



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Impact of Metaphors in Advertisements: An Explorative Study**

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**ABSTRACT**

Metaphors are often used in advertisements to convey messages to the target customer. The study focuses on discovering the impact of simple, metaphorical (with pictures), and metaphorical (with both text and picture) adverts on consumers in terms of their ease of understanding, attractiveness, duration of evaluation, and persuasive power. The aim of the study is to find out if there is a significance difference of understanding, persuasion, evaluative time, and attractiveness of metaphorical and no metaphorical advertisement. The results of the study can be useful not only in the field of advertisements but also in any field that involves persuasion and communication skills. The methods used were laboratory experiment and self-report. A cohort of thirty people participated in the study comprised of ten male and ten female students, five male and five female faculty members. The study suggests that metaphors adverts have better attractiveness and persuasive power as compared to simple advertisements.

**Keywords:** Advertisements, Communication, Metaphors, Persuasion

**Introduction**

The word metaphor is taken from a Latin word “Metaphora” which means to transfer. Metaphor is defined as an expression, word, phrase, widely used in linguistic as a figure of speech to develop comparison between two things to better understand the concept. These two things may differ from each other completely but have common characteristics in them. That’s why linguistic often use metaphors to establish hidden resemblance between two objects, place, person etc. It takes attributes of one object and assigns it to other object to show similarity between both without using “as” or “like” unlike similes. Kaplan (1992) defines metaphor as a mix of two concepts related to one another that one accounts to arrange or systemize another. Van Noppen outlines the theory of Indurkha which says that “a metaphor is an explanation of target in reference to source” (Noppen, Jean-Pierre, & Hols, 1990). Human beings structure and interconnect their ideas to better interpret their experiences (Johnson M. , 1987). This means that human being tends to understand complex notions or ideas i.e. target term, with the help of cues that he naturally or easily understands i.e. referred as source domain. Metaphor is composed of two parts namely, target and source or ground and figure or tenor and vehicle the term given by (Richards, 1936). Source domain is the one from which attributes or characteristics are taken to be applied and target domain or tenor is the one on which attributes are applied. For example: “Tony is a black sheep” Here black sheep is a source and tony is target. (Corbett, 1965) Define metaphor as non-explicit comparison of two objects which are different from each other but still have similar characteristic or attribute. Metaphor do not inspire in Linguistic only, but in everyday life including actions and thoughts. The quality of metaphor is to perceive and observe one thing or concept in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2003). Being in an era of mass technology and coming across thousands of messages every day, marketers need to differentiate and to create long lasting impact on consumers mind and to persuade them about their product, service, idea or information. Among various techniques one of which is widely used is to deploy metaphors

in advertising message. Metaphors in advertisement are considered tools that are used to communicate abstract ideas in a fast and quick manner and to reduce complexity and bring them to life. There are various types of metaphor used in linguistics but advertisers widely use the help of conceptual metaphor to generate understanding and positive perception about the product or value of product and to gauge attention of consumers towards themselves. Advertisers often combine two contradictory images or an image with a phrase to create symbolism.

### **Literature Review**

Conceptual metaphor also known as cognitive metaphor is a metaphor in which a characteristic of one object is understood in relation to other. The theory was given by Lakoff and Johnson, suggesting that how we interact, perceive and get around with other people is structured by our concept and most of the things we do and observe are metaphorical by nature. The most widely known conceptual metaphor is "ARGUMENT IS WAR" (Lakoff & Johnson, *Conceptual Metaphors in Everyday Language*, 1980). Whenever we argue the other person seems to be an opponent and the intention behind each point is to attack his position.

Primarily the cognitive metaphorical theory was generally focused towards rhetorical metaphor but later on it was known and researched that metaphors can be demonstrated visually. Here visually includes both the pictorial representation (Grady, 2007) and multimodal representation (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). According to (Steen, 1999) people communicate their emotional feelings through conceptual metaphors. This represents that in most scenarios human being interact via metaphor which they can understand and interpret. (Silvestre, 2009) States metaphors are psychological devices or instrument with which we can organize beliefs or understanding and knowledge generated from exposure to environment. Conceptual metaphors in advertisements help to understand complexity of idea by comparing or associating two similar characteristics. Advertisers widely use conceptual metaphors to communicate intended information, to increase the sale and promotion of product and most importantly to divert attention of people towards themselves (Zhang & Gao, 2009).

Conceptual metaphors can also be complex in nature. Viewing that (Philps & McQuarrie, 2004) claims that those metaphors which are complicated to understand thus are complex in nature may have higher intensity of attraction and grasp but they holds a higher degree of uncertainty too that viewer may not be able to interpret them. The Procedure of understanding cognitive metaphors includes the formation among the two areas of brain. (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphor We Live By*, 1980); (Forceville, *Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for research*, 2006) States Cognitive metaphors is a tool that aids a person to interpret complicated ideas and non-figurative thoughts by linking them to something more easy that is present naturally in human brain. (Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, 1999) While suggesting the central objective of Conceptual metaphoric theory states that human being structures the reasoning or argumentation while the brain is just genetically constructed or embraced. The description of this theory is that an human beings are capable of classifying and structure concepts or situations more easily and clearly which they can sense i.e. view, listen, touch etc, rather than which they cannot experience or sense by their five senses. This the reason that human being automatically tend to comprehend rhetorical concepts and difficult ideas by relating them to easier concept which are already built in human mind.

The conceptual metaphors do not only revolve around purely on interpretation of oral speech or phrase. Basing foundation on only rhetorical speech is demonstrating and defining just one element of cognitive metaphorical theory (Forceville, *Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for research*, 2006).

Advertisers learn applications of metaphors to observe or understand customer's attitude (Coulter, 1995). Advertising is a tool for companies that they use to manipulate people, to influence people feelings in order to persuade them to buy particular product in which they are not in need of. The aim of advertiser is to find the way in which they can create value of their product and associates appeals that attracts and persuade target market. Stern, who is a proponent of learning the use of symbols and metaphors in advertisements, believes that not only poems have a touch of metaphorical art but advertising too (Burstin, 1988). Advertiser use metaphors to arouse these feeling and to create new experience. They help marketers to hide their intention of increasing sales and profit by letting audience lost in wonderment and fantasy. Metaphor let the consumer to build his own thought and to come to his point of conclusion. Many of the large and small scale campaigns are run in which advertiser use this technique. Land Rover ran an ad to persuade that they are extraordinary and exciting by showing lion as a pet in car instead of a usual dog. Homer and kahle concluded from their study that prolong retention and aim to purchase is higher by the use of strange matter or text in advertisements (Homer & Kahle, 1986). Reason of metaphors to be applicable on advertising is the use of cognitive or mental images and symbolism innovatively, to produce applicable interpretations and bring them to existence by enforcing actions (Coulter, 1995).

Visual metaphors are constituted as art (Aldrich V. , 1968) and (Aldrich V. , 1971). Research has accelerated the figuration of metaphors in distinct ways than just using words due to its immerse importance as an element of consideration. (Cienki & Muller, 2008) (Raymond W.Gibbs, 2008) (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, Multimodal Metaphor, 2009). Visual metaphor was mentioned by Eikhenbaum earlier in 1927. Different linguistics and philosopher have presented their view then distinctly. Some refers rhetorical metaphor are interpretation of visual metaphors (Eikhenbaum, 1927) and (Kennedy, 1982). While other accepts the visual metaphors presence due to believe that language is led by them. (Gombrich, 1963) (Aldrich V. , 1968) (Clifton, 1983); (Whittock, 1990); (Forceville, The Identification of target and Source in Pictorial Metaphors, 2002). One can understand visual metaphor with an example of a guitar which is represented by opposing to a grenade to convey that guitar have similar qualities of explosion. But obviously in literal sense it is not the same but deep down it may help to understand the feature and quality of that guitar. In broad spectrum of multimodal settings visual metaphor is perceived as a crucial rhetorical tool (Forceville, Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representation, 2008).

Forceville in his article (Forceville, Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representation, 2008) and (Forceville, Multimodal metaphor in ten Dutch TV commercials, 2007) has described multimodal metaphors as interlacing of source and target term in addition to one symbol, expression or speech, or the combination of symbol or speech. Metaphors which are multimodal are described as ones which illustrate target domain and source domain in separate terms commonly and completely (Forceville, Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for research, 2006). This statement means where there is a pictorial representation of source term and rhetorical or lingual representation of target term or vice versa. A cognitive mechanism is required to differentiate between pictorial and rhetorical domains. To express or understand metaphor more easily these are often presented as a combination of image and language or words. To combine both the image and language is important to let the viewers evaluate the intended message or figure and ground (Pollaroli & Rocci).

The research framework of the study is shown below:

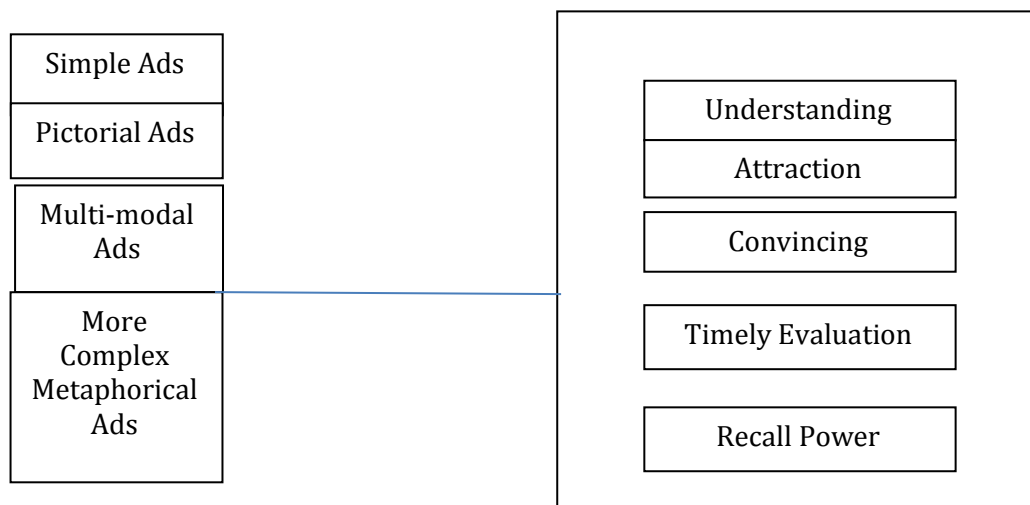


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

### Material and Methods

To analyze the effect of metaphors on consumers or how consumers are a focus group analysis was carried out which included 30 participants. Four commercial advertisements were selected and shown to the viewers and were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Advertisements shown included:

- (1) Simple advertisement (without metaphor)
- (2) Virtual metaphor
- (3) Multimodal advertisement.
- (4) Complex metaphorical advertisement.

### Variables

1. Dependent Variables
  - a) Understanding
  - b) Attraction
  - c) Convincing
  - d) Evaluation Time
  - e) Recall Power

### Explanation of Independent Variables

#### Simple Advertisement

iPod



Figure 2

<http://www.pophistorydig.com/topic/ipod-silhouettes-2000-2011/>

This is an Apple advertisement campaign for endorsing iPod. This advertisement portrays a man dancing around and listening music in “iPod” with a tag line “10,000 songs’ in your pocket, Works with Mac or PC”. With a simple tagline and straight through message it can be analyzed that there is no metaphor involved in this advert. Hence it is a simple advertisement/ image

### Pictorial or Visual advertisement

“Mr. HOT PEPPER”



Figure 3

<http://drprem.com/marketing/mr-hot-pepper-hot-sauces-spicy-food.html>

This advertisement is by Mr. Hot Pepper restaurant (Lahore, Pakistan) to endorse their spicy and hot food especially sausages. The interpretation of the advertisement is that the food served at Mr. Hot Pepper is so spicy and hot that it will blow the mind of one who eats it. Here the target is the physical mind of the person whereas source is the spiciness of

food which is depicted through smoke. Thus it represents both the domain in one image without any verbal phrase there is an implementation of pictorial or visual metaphor.

The advertisement is intended for audience that loves to eat spicy food and serves as a best medium to Pakistani audience because of their extreme preference towards spicy food.

### Multimodal

“Ecovia” campaign



Figure 4

<http://engl1102spring2015.rswsandbox.net/category/blog-projectprompts/analyzing-multimodal-texts/>

This campaign was run by Ecovia. When seeing an image it shows that a person's face is punched by someone and there is a car painted on the hand of the person who is punching and on the face of the person who is punched. The ways cars are painted it shows the collision of cars, thus an accident is taking place. By interpreting the message one can figure out the source and target term. Here source term is physical violence and target term is accident with the verbal message “STOP THE VIOLENCE, DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE”. One can easily make connection of the image with phrase that drinking and driving is equal to physical violence. The combination of verbal phrase and image suggests it is a multi-modal metaphoric advertisement. The way in which message is transferred draws people attention and effectively bring awareness about the issue.

### More Complex Metaphors:

Poly Brite



Figure 5

<https://designschool.canva.com/bolg/clever-advertising/>

It has been argued that it is difficult for viewers to understand metaphors that are complex or they are represented complexly. This advertisement is about the product "Poly Brite" endorsing that it is a super adsorbent for all your spills. Here the source is drainer whereas the target is the product which has the capability like a drainer to clean all the spills.

### Design Strategies

The research was quantitative in nature and data was collected from the teachers and students of a university and analysis was carried on SPSS. It was an experimental research in which some advertisements are shown and then data was collected through a questionnaires and the participants responses were analyzed using SPSS.

### Sample

There were 30 participants in focus group experiment. Divided into 20 students among which 10 were male and 10 were female and 10 faculty members among which 5 were male and 5 were female. An equal proportion of male and female participants were taken.

### Sampling Techniques

A non- probabilistic convenience based sampling was used.

### Research Tools and Techniques

Questionnaire was designed comprised of items about dependent variables.

### Instrument Design

Likert scale of 1-4 was used to design the questionnaire.

### Reliability

The reliability of the study carried out is 65.5%.

**Table 1**  
**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.655	19

### Results and Discussion

The mean scores of *more complex metaphorical advertisement* are higher in for attractiveness, convincing power and recall. Whereas mean scores of non-metaphorical advertisement is low as compared to multi-model for the variables and more complex metaphorical advertisement. It is also noted that Pictorial advertisement has also higher mean scores for all variable. (See Table 3)

**Table 3**  
**Summary of the Results**

Types of Advertisement	Understanding	Attractiveness	Convincing Power	Time Evaluation	Recall Power
Non-Metaphorical	2.07	2.80	2.23	1.20	2.4
Pictorial	2.40	2.90	2.43	1.73	2.7
Multi-Model	2.50	2.92	2.60	1.43	2.9

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More Complex Metaphor	2.07	2.97	2.93	2.53	3
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### Findings

Because of intense competition companies in Pakistan should increasingly utilize metaphor to deliver message more effectively and to increase the chance of retaining the message in consumers' mind. Public service message should employ messages with metaphors to tap emotions more effectively and gain attention and action more. Use of metaphor is not limited to linguistic or any specific industry thus increase advantages should be reaped by the use of metaphors in all fields.

### Conclusion

It has been proved that the use of metaphors generate greater results for companies to convince customers and let them communicate message in easy and understandable way. Theories given by different authors have proven right about metaphors and complex metaphors. Metaphors generate more desirability to act in a certain way than any other method. Consumers nowadays look for change that is interesting and attractive to them metaphors help advertisers to fulfill this aim profitably. Different authors hold a view that complex metaphor most of the times are not interpreted by human cognitive system and should not be used in advertisings. This study is an evident to support their views through the result generated. Multimodal ads generate greater understanding as compare to pictorial because of the support of verbal phrase. Advertisers just do not want to attract but want consumer to respond in accordance to desired action. This could be done in the finest way by incurring metaphors in ads. Presented evident form study gives a deep insight to advertisers about how to use metaphors to achieve their objectives.



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