

ANALYZING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIAN ADVERTISEMENT: MCQUARRIE AND MICK'S RHETORICAL FIGURES FRAMEWORK APPROACH

Yee Li Lian

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (Yeelilian@yahoo.com) and
Phuangphet Tonawanik,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (ptonawan@hotmail.com)

Abstract

This study analyses how Malaysian university students construct meanings of advertisements found in men's magazines, centring on their interpretation of figurative language. Four second-year TESL undergraduates were asked to interpret ten selected advertisements of various products and services using McQuarrie and Mick's Rhetorical Figures Framework (1996). These rhetorical figures are the following: repetition, reversal, substitution and destabilization. Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Blending Theory was then used to analyse how they composed, completed, and elaborated the input and blended spaces. The results revealed that although the respondents came from similar backgrounds, they employed different strategies in making sense of the advertisements. It was found that their general knowledge, personal experience, emotion, interests, personality, language proficiency, visual clues, and assumptions played a significant role in facilitating their understanding. Some of them constructed similar frameworks, whereas different in others. It can thus be concluded that advertisements in a larger context can be used as literary devices and are good authentic teaching materials for teaching and learning English.

Keywords: Figurative language, Conceptual Blending theory, blended spaces, & advertisement, teaching literary devices

Introduction

It is a truism to note that the very basic appreciation of a text will not be actualized unless we can comprehend the text. Nippold (as cited in Palmer & Brooks, 2004) states that the "inability to interpret figurative language lead to a breakdown in text comprehension, which in turn can frustrate readers and discourage them from continuing the reading task." The pedagogical implications of this for learning to read L1 and any additional language are significant.

Different researches have been dedicated to the analyses of figures of speech in advertisements such as Leigh (1994), McGuire and Mick, (2000) Toncar and Munch (2001), Mulken, Dijk, and Hoeken (2005), Philips (2000), and Lagerwerf and Meijers (2008), which all point to the interconnectedness of figurative meanings found in the advertisements with comprehension.

Grasping figurative language is recognised as a major task in language pedagogy. Zhang (2008) comments that many theories related to metaphorical comprehension have been proposed: Interaction Theory by Richards, (1965) and Black (1962), Mapping Theory by Lakoff (1987), and the recent Blending Theory by Fauconnier (1997). Other researchers also advanced distinctive views on how readers understand figurative language, particularly in L1, such as the Graded Salience Hypothesis by Giora (1997) and Glucksberg's (1991) attributive categorization proposal. However, one common problem many teachers face in teaching literature is getting students to interpret and understand figurative devices. Literary devices seem to be very distant for students even though they encounter them in daily life on a constant basis (Lakoff, 1997) without realising their discursive presence and nature.

There is voluminous research on advertising language, particularly of interest to the advertising industry (Langrehr, 2003); yet the focus there tends to be on the products and consumers' feedback, with research findings applied to improve marketing strategies for commercial ends. This study, by contrast, is oriented to advertising discourse and foreign language pedagogy. Using CBT, this research aims to contribute to the existing gap of knowledge in understanding how foreign language learners and users actually comprehend figurative language in their own process of thinking. Implications for utilising commercial advertisements in teaching strategies for comprehending figurative language and honing critical thinking skills are drawn from the findings.

This paper will try to answer the following questions, which served as its aims, using advertisements as stimuli in order to analyse the respondents' comprehension of figurative language in English:

1. How do the respondents construct meanings of figurative language found in advertisements of selected men's magazines in Malaysia?
2. What are the possible factors that influenced respondents' comprehension of advertisements?
3. What pedagogical implications can be drawn on the use of advertisements in teaching metaphor and critical thinking skills in the L2 ELT classroom setting?
4. Can advertisements aid in the teaching and learning of English of second and/or foreign language learners?

Past Studies on Figures of Speech in Advertisements

Print advertisements frequently feature rhetorical figures (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). Stern (as cited in Langrehr, 2003) mentioned, "both literature and advertising share similar creative techniques to say things in ways other than by direct

statements of fact." Stern (1988) used poems to analyse two financial services advertisements and applied poetic explication in her analysis. She broke down the prose into poetry form and analysed them using imagery, metaphor, and symbol. Her findings revealed that both advertisements convey different personas: one focusing more into power, while the other into establishing a relationship with consumers. Leigh (1994) on the other hand, investigated headlines in print advertisements and found that puns, alliteration, and assonance were used widely compared to other figures of speech. The research concluded that figures of speech and headline-picture linkage were prevalent in advertising.

Pawlowski, Badzinski, and Mitchell's (1998) research on children in second, fourth, and sixth grade levels revealed that young readers had problem interpreting metaphor. The older the children become, the better they interpret metaphors. The usage of metaphors found in the advertisements did not generally improve children's recall of advertised content or perceptions of the understandability of the advertisements and liking of the advertised products. In other words, young children generally have difficulty comprehending the complexity of metaphors which require contextual knowledge and life experiences in order to decipher them.

Imagery is also a very popular figure of speech in advertisements. Philips' (2000) study showed that verbal anchoring (or pictorial metaphor advertisements) increased comprehension; yet reduced advertisement liking as it gives the messages away, decreasing the subjects' enjoyment of interpreting the advertisements themselves. Toncar and Munch (2001) conducted a research on the effects of tropes in print advertising. Tropes are indirect or irregular statements, like metaphors and puns which require readers to make inferences in order to understand their intended meanings. Their findings revealed that the usage of tropes created a more lasting impression and made the advertisements more convincing compared to explicit message content. Nonetheless, they also aptly pointed out the risk of using tropes in advertisements as different readers generate different interpretations due to their different backgrounds and knowledge.

These are just a few of the studies done using figures of speech in analysing advertisements. These advertisements were used in classrooms in order to aid teachers in teaching figures of speech, particularly to second language learners.

Conceptual Blending Theory

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) state that

... building an integration network involves setting up mental spaces, matching across spaces, projecting selectively to a blend, locating shared structures, projecting backward to inputs, recruiting new structure to the inputs or the blend, and running various operations in the blend itself (p.44).

Mental spaces are “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk”; they are linked to our long-term schematic and specific knowledge (p. 40). When we read, our knowledge will be evoked in our mental spaces and construction of meanings will take place in the blend. Emergent structure is formed in three ways: “through composition of projections from the inputs, through completion based on independently recruited frames and scenarios and through elaboration or running the blend” (p. 48).

Rhetorical Figures

McQuarrie and Mick (1996) describe a rhetorical figure “as an artful deviation in the form taken by a statement” (p. 424). Even though rhetorical figures are prevalent in print advertisements, comparatively little research has been carried out to incorporate them into advertising theory. Thus, they developed a framework to classify the rhetorical figures that differentiate between figure and nonfigurative text, between two types of figures (schemes and tropes) and among four rhetorical operations, namely, repetition, reversal, substitution, and destabilization. Their framework is validated by preliminary validation data and is connected to suggested consumer responses. The present study makes use of some aspects of this analytical approach to rhetoric.

The first rhetorical operation, repetition “combines multiple instances of some element of the expression without changing the meaning of that element” which covers three aspects: sounds (rhyme, chime, assonance, and alliteration), words (anaphora, epistrophe, epanalepsis and anadiplosis), and also phrase structure (parison) (p. 429). The second rhetorical operation, reversal “combines elements that are mirror images of one another in an expression.” It is like “a mirror image that repeats the original, but in reverse.” A reversal rhetoric figure can be either syntactic (antimetabole) or semantic in nature (antithesis) (p. 432). Substitution, another type, “selects an expression that requires an adjustment by the message recipient in order to grasp the intended content” which “always takes place along a dimension or in some kind of pre-established relationship.” Claim of extremity (hyperbole), assertive force (rhetoric question and epanorthosis) presence of absence (ellipsis) and centre of periphery (metonym) are all under the substitution operation (p. 432).

Destabilisation, on the other hand, “selects an expression such that the initial context renders its meaning indeterminate (whereby multiple coexisting meanings are made available, no one of which offers a final resolution).” The relationships involved could either be of similarity (metaphor and pun, whereby pun is a term encompasses homonym, antanaciasis, syllepsis and resonance) or opposition (paradox and irony) (p. 433).

Methodology

This qualitative research employed a case-study method of four selected second-year male undergraduates majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language

(TESL) at the Faculty of Education in one of the universities in southern Malaysia as respondents. Convenience sampling was used, but the minimum requirement was that candidates must possess a minimum of Band 4 in their Malaysian University English Test (MUET) scores. Respondents were given advertisements to analyse. To avoid overtaxing the respondents, instead of asking them to analyze five each, they were asked to analyze four. Ten advertisements were shown to the four respondents selected. The taglines of the advertisements were shown to them including the picture the taglines refer to so that they could focus on the literary devices used. They were given blank A4-sized paper so that they could mind-map and write down their process of thoughts when trying to understand the rhetorical devices. As an immediate follow-up, the researcher interviewed each respondent individually to gain further insights on their thoughts. Based on their mind-maps and interviews, the researcher reconstructed the input spaces using the Conceptual Blending Model. A questionnaire soliciting the respondents' background information was administered by the researcher.

Sample of Advertisements

The ten advertisements used in the study were taken from three magazines issued in November 2009 (*AM: August Men, MH: Men's Health, NM: NewMan*) are listed in the following table.

No.	Brand/Type of Product	Tagline	Type of Figurative Language	Mag/ Page
1.	Toshiba (Television)	Get the Full Impact of Full HD With Toshiba's Superior Power Meta Brain Technology	Substitution → Hyperbole	AM161
2.	HP (Laptop)	CAN YOU HANDLE IT?	Substitution → Rhetorical Question	AM55
3.	Nature Valley (Energy Bar)	Mother Nature's Treadmill → → Mother Nature's Energy Bar	Destabilization → Metaphor	MH22
4.	Olympus (Digital Camera)	Not a Compact. Not an SLR... It's a PEN.	Repetition → Assonance	AM57
5.	Polar (Training computer)	YOUR HEART KNOWS HOW TO MAKE EVERY BEAT COUNT	Destabilization → Pun	MH 15
6.	Action3 (Deodorant)	BEST DEFENSE AGAINST SWEAT	Repetition → Alliteration	NM103
7.	Chivas (Whisky)	LIVE WITH CHIVALRY	Substitution → Metonymy	AM19
8.	Glenmorangie (Beer)	Where flavours collide	Substitution → Personification	AM27
9.	Gatorade (Isotonic Drink)	ZERO CARBONATION. OPTIMAL ELECTROLYTES.	Reversal → Antithesis	MH19
10.	Air Asia (Transport)	Let us be your London Bridge	Substitution → Metonymy	NW67

Participants

Respondents B, C, and D are all 21 years old; respondent A is 20. They are all single, male, of Malay descent, Moslems, and come from a Malay cultural background. Bahasa Malaysia is the mother tongue of respondents A, B, and C,

while respondent D reported English as his mother tongue. He can also speak Hindi and Urdu since he comes from an Indian Moslem family. Because of their course of studies, three state that English is the primary language they now use; respondent B says Bahasa Malaysia is his main language of everyday use. According to their self-rating, all of them possess a good command of English proficiency, both spoken and written. All four obtained an A for their SPM English; respondents A, B, and C achieved Band 4 (competent user of English language), while respondent D achieved Band 5 (good user) in the MUET exam. Through their samples of analyses and interviews, it was evident that the respondents possess a satisfactory level of upper-intermediate to advanced English proficiency.

All stem from a suburban area and are staying in the university hostel; respondent B receives a scholarship, while the other three are supported by their parents or guardians. All four respondents have moderate purchasing power and considered as coming from a moderate to comfortable socioeconomic background. All four tend to purchase different kinds of products and services.

Respondents A and C consider themselves moderate readers, while B and D identify themselves as avid readers. All of them show different preferences for reading materials. Two of them have never bought magazines, while respondent B subscribes to a Malay magazine *Maskulin* and respondent D subscribes to *Reader's Digest* once every six months. They are drawn to advertisements by their different features; they sometimes pay attention to and read the advertisements if the products are related to them. As based on the questionnaire, they have a generally receptive attitude towards advertisements.

Scope and Limitations of The Study

The scope and limitations of the study are as follows:

Instrumentation

The respondents were asked to write down a mental map of their construction of rhetorical meanings. Although some might find it difficult to express in writing, they were interviewed right after the mind-mapping sessions to clarify their thoughts.

Level of Difficulty of Advertisements

The figurative language employed may be difficult for ordinary L2 students in Malaysia and elsewhere, but it was hypothesised that the content was suitable for the second-year undergraduate males majoring in TESL who were likely to see or use the products or services.

Selection of Advertisements

Only ten advertisements for different products and services were selected from three men's magazines published in Malaysia: *Malaysian's Definitive Men's Journal*, *Men's Health*, and *New Man*. The selection is thus highly specific but reflects

international advertising conventions. However, there was a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar items for analysis purposes.

Selection of Figurative Devices

It largely depended on the availability of the advertisements found in the magazines. The frequency of their appearances also influenced the selection.

Analysis of Advertisements

The four respondents each analysed four advertisements so as not to overtax them. Three pairs of the ten advertisements were analysed twice by two different respondents so that process of comprehension can be compared.

DATA ANALYSIS

Repetition: Alliteration – “BEST DEFENSE AGAINST SWEAT”

Respondents B and D both analysed the Action3 deodorant advertisement. Respondent B described his construction of meaning in Figure 4.1:

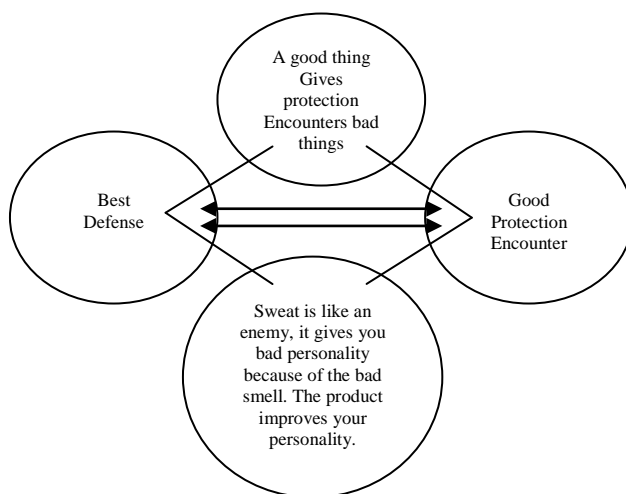


Figure 4.1

Respondent B usually buys health and skincare products; he enjoys reading and subscribes to *Maskulin*, a men’s magazine, once every six months. He is actually using the same product. In his composition process, he emphasised the word “against,” stating it was “like a war,” and managed to “cure something bad,” From his diction, sweat was like his enemy. He would go all out to fight against it, a sentiment which he shared as he associated “sweat,” something quite natural especially in a tropical climate like Malaysia, with “bad personality.”

Respondent D described his comprehension in Figure 4.2:

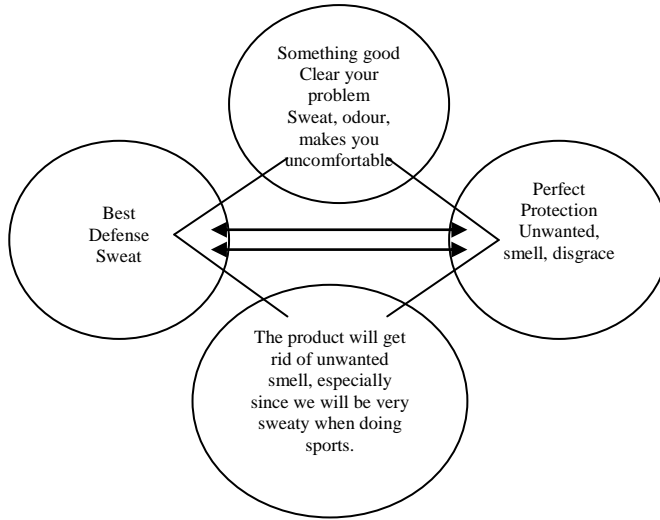
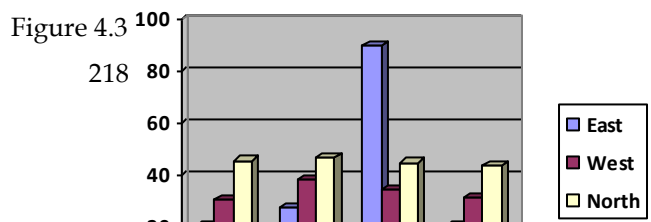
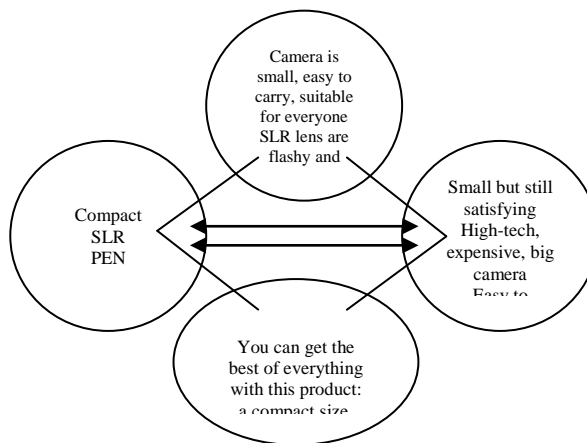


Figure 4.2

Respondent D is a sociable person. He enjoys going out with family and friends. He also likes outdoor activities such as gardening and jungle trekking. He is currently using a deodorant, but a different brand (Axe). His focus was on the word “sweat” and he used a strong word “disgrace” to indicate the embarrassment due to the odour. In his elaboration process, it was noted the product could help “get rid of the unwanted smell.”

Assonance – “Not a Compact. Not an SLR... It’s a PEN”

Respondent A is a very tech-savvy person; he owns a SONY SLR camera and enjoys taking photos. His analysis was shown in Figure 4.3.



Respondent A had no problem understanding the advertisement. In both composition and completion processes, he displayed an in-depth knowledge of cameras, since he was able to identify the contrast between “Compact” and “SLR”. He explained that compact referred to the size and that it was easy to carry, while SLR was the opposite of compact. Although SLR lenses were expensive and of high quality, they were very bulky and “could not be put into the pocket.” Olympus PEN, however, combined the best of the two things in its product.

Reversal: Antithesis - “Zero Carbonation. Optimal Electrolytes”

Respondent C’s analysis on the isotonic drink was shown in Figure 4.4:

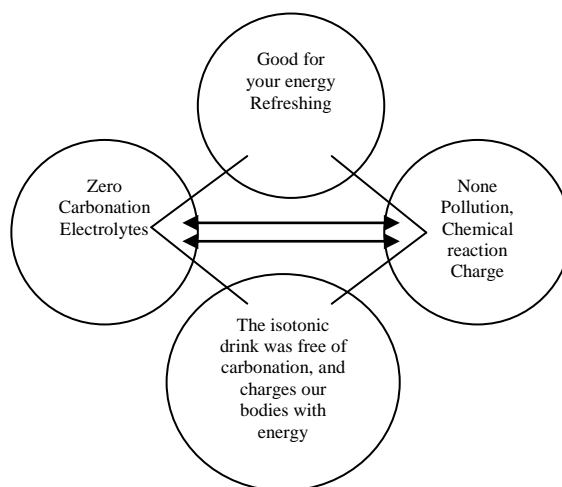


Figure 4.4

Respondent C was a sportsman, and he has consumed the product before. Being a former science stream student, he focused on “carbonation” and “electrolytes”. He explained, “carbonation” was “a chemical reaction” and “one of the factors contributing to pollution” whilst “electrolytes” referred to “elements that charge, and bring out energy.” Blending the information together, respondent C could only make sense of the second part that the isotonic drink recharged our energy, which was very much needed after vigorous exercise, but not the first part when asked the relationship between carbonation and pollution.

Encyclopaedia Britannica explains carbonation as “addition of carbon dioxide gas to beverage, imparting sparkle and a tangy taste, and preventing spoilage.” Electrolyte, according to Discovery Health is a “medical/scientific” term for salts, specifically ions and they are used by cells to maintain voltage across their cell membranes and to carry electrical impulses across themselves and to other cells.” Respondent C mismatched the meanings in the composition and completion processes, thus unable to interpret the meanings correctly.

Substitution: Rhetorical Question - “CAN YOU HANDLE IT?”

Respondent A owns an ACER laptop; he described the meanings of the laptop advertisement in Figure 4.5:

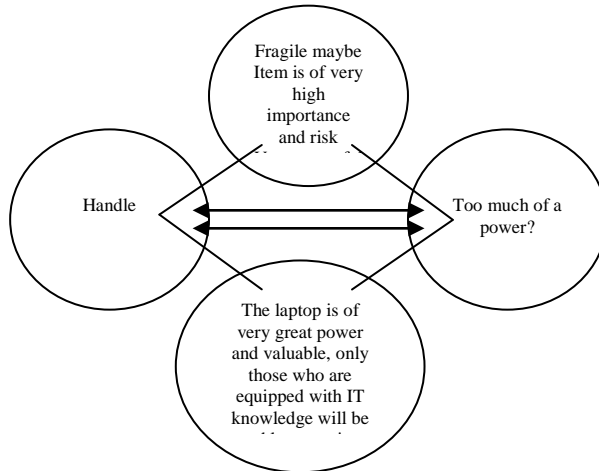


Figure 4.5

Respondent A focused on the word “HANDLE”. He saw it as something very powerful, and if “it is not handled properly, we will have to pay for it”. It required “a lot of attention” because of its fragility as it can break easily. Risk was involved, as it was valuable so “everyone wanted to take it from you.” Only those who were laptop-savvy could fully utilize all the functions; those who were not, could only “use it for its simple functions”. He matched the power of IT knowledge to the functions and sophistication of the laptop.

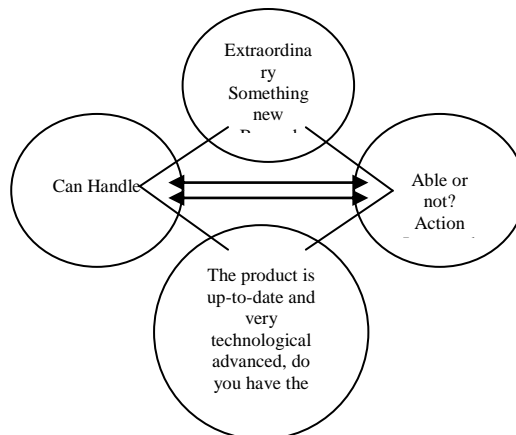


Figure 4.6

Respondent C has used a laptop though currently he does not own one, posing difficulties in his studies. He also emphasized the word “HANDLE” in the

composition process: “handle” connoted the idea of “an action of control.” Thus, the product must be “extraordinary” and “beyond our expectations”; giving it a very strong message to readers in the blended space: “Do you dare to accept the challenge to use an up-to-date, and highly technological advanced HP laptop?” His analysis was shown in Figure 4.6:

Hyperbole - “Get the Full Impact of Full HD with Toshiba’s Superior Power Meta Brain Technology”

Respondent A loves playing football and is an enthusiastic football fan that never misses football matches shown on ASTRO (Malaysian satellite television). He was thrilled when relating his experience of watching football matches on high-definition (HD) TV. The images were very clear; he could “slow down the match and watch the details” and could see “if the players have committed a foul.” In his elaboration process, the Toshiba plasma television was the best in the market as the words “SUPERIOR” and “META BRAIN” indicated “highest and undefined intelligence.” The viewers could fully “indulge themselves” and “feel the feelings” due to the maximum impact endowed by clear HD images. His construction of meaning was shown in Figure 4.7:

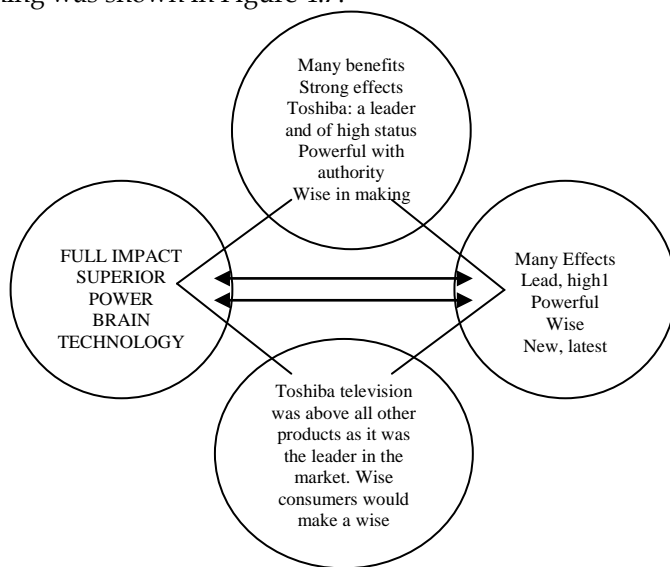


Figure 4.7

Respondent B did not focus on HD as he did not fancy watching television, though they have an LG brand plasma television at home. Instead, he emphasized the wisdom of choice in “making a decision” to purchase the “new and latest” Toshiba TV modelling the composition process. The highlight of the advertisement was not the clear HD images but the wise decision of buying the product. The attention was on the consumers’ mind sets as all thinking “came from the “BRAIN”,” and if one were wise, he would have “thought of the benefits” of purchasing the product. His analysis was shown in Figure 4.8:

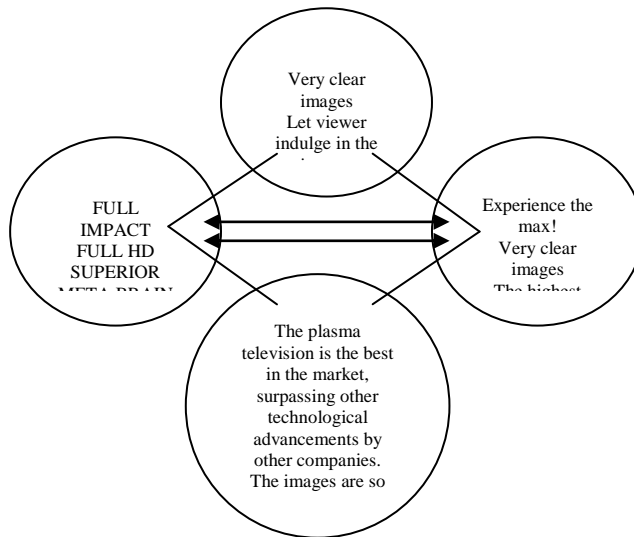


Figure 4.8

Metonymy - “LIVE WITH CHIVALRY”

Respondent B was not familiar with the word “CHIVALRY”. To understand the message, he used the visual element to facilitate his comprehension. In his completion process, horses symbolized “freedom” and limitless opportunities. The riders were living a luxurious lifestyle since horse riding was an expensive activity. He felt there was “no connection” between the images depicting freedom and alcohol. Being a Muslim, he has never consumed alcoholic drinks as it is against his religion. Figure 4.9 showed his understanding of the alcohol advertisement:

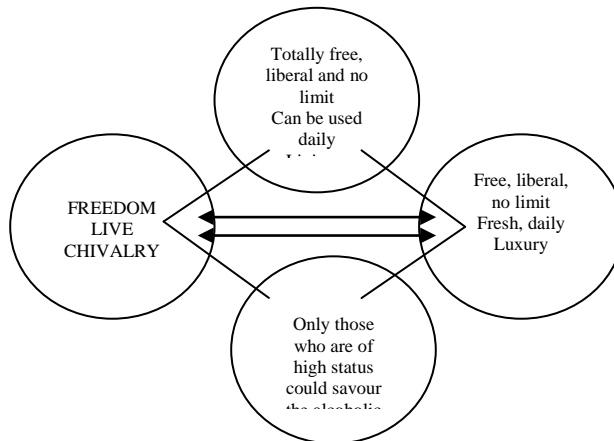


Figure 4.9

One of the meanings of “chivalry” as defined by Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is “the religious and moral system of behaviour which the

perfect knight was expected to follow in the Middle Ages.” Horses were also associated with knights in the Middle Ages, who were bound to their code of honour. Thus, the brand reflected knightly sentiment and honour, specially catering to the select few. This suggests the beverage is for an exclusive group of sporty, powerful men.

Metonymy - “Let us be your London Bridge”

Respondent D has flown before; he is very well read and subscribes to *Reader’s Digest*. In the composition process, he first broke “London Bridge” into two units (London – a grand and civilised city; and Bridge, the connector) then combined them together as a famous structure of the world which everyone knows. He concluded that Air Asia airline “helps you connect to other places which used to be impossible.” The metonymy is that the concept ‘link’ is realised here as ‘London Bridge,’ a complex image as a metaphor, since it is literally London, the Stansted airport. His analysis was shown in Figure 4.10:

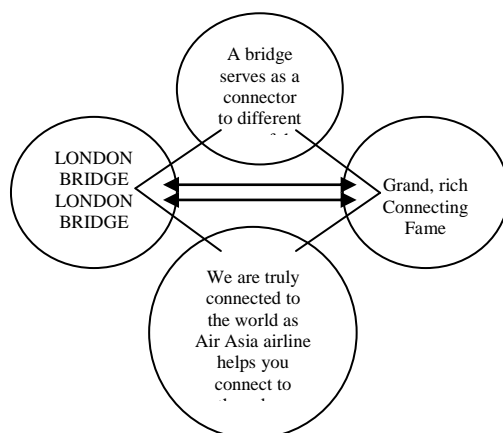


Figure 4.10

Personification - “Where flavours collide”

Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary explains “collision” as an accident in which two vehicles or people crash into each other. The strong impact is fabricated and it is used here to explain how the flavours “collide” and hit each other. Respondent C was fond of the word “flavours” and associated it with a positive “awesomeness” in the completion process. With the plural form, it indicated many flavours, rendering it “awesome”. Although he has never consumed the product before, the word “collide” referred to both the taste of whisky and “another flavour of the mixture” that “went deep into your heart”. This special mixture would be irresistible and everybody would want it because of its awesome taste. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.11:

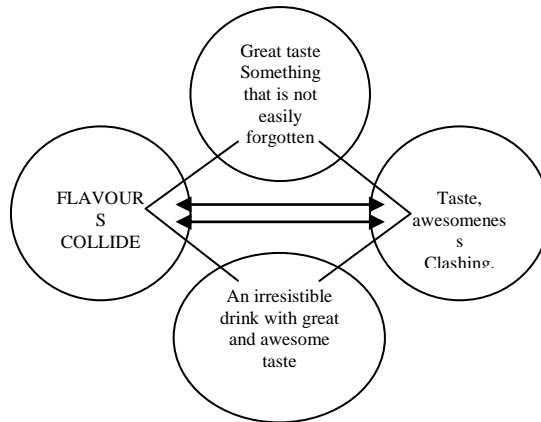


Figure 4.11

Respondent D also saw a positive connotation with the word “flavours” which he associated with “the best essence” in the completion process. “Collide” referred to “explosive types of flavours”, something which gave “oomph”. With the combination of the different flavours, it offered drinkers the best drink with a great taste. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.12:

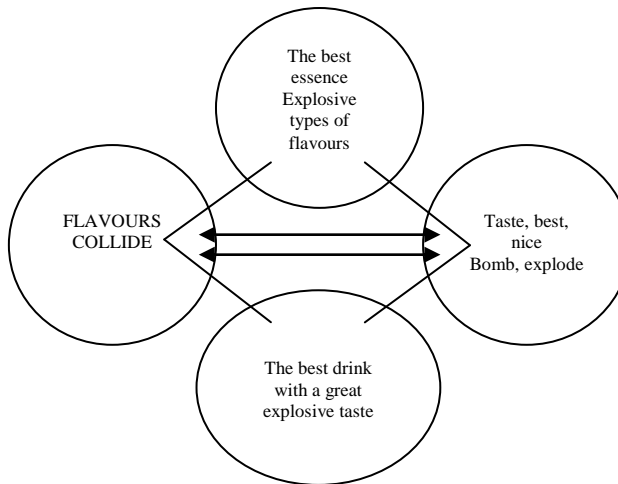


Figure 4.12

Destabilization: Metaphor - “Mother Nature’s Treadmill → Mother Nature’s Energy Bar”

The two metaphors found here are Mother Nature (as a metaphor for natural goodness, health) and Treadmill for exercise and fitness. Respondent A has a very close relationship with his mother. He saw “Mother Nature” as a representation of a motherly figure, “who is the best and always gives the best to her children as she knows what is best for them.” Blending the information, respondent A saw the

energy bar “as good as the one we get from our own mother.” He has consumed the product before. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.13.

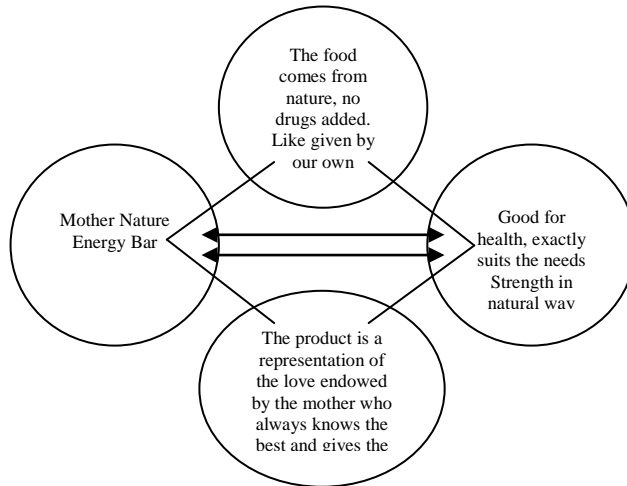


Figure 4.13

Respondent D also has a close relationship with his mother. But unlike respondent A, who combined “Mother Nature” as one unit, he separated the notions of “Mother” and “Nature” into two different units in the composition process. He analysed the word “Treadmill” as health because people use it for jogging or walking purposes, further highlighting the concept of health in relation to this health food. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.14:

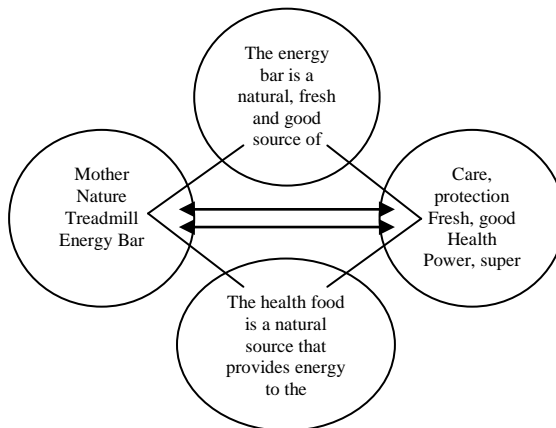


Figure 4.14

Pun - “YOUR HEART KNOWS HOW TO MAKE EVERY BEAT COUNT”

Respondent B is not a sportsman and does not enjoy doing sports; the training computer product is quite foreign to him. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.15:

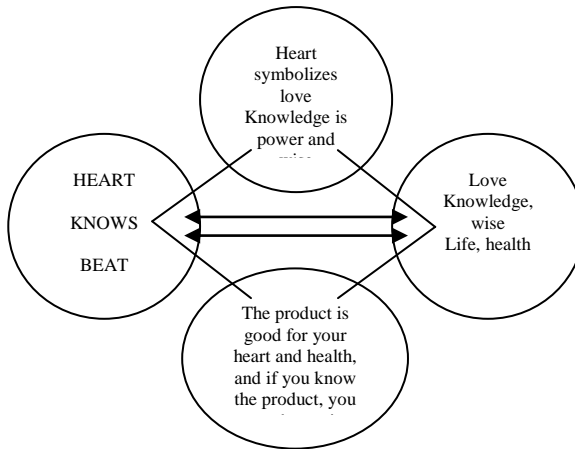


Figure 4.15

Being a health-conscious person, respondent B matched “HEART” with “love” in the completion process and “if we love ourselves, we will take care of our health.” He did not know the functions of the product, as he has never seen one before. Based on the notion of health, he figured out that the product was “good for your heart and health; and if you know the product, you must be a wise consumer,” linking the decision to purchase to wisdom and knowledge, and not the benefits of the training computer.

Respondent C was an active sportsman, and had used the product before. He related “HEART” to health, and “doing a lot of exercise can stay away from cardiovascular diseases.” He saw the connection between “COUNT” and Mathematics, and blended counting of heartbeats in the elaboration process: “the watch helps us count and monitor heartbeats when doing exercise” so we will not strain ourselves. His analysis is shown in Figure 4.16:

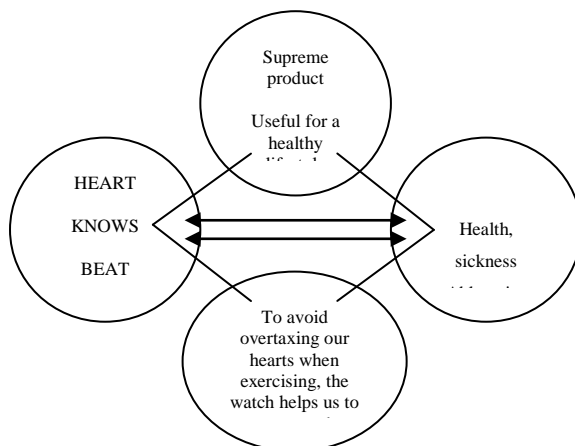


Figure 4.16

Discussion

Factors Influencing Comprehension

Cook and Myers state that “advertising text is not stable and not open to one and only one interpretation, instead, the text is unstable and readings of text are multiple, depending on the interpreters of that text” (as cited in Brown, Stevens, and Maclaran, 1999, p. 11). They further state, “the interpreters’ personal, cultural, and gendered baggage is the context from which they make meaning” when analysing the same textual stimuli. The findings of this research revealed that despite coming from the same ethnic, cultural, and gender background, the comprehension process varied due to the participants’ general knowledge, personal experience, interests, personality, and language proficiency.

Moreover, when words fail to convey the intended meanings, visual clues come into play. In her study, Lundmark (2005) discovered that “some elements in the blending network are realized linguistically, others are realised visually, and some are realised in both ways.”

General Knowledge

General knowledge plays a crucial role in constructing meanings. Respondent D used his knowledge about the London Bridge as the focal point in his composition process. London Bridge is a famous architectural structure whilst “bridge” is the symbolism of “connector”, helping people to “connect to other places which used to be impossible.”

Personal Experience

Comparing respondents C and B on the training computer advertisement, owing to his sports background and familiarity with the product, respondent C had no difficulty analysing the advertisement. Respondent B, on the other hand, has never seen or used this product before, so his understanding was largely based on the notions of heart and health.

Emotions

Both respondents A and D have close relationships with their mothers, especially respondent A. When analysing “Mother Nature”, he fondly saw it as a symbol for mother; the focus of his analysis was on “Mother”. Respondent D separated “Mother” and “Nature” into two different units. He also analysed “Treadmill”, which respondent A did not analyse. The differences could be due to emotional attachment to the phrase “Mother Nature”. If a reader focused too much on an attached or familiar element, the subjectivity could be affected, as they may overlook the intended message.

Interests

No explanation was provided in the camera advertisement about the meanings of SLR or Compact; they were presumed background knowledge. However, because

respondent A has a special passion for taking photos, he possesses an in-depth knowledge of cameras and their functions, and this facilitated his comprehension process. It was a clear example of the presence of a scheme technical but familiar. It also marked his social class a bit.

Personality

Respondent B is realistic as he “usually sees things from the real perspective and real reasoning in making decisions.” Unlike respondent A, who focused on HD, he emphasized the wisdom of choice in “making the decision” to purchase the television. He focused on “BRAIN,” the centre where thoughts are formulated: a “wise” consumer would figure out the benefits of buying the product.

Language Proficiency

The unfamiliarity of technical terms might hinder the comprehension process. Respondent C tried to analyse “carbonation” and “electrolytes,” but can only understand “electrolyte”; he misinterpreted carbonation as pollution, which was not related to the isotonic drink. Thus, blending did not take place. This ad clearly presumes scientific knowledge, or awareness that the terms are highly technical.

Visual Clues

The word “chivalry” was foreign to respondent B, so he relied on the visual clue of a few young men riding horses, which was associated with freedom, luxury and power (indeed ‘horse power’). During the interview, he related that the picture did not help him in guessing the meaning as he found no connection between the picture and the alcoholic drink. In general, the image of the horse is cultural here and in some sense quite Western.

Implications

Compared to literary texts, advertisements provide a good source of authentic teaching materials in class. For one, the language used is authentic and more user-friendly as it is shorter and has attractive visual layouts. They are an integral discourse within consumer societies, and literally bombard us on a daily basis, increasingly so, on the Internet. Yet, advertisements are not meant to substitute literary texts, but are a familiar alternative reading material to stimulate students’ learning of literary devices, sentence structures and vocabulary.

Advertisements can serve as stimulants to develop students’ critical thinking skills as advertising uses “implicit meanings which may deceive consumers” (Stern, 1992). The deception techniques are potential sources for stimulating discussions as some students might have used the products or services before. With familiarity, they are good starting points to teach thinking skills prior to critical academic readings. Advertisements manipulate us and this should be fore grounded in teaching critical awareness of ads.

In understanding literary language, Palmer and Brooks state that students comprehend it based on their schemata, therefore, “direct or explicit, instruction is

often needed to provide knowledge necessary to understand not only the figurative language expressions but the context surrounding them as well" (as cited in Palmer, Schackelford, Miller, & Leclere, 2007). Thus, teachers have to first activate the students' schemata regarding the context, such as the socioeconomic or historical backgrounds. If the students do not have them in their schemata, teachers must expose them to the necessary knowledge required to better understand the texts.

Verbalization is vital in comprehending figurative language. In the analysis, respondents jotted the key words, which were not elaborative. However during the interviews, it was noted that when explaining what they had written, the respondents were getting clearer with what they had in mind. Discussions are important to help students verbalize and clarify their thoughts.

Since "the rhetoric of images requires complex interpretation" (Joy, Sherry & Deschenes, 2009), they should be interpreted hand in hand with the verbal clues found in advertisements. Images and other visual layouts reveal a lot about advertisements and provoke different emotions. The choice of either only emphasizing linguistic features, visual elements, or both of them, largely depends on the teaching objectives and learning outcomes of the lessons.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Scott and Vargas in their book state, "pictures are every bit as learned as words and thus, the processing of visuals is owed equivalent attention" (as cited in Joy, et. al, 2009, p. 48). All features found in an advertisement, such as colours, font sizes, and pictures help people understand, in fact they also manipulate the readers' mind sets to react to the targeted response – buying the products or services. Therefore, a more comprehensive picture of the comprehension process can be gained by using CBT if the visual element is also taken into consideration.

As reading is personal, how men and women read and comprehend the same textual stimuli is also an area of interest. Rosenblatt mentions "men read in a cognitive way toward an informational goal whereas women read in an affective way towards an experiential goal" (as cited in Brown, et. al, 1999, p. 11). Bleich and Flynn argued that men are more judgmental whilst women are more empathetic while reading (as cited in Brown, et. al., 1999). Hence, the issue is how both genders make sense of meanings found in advertisements, although this was not examined here.

The research topic can be extended to a few areas: how men and women comprehend advertisements meant for men; or how both genders interpret advertisements targeting women. It is also interesting to cross-reference how each gender comprehends advertisements meant for the opposite sex. People of the same gender but different age groups and various professional backgrounds may also react differently to the advertisements. Conceptual Blending Theory shows how readers comprehend the words they encounter while reading. Reading is "a routine cognitive operation with wide applications; it occurs in the moment of thinking about a particular ad or topic" (Joy, et. al., 2009, p. 48).

References

- Action3. (2009). Action3 Advertisement. *New Men, November*, 103.
- AirAsia. (2009). Air Asia Advertisement. *New Men, November*, 67.
- Brown, S., Stevens, L., & Maclaran, P. (1999). I can't believe it's not Bakhtin!: Literary theory, postmodern advertising, and the gender agenda. *Journal of Advertising*, 28(1), 11-24.
- Carbonation. (2010). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica Online <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/95158/carbonation>
- Chivalry. (2010). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/chivalry>
- Chivas. (2009). Chivas Advertisement. *August Men, November*, 19.
- Coulson, S. & Oakley, T. (2000). Blending basics. *Cognitive Linguistics 11*(3/4), 175-196. Retrieved from <http://www.case.edu/artsci/eng/Library/Oakley-CoulsonBlendBasics.pdf>
- Coulson, S. & Oakley, T. (2005). Blending and coded meaning: Literal and figurative meaning in cognitive semantics. *Journal of Pragmatics 35*, 1510-1536.
- Electrolyte. (2010). *Discovery Health*. Retrieved from <http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/diet-fitness/information/question565.htm>
- Fauconnier, G. & Turner, M. (2002). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Flavour. (2010). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/flavours#flavour_1
- Gatorade. (2009). Gatorade Advertisement. *Men's Health, November*, 19.
- Gibbs, R. W., Jr. (2006). Cognitive linguistics and metaphor research: Past successes, sceptical questions, further challenges. *Delta*, 22. Retrieved from http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0102-44502006000300003&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en
- Giora, R. & Fein, O. (1999). On understanding familiar and less-familiar figurative language. *Journal of Pragmatics, 31*, p. 1601-1618.
- Glenmorangie. (2009). Glenmorangie Advertisement. *August Men, November*, 27.
- HewlettPackard. (2009). HP Advertisement. *August Men, November*, 55
- Joy, A, Sherry, J. B., & Deschenes, J. (2009). Conceptual blending in advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 39-49.
- Lagerwerf, L. & Meijers, A. (2008). Openness in metaphorical and straightforward advertisements: Appreciation effects. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(2), 19-30.
- Lakoff, G. (1997). *The contemporary theory of metaphor*. Retrieved from <http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor.pdf>
- Langrehr, D. (2003). From a semiotic perspective: inference formation and the critical comprehension of television advertising. *Reading Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/langrehr/>
- Leigh, J. H. (1994). The use of figures of speech in print ad headlines. *Journal of Advertising*, 23(2), 17-33.
- Lundmark, C. (2005) *Metaphor and creativity in British magazine advertising* (Doctoral dissertation, Luleå University of Technology). Retrieved from <http://epubl.ltu.se/1402-1544/2005/42/LTU-DT-0542-SE.pdf>

- McGlone, M. (1996). Conceptual metaphors and figurative language interpretation: Food for thought? *Journal of Memory and Language*, 35, 544-565.
- McQuarrie, E. F. & Mick, D.G. (1992). On resonance: A critical pluralistic inquiry into advertising rhetoric. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 19 (2), 180-197.
- McQuarrie, E. F. & Mick, D. G. (1996). Figures of rhetoric in advertising language. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(4), 424-438.
- McQuarrie, E. F. & Mick, D. G. (2003). Visual and verbal rhetorical figures under directed processing versus incidental exposure to advertising. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(4), 579-587.
- McQuarrie, E. F. & Mick, D. G. (2009). A laboratory study of the effect of verbal rhetoric versus repetition when consumers are not directed to process advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 28(2), 287-312. Retrieved from <http://gates.comm.virginia.edu/DGM9T/McQuarrie%20and%20Mick,%202009%20A%20Laboratory%20Study%20of%20Verbal%20Rhetoric%20and%20Message%20Repetition.pdf>
- Metaphor. (2010). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica Online <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/377872/metaphor>
- Mick, D. G. (1992). Levels of subjective comprehension in advertising processing and their relations to ad perceptions, attitudes, and memory. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(4), 411-424.
- Mulken, M., Dijk, R. E., & Hoeken, H. (2005). Puns, relevance and appreciation in advertisements. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37, 707-721.
- McGuire, W. J. (2000). Standing on the shoulders of ancients: Consumer research, persuasion, and figurative language. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(1), 109-114.
- NatureValley. (2009). Nature Valley Advertisement. *Men's Health*, November, 22.
- Olympus. (2009). Olympus Advertisement. *August Men*, November, 57.
- Palmer, B. C. & Brooks, M. A. (2004). Reading until the cows come home: Figurative language and reading comprehension. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 47(5), 870-879.
- Palmer, B. C., Shackelford, V. S., Miller, S. C., & Leclere, J. T. (2007). Bridging two worlds: Reading comprehension, figurative language instruction, and the English language learner. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50(4), 258-267.
- Pawlowski, D. R., Badzinski, D. M., & Mitchell, N. (1998). Effects of metaphors on children's comprehension and perception of print advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, 27(2), 83-98.
- Philips, B. J. (2000). The impact of verbal anchoring on consumer response to image ads. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(1), 15-24.
- Philips, B. J. & McQuarrie, E.F. (2009). Impact of advertising metaphor on consumer beliefs: Delineating the contribution of comparison versus deviation factors. *Journal of Advertising*, 38(1), 49-61.
- Polar. (2009). Polar Advertisement. *Men's Health*, November, 15.
- Stern, B. (1988). How does an ad mean? Language in services advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 17(2), 3-14.
- Stern, B. (1992). "Crafty advertisers": Literary versus literal deceptiveness. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 11(1), 72-81.
- Stern, B. (2006). What does *brand* mean? Historical-analysis method and construct definition. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(2), 216-223.
- Toncar, M & Munch, J. (2001). Consumer responses to tropes in print advertising. *Journal*

of Advertising, 30(1), 55-65.

Toshiba. (2009). Toshiba Advertisement. *August Men, November*, 161.

Turner, M. (2002). The cognitive study of art, language and literature. *Poetics Today* 23(1), 9-20.

Zhang, Q. (2008). The cognition and image preservation in the translation of metaphor from English to Chinese. *Asian Social Science*, 4(8), 84-89. Retrieved from <http://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/viewFile/56/37>.