz ketchup are fresh and healthy, filling the whole ketchup bottle. The visual metaphor represented by the tomato in the form of a bottle of ketchup is an effective way of representing the message in the source text. The tomato that grows in the form of a bottle suggests a strong visual analogy, associating the people watching it with aftertaste and healthiness. When considering the source and target texts in the ad, the two work together well to communicate the brand message that Heinz ketchup is made from the freshest ingredients.



*Figure 3 AD HEINZ " No One Grows Ketchup Like Heinz'*

Fig 4: The visual metaphor analysis of the brand's slogan, "Be Aware of Heat," and its marketing tagline, "Little bottle, big flavor" presents the brand's identity and essence. While "Be Aware of Heat" constructs the image of warning – it is a caution not to be taken lightly: the sauce is hot, pay attention. The metaphor is a warning that the brand is very hot; "Little bottle, big flavor," on the other hand, creates the idea of concentrated potency. It refers to the ability of the sauce to surprise your taste buds with its fiery taste. Both these metaphors represent the core of the brand – heat and flavor – and are very visual. The visual concept of a Tabasco paper-shaped sauce bottle in the form of a fire extinguisher connects the brand's image with the fire, which it adds to food. A shaped bottle is a fire extinguisher, metaphorically – is entirely logical, capturing the hotness of the sauce. It is an extraordinary representation of the brand and the idea that the sauce is both hot and extremely spicy. The iconic color of the shaped bottle, Tabasco red, supports brand recognition.

Analyzing the visual metaphors embodied in the brand's slogan "Be Aware of Heat" and marketing tagline "Little bottle, big flavor" allows for capturing the essence of the brand. Thus, the original text "Be Aware of Heat" creates a feeling of warning, notifying consumers that it is spicy. Thus, this is the verbal component, and it is communicated in the text, as it says: be aware of it. At the same time, the target text "Little bottle, big flavor" creates the feeling of the potency that is concentrated and, despite the size of the bottle, will be spicy; therefore, the metaphor links a little bottle to the intense spiciness, making the text an integral part of the metaphor.



*Figure 4 Ad Tabasco Sauce 'Beware The Heat'*

Fig 5: The source text of this advertisement is the verbal component of the ad, where it is stated “feel the relief.” In this case, the target text is the visual representation related to this statement. The visual in question is an illustration of a cactus stuck in the throat, and it is an illustration of the message that is conveyed in the verbal text, which is the discomfort of a dry, prickly throat. In this case, a visual metaphor is used to translate the verbal message into a visual form, and the cactus stuck in the throat represents the sensation of throat irritation and discomfort. The metaphorical representation of a cactus in a throat in the ad is a strong visual analogy, which makes consumers think about the sensation of dryness and discomfort. By using this illustration along with the message, an advertisement communicates to the target audience that with Difflam, a dry and prickly throat can be relieved. Furthermore, the campaign includes a film, social media content, and in-store communication, which makes the ad impactful and makes the target audience remember the message across all the channels and touch-points. In conclusion, this ad uses a straightforward visual representation to convey the message memorably: with Difflam, the throat discomfort can be relieved.



Figure 5 Ad from Difflam 'Feel The Relief'

Fig 6: A laptop resembling a McDonald's hamburger box serves as a visual metaphor for McDonald's free Wi-Fi served at all restaurant. This image's smart design brings up images of

digital technology and burger boxes holding the McDonald's trademark. The traditional burger box is transformed into a laptop shape to emphasize connection and internet access. The metaphor does a fantastic job of conveying the idea that McDonald's offers useful workspace in addition to delicious meals. Target customers for the restaurant are college and high school students searching for a place to dine and still be able to use the internet. This visual metaphor will connect well with this group of people. The look is fresh but familiar at the same time. The visual metaphor's effectiveness in conveying the benefits of McDonald's free Wi-Fi in an unforgettable and captivating way is enhanced by its simplicity and straightforward message.

Regarding this advertisement, the source text is the statement that all restaurants have McDonald's free Wi-Fi. The verbal component says that the opportunity to connect to the Internet anonymously will be hosting at McDonald's restaurants. The target text is the visual image of a laptop looking like a McDonald's hamburger box. The visual metaphor is the verbal message turned into a vivid picture opportunity to connect a laptop synthesizing digital technologies and a McDonald's sign. The visual stylistic image of an everyday burger box turns into a visual appearance of a laptop communicates its idea of union and access to the Internet. Thus, the presented advertisement continues the subject, showing through the source text, and its visual metaphor that McDonald's restaurant does not only offer tasty food but also a cozy place for uses laptop as the ad is likely to call in college and high-school students who enjoy eating while using the Internet . Recognizable appearance and unusual but recognizable transformer laptop encourage the ad to be remembered and noticed. Hence, this advertisement concludes with a simple visual metaphor, contributing to send the source sentence to the audience necessary to emphasize McDonald's benefit.



*Figure 6 Ad from Mcdoland 'Free Wi-Fi Served At All The Resturant'*

Fig 7: The advertisement for McCafe makes brilliant use of imagery, showing a coffee cup with a warm McCafe cushion cleverly placed between the cups. The words “on your way so you can sleep longer”. This visual metaphor implies that McCafe provides its customers with the possibility of enjoying their favorite coffee while on the go, allowing them to stay in bed for some more time in the morning as the cushion becomes their portable cup holder. In other words, even the people with the most hectic lifestyle and the tightest schedules can still enjoy their favorite coffee. The cushion symbolizes the comfort and warmth with which one can be relaxed and no matter where they are. Thus, the advertisement effectively communicates the idea that McCafe brand delivers high-quality coffee that effortlessly fits into its consumers’ way of life, adding luxury and tenderness to their everyday routine.

The source text of the advertisement is the phrase “on your way so you can sleep longer.” The target text, in this case, is what needs to be marketed – a creative graphic representation of a cushion from a warm McCafe coffee placed between the cups. The image thus shifts the literary element of the source text to a creative metaphor that translates the message without further ado.

Cups are a graphic visual metaphor: when the cups are pushed apart, an insulated cushion appears between them with a heart that adds meaning to the image message. The very idea of the source text and its implementation in the image is a translation – a message, a position. Airbnb with its logo tried to explain what kind of space the organization was renting with apartments through the symbolism of the letter ‘a.’ Literary language positions the McCafe position – the brand delivers comfort and wants the client to feel it. The visual component of the Cup shifts the presence of comfort – one cup is you, and the other cup is your comfort. The target audience for the advertisement is anyone who loves coffee. Busy people symbolize the client in this case. The visual metaphor shifts the presence of comfort, the desired meaning and a warm cup, and added convenience.



*Figure 7 Ad from McCafe 'On Your Way So You Can Sleep Longer'*

Fig 8: This is an excellent example illustrating how a visual metaphor works, as well as an example of how one image could have multiple meanings. Diniz used tropical fruits as a visual metaphor for sunglasses to promote their summer eyewear collection. With this image, they create two visual metaphors at the same time room in one image. On one hand, the tropical fruits used in the image's shadow refer to the idea of summer and sunny weather. In this way, the consumer will be mentally linked to a happy summer vacation. On the other hand the different shape of the shadows that is

given by the fruits, present different sunglasses that belong to their collection. In this particular example, the Vasilis Leather courtesy of Diniz the visual metaphors are connected to the message they wish to communicate with the target audience that their sunglasses are so varied that every individual could find a pair, corresponding to their personal taste, lifestyle, and budget. Diniz used this approach to catch the attention of their target consumers. Additionally, they made the consumers feel happy and positively impress them.



*Figure 8 Ad from Diniz eye shadow*

Each visual metaphor may have its combination of an image and a word to mean part of a statement. Sometimes, the image communicates all of the meaning without needing any words. However, other times, it could have more meaning with words. This way, there are two types in between: the one which uses words to demonstrate the image and the one that uses the words. Therefore, as White and Lutkoff state, there are four types of visual metaphors: visual metaphors supported by text, pure visual metaphors, visual metaphors shown both visually and verbally, and visual metaphors triggered by words.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Nowadays, visual metaphors are becoming more popular in advertisements, and more companies are using them in their marketing activities. Visual metaphors are both unique and sensibly unusual in their images that draw more participation. It is a useful tool for advertisers to help them depict

challenging concepts, emotions, or company principles in simple yet thought-provoking visual cues. Using universal metaphors, stereotypes, or cultural references, visual metaphors can effectively communicate with a broader audience and go beyond language barriers, making them highly relevant in today's globalized business environment. Every brand is looking for new ways to get noticed because there is so much advertising going on around. Visual metaphors are an opportunity for a brand to be different from the competition and to create an emotional connection with their target audience. Visual storytelling allows brands to present their story and credible values to the consumer more efficiently, which will ultimately lead to deeper participation in the brands' offerings.

The use of visual metaphors is among the most effective tools in modern advertising to communicate the message and draw attention to the brand. They can show the product or viewed idea from the other side and encourage the target audience to buy. Nevertheless, the development of an impactful visual metaphor involves the negotiation of the artist, and advertisers should find a middle ground for ensuring the viewer understands the message. More importantly, one should always find the right balance between the complexity of the visual and the accompanying message. At last, the copy should only complement the phrase and not oppose it. Indeed, a good play on words can increase the appeal of the visual metaphor and the entire advertising campaign.

These examples demonstrate the efficacy and pervasiveness of visual metaphors in advertising. Visual metaphors can be an incredibly effective tool in communication, as they can help advertisers communicate relatively complex concepts or emotions in a simple image. Whether casting incredibly familiar objects as symbols of much more abstract ideas or transforming common scenes into symbolic ones, visual metaphors capture their audience's attention in an effective and memorable way. In all of the abovementioned examples, the idea or text is literally vandalism, billboard, and whirlwind dream . That is, a visual metaphor transforms into a metaphor that allows "to perceive not only with the mind but also with the heart". Therefore, the message is more accurate in perception and more memorized by the audience. Thus, the use of a visual metaphor by the advertiser evokes emotion from the audience, makes the message more memorable and verbally thereby creating a more powerful connection with the brand message from the consumer. In conclusion, advertisers and marketers can greatly enhance their campaigns by using visual metaphors.

To get maximum benefit, consider the following list of recommendations:

- Understand the Audience: Only select visual metaphors that coincide with the audiences' experiences, motivations and values. Make market research to find consumer patterns and motivation; Keep it simple.
- Visual metaphor has to be bright, simple, and easily understandable. Do not overload the image with absurd details; make it easy for the audience to perceive; align with brand identity. Visual metaphor has to correlate with your brand's identity and persona.
- A continuous image will help recognize and create confidence in the brand;
- Foster creativity: Be creative and find original and unique decisions to create a solution for the visual metaphor issue.
- Just the unfamiliar solutions attract peoples' attention; Test and iterate: After you create the visual metaphor, test it with several representatives of the target audience. In case changes are needed to make sure that the advertisement is understandable and memorable, do them. By following these recommendations, it is possible to create exceptional, lasting campaigns, drawing connections with the customers.

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