# The Persuasive effect of using Visual Metaphors in Advertising Design

**Dr.Amira Kadry**

Lecturer ,The Higher institute of Applied Arts, Graphics& Advertising arts dept., 6th of Oct.City,Egypt

**Abstract:**

Advertising is omnipresent in our daily lives. We are exposed to hundreds or even thousands of visual persuasive messages each day. Constantly these messages attempt to persuade us to feel, believe, act and buy. We lack the ability to process all of this information overloaded in a conscious way. Still, some of these are carefully constructed visual messages succeed in affecting our attitudes and behaviors more than others .In the field of Advertising design images are worth than thousand words and Coming up with a new and creative advertisement is a sophisticated task for designers. Modern advertising relies heavily on visual metaphors ,as Images  sell everything and Visual metaphors- also known as pictorial metaphor, analogical juxtaposition are highly structured images created to capture the viewer's attention and push them to build one or more metaphorical correspondences between concepts that are depicted or cued by the image itself to highlight specific features of the product to be sold .

This paper attempts to study the  persuasive role of visual metaphors as one of the persuasion techniques in advertising communication ,it will discuss the crucial elements needed in visual metaphors to create clever and coherent advertisements.  it also explores through the analytical study the various types of  visual metaphor where the visual metaphor was the hero image of their design and how this affected the persuasion process. Major results include that When visual metaphors used in advertisements, consumers tend to acquire more positive effects and comprehend deeper meanings to unravel the complex parts of an advertisement, Visual metaphors  not only have an impact on persuasion but they also have a Remarkable Power to Make designers  More Creative, Visual Metaphors are effective tools to create Concepts  that are developed verbally and visually.

## Introduction:

Today people live in a visually intensive society, in a world of spectacular and exciting images. They are bombarded with an orderly and continuously stream of visual stimulation from all manner of media every day. They see mediated images more often than they read words . As creativity requires breaking conventional associations to create new juxtaposition of familiar objects, And Using objects in an uncommon context to attract the viewer's attention in an effective way to communicate a message .Images surround us everywhere; at home, work, on the subway, on television, and in magazines. Historically, images have played an important role in developing consciousness and the relationship of the self to its surroundings (Helmers, 2004) .

In the field of advertising design Semiotics are frequently used in advertising to signify an advertiser's message through the use of signs or symbols,Visual semiotics are used in a very wide range, and as *S*emiotics, is the study of signs, symbols, and signification. It is  also the study of how meaning is created. Visual semiotics is a new branch of the field of semiotics originated in 1990's  and visual Metaphors are one of the tools to create  visual semiotics. (Leeuwen, 2006)

Visual   metaphor is a powerful tool ,visual metaphors allow expression of concepts that might not have a linguistic equivalent in a foreign language, concepts that appear as taboo in a foreign culture, concepts with a heavy emotional connotation, or abstract concepts that are otherwise hard to express through words. For these reasons, knowing how these images are constructed, and different models for visual metaphor identification and analysis will be presented and discussed. (Messaris, 1997)

Advertisements have their own particular language, visual advertising can signify a remarkable amount of information in a glance. Through images, multiple elements like colors, lighting, arrangement, gestures and expressions are delivered simultaneously. visuals are not an addition to a verbal message but are essential persuasive devices on their own. Additionally, the researchers asserted that visual metaphors work even better than its verbal counterpart as it is less ambiguous and perceived more universally, so the audiences could receive the message not only in greater amount, but also at a shorter time. Such delivery style works especially well when there's a need of attention capture in a short amount of time, Visual Metaphors  also have a very strong persuasive effect (Egan, 2007) ,as the use of an unexpected visual will get viewer's attention and get them to engage in more effortful and elaborative processing. visual cues not only draw attention, but also bring out a certain emotion. human perceptual system is used to pay special attention to unfamiliar objects or when objects are

somewhat different from the expectations. Therefore, many advertisers create complex messages making use of visual metaphors , As metaphors are likely to increase audiences' cognitive elaboration when they process the message, which may lead to greater persuasion. (A.Belch, 2014)

## The Study Significance
This paper contributes towards understanding the persuasive effect of different forms of visual metaphors in print advertising, This study emphasizes the role of visual metaphors as one of the most powerful persuasion techniques in advertising communication.

## Hypothesis :
The use of visual metaphors in advertising design may lead to a stronger persuasive effect and it could also be one of the most important persuasive techniques in advertising communication.

## The problem of this study may be formulated as follows:
- Does the use of visual metaphors in advertising design have a persuasive effect on the targeted audience?
- How could visual semiotics contribute in creating visual metaphors?
- Does the use of visual metaphor enrich the creative strategy of the advertisement?
- What are the design Requirements to create a persuasive Visual Metaphor?
- How to effectively use a visual metaphor in Advertising ?

## Visual Metaphor Definition
- Visual metaphor is the representation of a person, place or idea by a visual image that suggests a particular association. (Nordquist, 2015)
- A Visual metaphor is an unusual pairing of two elements that creates a new meaning that neither element had alone, thus creating a whole new conceptual  visual expression. (Bateman, 2014)
- A visual metaphor is an image used in the place of or in conjunction with another to suggest an analogy between the images or make a statement with them .
- A metaphor, uses two things - such as a vivid statement or a dramatic visual - to suggest another thing. And does so without the "like" or "as." . (Messaris, 1997)

## Requirements of the Visual Metaphor
Visual metaphors, if they are not understood accurately by consumers, would not draw attention as planned. The essence of composing visual metaphors is, to assure stability between unlike objects by using them adequately proper forms.

The fundamental causation of using metaphors in problematical conditions is to divulge the fact that; actual feelings about a concept can effect result and also the situation. The power of metaphors is seen in the relationship between a user and a product, the way that user approaches to perceive. Using improper or atypical metaphors can be misinterpreted and cause irritation that makes disappointment as a result. (Serig, 2008)

In addition to familiarity, an effective metaphor must not be overly simple or complex. It is important to identify learner characteristics that play a role in the ability to observe, interpret, and utilize a particular visual metaphor. The metaphor designer must find that narrow corridor where the analogies presented by the metaphor support successfully the transfer of identity from metaphor to new information without making so many analogies that the learner is overwhelmed by the number or the level of complexity. An image or set of images should be appropriately simple enough to be easily interpreted, but include enough detail so that the learner can process the metaphor quickly. If the learner's ability level is not taken into consideration and too much or too little detail is included, the metaphor will fail. Often, the metaphor designer seeks to be so accurate that too much visual detail is included. This is another decision point in creating visual metaphors for instruction. The metaphor must be familiar to the target learner. It must come from every day experiences and be appropriate for the developmental / educational level of the learner. The metaphor designer must create visuals with an appropriate degree of accuracy and detail. Too much detail and the learner may not be able to interpret the metaphor; too little detail and the learner may not be able to find enough analogies to use the metaphor. A very accurate metaphor may contain so much detail that the learner is overwhelmed and abandons the attempt to interpret it at all. (Williams, 1997)

## Creating the Visual Metaphor
The construction of the visuals is of great importance in assuring that the metaphor represents familiar concepts to the target audience and is easily interpreted by them . For example, if using the "time is money" metaphor, an number of images may be used. For example, American audiences would recognize the dollar sign ($) appearing on a clock, while they might miss the significance of seeing a British pound sign (£) on a timepiece. The Metaphor Tool takes a well-recognized and accepted cultural symbol and manipulates it to connect to the product, brand, or message.  The trick is to do it in a non-obvious, clever way.  The process is called fusion, and there are three versions:       Metaphor fused to

Product/Brand, Metaphor fused to Message, and Metaphor fused to both the Product/Brand and Message.      (Serig, 2008)

To use the Metaphor Tool, start by defining the message. Then create a list of symbols (objects, images, or concepts) that are directly related to the message (a metaphor). Next make a list of the product's components or components near the product (Closed World). Finally, choose a symbol and a component and fuse them together. Create various combinations of metaphoric symbols and components to find candidates that have that element of surprise or cleverness. (McNamara, 2014)

Metaphors and similes can help you bring abstract ideas to life. To represent unexpected risks in life an ad for an insurance company could picture a man about to step on a banana peel.

 - Metaphors and similes let you express sensitive subjects by suggesting rather than showing or saying.
 - A metaphor can also represent a product feature, as in the ad for an iron enriched breakfast cereal showing the cereal flakes flying out of the box as they are attracted to a magnet.
 - Perhaps best of all, you can use metaphors and similes to express product benefits in fresh ways. A perfect example is the print ad for Gold's Gym showing a man lifting his car with one hand to change the tire.
 - Start with the most basic idea, the key concept for your product. That might be 'safe' or 'agile' or 'bright' or "well engineered". Then sketch or write ways to express that idea.
 - Complete the sentence, creating a simile, "This brand, service or product is like ..."
 - Fill in the blank: "The benefit to the consumer of this brand, product or service is like _____"

Now see if you can remove the "is like" to form the metaphor. (McNamara, 2014)

## Persuasion in Advertising

Persuasion is the art of convincing someone to do something for his own good. (Dictionary.com)

Persuasion happens any time you are trying to get someone to do something or change their mind to your viewpoint.

 In advertising, persuasion is used to help customers realize that a product or service best benefits them in response to a functional or emotional need. Advertisers use logic, emotions and trust to persuade audiences. (Messaris, 1997)

## Persuasion Using Logic

Logical persuasion uses hard data -- research results, facts and figures -- as evidence of believability. Logical persuasion requires fully attentive audiences with fully engaged brains to

absorb inputs based on logic. Consequently, most people filter and tune-out most advertising messages. Advertisers are therefore challenged to devise ways to circumvent audience mental filters. This is a tall challenge. But, advertisers often combine logic with trust or emotional appeals to evade mental filters. Aflac uses the duck quite effectively in its TV commercials, for example, to evade mental filters by combining the emotion of humor and logic to sell supplemental health insurance.

## Persuasion Using Emotion

An appeal to emotion is the preferred persuasion strategy for many advertisers. Logical persuasion requires fully attentive audiences with fully engaged brains. Researchers claim that most people's brains run on "idle" most of the time; a mental state where the sub-conscious mind is in command and emotions reign supreme. Emotional appeals found in advertising today often involve at least one of the emotions of exhilaration, hope, fun , anger, love, joy, fear, confidence, guilt, benevolence, pity, envy, and emulation. When advertisers trigger one of these visceral responses to an advertising message, targets typically have no need for logic except as justification for their visceral responses. (kOKEMULLER, 2004)

## Persuasion Using Trust

The "trusted authority" character has been ubiquitous in advertising since the dawn of television. This is the guy in the white lab coat, or the doctor-looking character with the stethoscope draped around her neck, that provides "expert" testimony and recommends  a  Product . Advertisers often use celebrities and other public notables for the same purpose based on the premise that the public notable is respected and generally accepted as being trustworthy. Many advertisers are furthering their branding initiatives by establishing a presence in social media as trusted authorities on topics in their specialty and of interest to online communities.  (Boykin, 2009)

## Persuasive Techniques in Advertising

 1- Consider the message and the audience. The obvious goal of most ads is to get you to buy a product or "buy into" an idea. When you understand the message and audience, you can determine which techniques are being used and why. Ask yourself: • What is the message? What does the ad want the consumer to buy? • Who is the audience? Does the ad appeal to certain emotions or beliefs? What do those emotions or beliefs tell you about the audience? Strategy.
 2- Spot the persuasive techniques. Advertisers strive to make each ad memorable, convincing, and exciting. Characters, slogans, text, and

sounds are all part of the persuasive technique. Ask yourself: • Who appears in the ad? The people who appear in the ad often reflect the target audience or whom members of that audience are likely to admire. Advertisers might choose specific celebrities to endorse products because they want the audience to associate the celebrity with the product. Actors or models might be chosen for many reasons. For example, they might be people just like the audience (plain folk), rebellious or unique (individuality), or "one of the crowd" (bandwagon). • Does the ad appeal to emotion or to logic? Many ads today don't provide information about the product, and some ads don't even show the product. Instead, the ads appeal to the audience's emotions, such as pity, fear, or vanity. For example, commercials for telephone companies often appeal to viewers' emotions of happiness or nostalgia to leave them with a positive feeling about their product and company. Some ads use humor to persuade an audience. • What language is used? Every word in an ad counts, but not all the words actually inform the audience. Loaded language, including purr, snarl, and weasel words, appeal to the audience's emotions rather than their reason. Purr words—such as "tasty" and "sensational"—can make a product seem more desirable. • Does the slogan stick? The best slogans are memorable and create an "image" of the product. Slogans are less about the actual product and more about the audience recalling a catchy phrase and associating it with the product.

3- Understand the intended effects on the target audience. Most ads don't employ just one persuasive technique. They often use several. Each technique is chosen to appeal specifically to the product's target audience. Ask yourself: Why do I think these techniques were chosen? (ANDREWS, 2013)

### How to effectively use visual metaphors in advertising design

Like everything else, visual metaphors also have their limitations. Overuse or misuse this strategy in advertising may cause unwanted effects. Until now, detailed specifications for visual metaphors in advertising have yet to be fully constructed. Nevertheless, we could draw some recommendations for effective use of visual metaphors in advertising from the existing data and observations .

### Avoid complicated rhetorical figures.

if the visual metaphors used in ads are complicated, audiences may spend all their cognitive resources to solve message and cannot remember the brand name. In this case, audiences who encountered advertisements without figures could recall the names better than those encountered ads with complex figures. As a result, it is recommended that advertisers employ familiar and simple rhetorical figures in the ads to accommodate their audiences' interpretation. (Nabil Mzoughi, 2011, p. 257)

### Avoid unrelated metaphoric figures.

Metaphoric figures only work if the elaboration is strongly related to the intended message, Obviously, a metaphoric figure that is clumsy or hard to understand cannot have a positive impact on consumers' attitude, if the figures have nothing to do with the argument, the increased elaboration actually has a negative effect on persuasion, as the distraction from the figures can overcome the main message. (Mulken, 2006)

### Minimize accompanied text

Metaphorical figures without verbal explanations in advertising can persuade audiences better than literal images with straightforward arguments,the argument of an ad mainly comes from the images and metaphorical visuals, supplementary verbal explanation may not be necessary. visual metaphor without verbal propositions produces a greater degree of cognitive activity and thus makes the ad more persuasive and credible to audiences.

### Only use text to prevent confusions.

An image may bear more than one interpretation, As images can have a number of meanings, without the caption, they can be understood incorrectly. the text here serves to direct the interpretation, causing the audiences to avoid confusions and receive the intended meaning. (Edward F.McQuirrie, 1996)

### Analytical study

In this section the paper analysis some chosen samples that used the visual metaphor effectively to persuade the targeted audience .



Figure (1)

**Heinz ad campaign**

"No one grows ketchup like Heinz" is a simple example of how advertisers utilize visual metaphors. With a shift towards healthy eating individuals are now seeking healthier options. The visual metaphor here denotes that the entire bottle only uses the freshest and most organic products. Through the sliced tomato shaped into a bottle connotations such as "fresh" and healthy are placed into the minds of the audience.



Figure (2)

**Addidas New Balance shoe**

In this example a successful metaphor of how running is good for the human heart is seen through the strong resemblance of the shoes and water bottles to an actual human heart. This advertisement is presenting visual metaphor in this case the shoe advertisement appeals to the emotions of the consumer, rather than their desire to compete. The advertisement reads "Run with the Heart", and is clearly aimed at an audience who love running for the personal joy it brings them, rather than those who wish to outrace their opponents.

describe a gradual increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and its oceans, a change that is believed to be permanently changing the Earth's climate making it more warm .(Murtugudde, 2015) the visual metaphor here is represented through the object of an ice-cream cone. The ice-cream ball is replaced by the appearance of the melting earth, the interesting thing is the earth is melting and flowing down along the cone. The ice-cream here should not be treated in its normal usage as a sweet, cold dessert; instead, it is the metaphor of the earth. The ice-cream melting is the suggestive argument that the earth is melting away from global warming. By using the metaphorical image and minimal text, the ad manages to make audiences wonder what the message is and capture their attention longer.



Figure (3)

**Global warming ad**

Earth icecream - This example of visual metaphor obviously and directly represent the idea of the "Global Warming " which is the term used to



Figure (4)

**Anti smoking vermont department of health ad**

This is an anti-smoking advertisement for the Vermont Department of Health. The pure black background allows us to focus on the cloud of cigarette smoke in the center, which has taken the shape of a baby in the womb. The tagline for this advertisement is "When you smoke, your baby smokes." A baby in the form of smoke in this ad is a clear, direct metaphor implying that your baby will be fully affected if you smoke cigarettes while pregnant. I find this ad to be extremely chilling and powerful.



Figure (5)

**New York Film Academy**

Pop corn was the tricky visual metaphor the advertisement used to attract new screenwriting students to the New York Film Academy, they built popcorn from a garbage can full of trashed drafts, something all would-be-screenwriters can relate to.



Figure (6)

**Department of health secondhand smoke**

This poster is an advertisement for smoking. The quote is 'your smoking harms your child' and is metaphorically represented with a child and a hand over her mouth. The hand and arm is composed of smoke and there are larger amounts of smoke to cover her mouth, saying that most of the smoke is inhaled by children when you smoke near them. The hand covering her mouth and nose, is suffocating her with smoke.
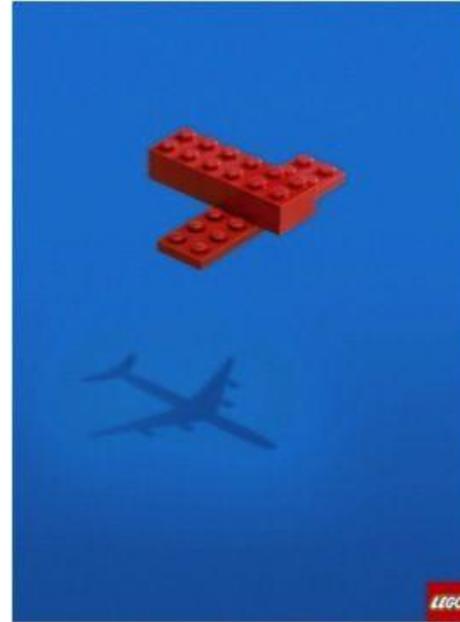


Figure (7)

**Lego ad**

This is an advertisement for the toy brand 'Lego'. They specialize in making toy building block which can be used to construct many different things. this poster is a metaphor for the idea that their product can be used to create anything. it is based on the phrase "The skies the limit" which means there is no end to the creativity and the limitation is your imagination. This is shown by how only 2 basic blocks creates a shadow an aero plane



Figure (8)

**Pilates With Gerda: Belly Bag**

Carrying too much weight?

Everybody wants to get rid of their extra weight

and have a beautiful body; that's the truth. A pilates school located in istanbul and Ankara, Pilates with Gerda's outdoor campaign targets those pepole who hates to carry their extra weight to everywhere they go... Just like a bag. So in this ads a metaphoric visual of a suit cases from Belly and Buttocks is used to show the expendables of our body and call people to drop them.

## Results

1- When visual metaphors are used in advertisements, consumers tend to acquire more positive effects and comprehend deeper meanings to unravel the complex parts of an advertisement.

2- The use of visual metaphors has a strong persuasive effect, as Visual metaphors not only have an impact on persuasion but they also have a Remarkable Power to Make designers More Creative.

3- Visual semiotics play a leading role in creating visual metaphors as the designer applies the visual semiotic principals where Visual metaphors may be more persuasive due to both visual argumentation and metaphorical rhetorics they use .

4- Visual metaphors not only have an impact on persuasion but they also have a Remarkable Power to Make designers More Creative, Visual Metaphors are effective tools to create Concepts that are developed verbally and visually.

5- The power of metaphors is seen in its familiarity and in the relationship between a user and a product.

6- Visual Metaphors are effective tools to create Concepts that are developed verbally and visually. The former helps determine the message you'll convey and the latter helps determine how you'll convey that message. Both are important roadmaps for your design decisions.

7- When visual metaphors used in advertisements, consumers tend to acquire more positive effects and comprehend deeper meanings to unravel the complex parts of an advertisement.

8- The most powerful visual metaphors consolidate two extremely different categories together to demonstrate the characteristics between them.

9- visual metaphor without verbal propositions produces a greater degree of cognitive activity and thus makes the ad more persuasive and credible to audiences.

## Conclusion :

Modern Advertising relies heavily on visual metaphors, Visual metaphors are powerful tools that allow us to view something from another perspective, they also have a powerful persuasive influence that can affect buyers attention and interest. Here comes the importance of using visual metaphors in creating print advertising ideas in terms of semiotic principles . as with Visual metaphors, an idea can easily be conveyed in a more powerful manner. Visual metaphors need to be crafted carefully in order to help the viewer figure out the intended meanings behind each metaphor. Taking into consideration the target audience learner's ability level because if that was not taken into consideration and too much or too little detail is included, the metaphor will fail.

there should also be a balance between the copy and visual .if you go for a visual metaphor, make sure that you use a catchy and complementary copy.

## Discussion:

Despite of the powerful role of visual metaphors in achieving persuasion in advertising, how visual metaphors could address the targeted audience, and how to effectively use visual metaphors in advertising. With all the advantages visual metaphor can bring to a brand, however, it also has some unwanted effects that advertisers need to know. It is recommended that advertisers avoid complex or unrelated metaphorical figures, use minimal text only to solve confusion from the audiences. To use the Metaphor Tool, start by defining the message. Then create a list of symbols (objects, images, or concepts) that are directly related to the message (a metaphor). Next make a list of the product's components or components near the product (Closed World). Finally, choose a symbol and a component and fuse them together. Create various combinations of metaphoric symbols and components to find candidates that have that element of surprise or cleverness. The metaphor designer must also create visuals with an appropriate degree of accuracy and detail, and Avoid unrelated metaphoric figures

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