

## Simile as a Powerful Visual Language Tool in Advertising Effectiveness

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### Abstract:

We live in a fast-paced world where we're repetitively bombarded by numerous types of advertising visuals through different medias. The main challenge facing communication professionals is how to make their message stand out. Figurative language tools may seem more appropriate for writers as they make language more interesting, descriptive, and creative. However, figurative language tools can also be powerful solutions for visual design problems. In the world of advertising creativity, there is a tool that holds immense potential; the visual simile. Whereas the key to communicating visually is finding universal visual symbols that need no verbal explanation to reach your target audience faster. Visual similes are a brilliant way to connect two thoughts with minimum similarities, and use these similarities to smartly convey thoughts in a creative way that can captivate and engage audiences like never before. This paper explores the world of visual simile and explains its concept and how it can unleash extraordinary creativity in advertising campaigns, it also discusses the benefits and techniques of incorporating visual similarity in creating appealing advertising key visuals and or ideas that are surprising, visually appealing and communicate effectively. How is simile incorporated successfully in advertising ideation through looking closely at selected international campaigns that incorporated visual simile effectively. Finding that visual Similes allow designers to present ideas in a way that target audience can immediately relate to and establish effective connections with their audience, Visual figurative language through similes is as an excellent communication tool that helps convey complex ideas or advertising concepts quickly and effectively. Incorporating visual similes in advertising creativity leads to effective recognition and association of brands or products easily leading to a faster communication process.

### Keywords:

Simile, Visual Simile, Figurative language, Visual figurative language, Key-visual, Visual Grammar.

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### Introduction:

In an era flooded with visuals, people have so many ads thrown their way, all day every day that they are increasingly becoming disoriented to them. Advertisers attempt to capture the attention of consumers using every variety of media; they have just 50 milliseconds to make a strong first impression on their audience; In other words, less than the reaction speed of a gamer pressing a button on his console. (Lindgaard, 2006)

This could be the basic reason why some ads go viral, while others may simply end up un noticed and un seen. Advertisers need to keep up with the times and make sure their content is engaging through creating key visuals and ideas that are visually striking to make an impact.

The old saying is that one picture is worth a thousand words, and because the mind thinks in images and associations, visual similes can provoke stronger and more effective concepts than adjectives or exact descriptions. that is why advertising visuals plays a vital role in gaining attention, creating impact, and stimulating interest from an uninterested audience through a well-crafted idea and key visual. Whereas figurative language in literature uses similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification to describe something through comparison with something different. Figurative language is also used in advertising because it can create more imaginative

aspects to catch attention and convince an audience to buy a product or try out a service. A simile is actually a subcategory of a metaphor, which means all similes are metaphors, but not all metaphors are similes. Moreover, the visual similarity in visual similes can be successfully utilized to stimulate curiosity, illustrate product features and benefits, create and develop a personality for a product, associate the product with certain symbols and lifestyles, and establish a brand's identity in the minds of the target audience. Visual simile is a way of describing something by comparing it to something else using 'like' or 'as', usually in an interesting or imaginative way. Visual Similes persuade, engage and connect with an audience and strengthen an advertising message via figurative communication as you get the chance to talk to your audience without using words through a fresh concept that can be the start to that strong first impression which converts a potential audience to an actual customer, increase engagement and nurture purchasing intentions. Where visual similes act like a hook to catch the viewers' attention through various tactics. including association, juxtaposition and hyperbole. Therefore, visual simile could be utilized as a powerful visual language tool in advertising effectiveness

### Research Objective:

This paper studies how visual similes are utilized to formulate an advertising concept or craft a key visual that seizes the audience attention effectively along with a strong visual impact.

### Research Hypothesis:

- 1- Visual figurative language through similes could serve as an excellent communication tool that helps convey complex ideas or advertising concepts quickly and effectively.
- 2- Incorporating visual similes into advertising campaigns can greatly enhance their creativity and impact by utilizing familiar and relatable objects ensuring simplicity and clarity and making the connection evident.
- 3- Visual Similes may allow designers to present ideas in a way that target audience can immediately relate to and establish effective connections with their audience.
- 4- Using visual similes may lead to effective recognition and association of brands or products easily leading to a faster communication process.
- 5- Similes demand less mental effort from the audience to interpret the message which guarantees instant attention.
- 6- Using visual similes may help you give your audience a new fresh way to look at advertised products and more likely become more memorable.

### Research Problem:

The research problem can be formulated in the following questions:

- 1- What is a Visual Simile?
- 2- How could a visual simile be a creative idea source for crafting a clever yet effective advertising idea or key visual?
- 3- What are the visual tactics used to craft visual similes successfully in an advertising idea/key visual?

### Research Methodology:

This paper follows the Descriptive method as it discusses the concept of visual figurative language especially visual similes and how they are utilized to formulate an advertising concept or craft a key visual that seizes the audience attention effectively. Followed by looking closely & analytically at international creative visual simile inspired campaigns.

### Theoretical Framework:

#### Figurative language

It is the usage of descriptive words, phrases and sentences to convey a message that means something without directly saying it. Its imaginative wording is used to build imagery to expand the audience's understanding and help

provide power to words by using diverse emotional, visual and sensory connections.

#### Figurative language is used to:

Compare two unlike ideas to increase understanding of one, describe ideas that are difficult to understand, show a deeper emotion or connection, Impact the audience, make descriptions easier to imagine. (Dmitrij Dobrovolskij, 2021)  
Whereas Simile is a main element of figurative language, visual simile can also be a main idea source in advertising creativity.

#### Simile Defined:

The words "simile" and "similar" come from the same root, and that's exactly what a simile is: It is a comparison of similar things. A simile compares two or more things using "like," "as,". (Glatch, 2023)

#### In Language:

A simile is a figure of speech and a language technique used to directly describe something by comparing it to something else with a similar properties or characteristics, using the words "like" or "as" to connect the two things. The purpose of similes is to provide readers with a vivid and engaging image of the character, object, or concept that's being described without needing to use multiple adjectives to convey the same message. (Landis, 2022)

A simile is used with the aim of sparking an interesting connection in the reader's mind. An example of a simile is, "The cat sat in the chair like a king overlooking his kingdom." The cat's sitting posture is compared to that of a king who relaxes in a special chair that is reserved for him and not any other person in the kingdom.

#### Similes in Advertising Slogans:

Similes have often been utilized in popular advertising campaigns and memorable brand slogans such as:

-Chevrolet Trucks – "Like a rock"

-Honda Cars – "The Honda's ride is as smooth as a gazelle in the Sahara. Its comfort is like a hug from Nana."

In advertising slogans; hyperbole, or exaggeration, is frequently used in similes. Example:

-You are as sweet as honey.

-You dance like an angel (Berman, 2010)

#### Simile, Metaphor, Analogy What's the Difference?

They are all literary terms in figurative language. Similes and metaphors are both methods of comparison and forms of figurative language. In fact, similes are a type of metaphor, because metaphor is a general term to describe a comparison that is often poetic.

A simile is saying something is like something else. A metaphor is often poetically saying something is

something else. An analogy is saying something is like something else to make some sort of an explanatory point. You can use metaphors and similes when creating an analogy.

There is a key difference between these literary terms. A simile compares two unrelated things via the words “like” or “as” or “than.” Often used to highlight a characteristic of one of the items. Similes rely on the comparison and the audience's ability to create connections and make inferences about the two objects being discussed and understand the one similarity they share. Similes are relatively more obvious when compared to metaphors because of their use of like or as—those two words act as flags to indicate to readers that the comparison is a simile.

Examples of similes:

My mother is as busy as a bee.

They fought like cats and dogs.

A metaphor, on the other hand, makes a direct comparison for rhetorical effect. whereas a metaphor; one object is called something else.

Examples of Metaphors:

He has the heart of a lion.

He is a shining star

(George Lakoff, 2003)

#### **Visual Figurative Language:**

Figurative language is regularly used in advertising imagery through utilizing simile, metaphor, hyperbole, analogy to associate a thing or a person that represents a concept or an idea to capture the viewers' attention; as per visuals are a more effective means of communication than written words. Those visuals are crafted carefully as visual figurative language allows us to convey particular ideas through images without directly stating them. (Paula Pérez Sobrino, 2021)

#### **Visual grammar:**

Just like literature needs a correct grammar, advertising design has its own grammar too. Visual Grammar refers to a set of rules and practices, which are used to communicate messages through visual design. (Saçak, 2019)

#### **Visual Simile:**

- Is a technique in advertising design where comparison is made between two objects or concepts using alike visual elements. It encompasses creating a visual imagery that draws a matching between the product or service being advertised and something relatable or desirable. Also called Pictorial simile, it is comparing two things or ideas, usually by saying “like” or “as.” (Forceville, 2002)
- It is a technique that uses graphic elements to suggest a specific connection between objects depending on similarity. It represents an object

by making it look like it's something else. (Charles Forceville, Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, 2009)

#### **The Benefits of implementing Visual Similes in Advertising Creativity**

##### **- Visual Similes sparks creativity and innovation**

By encouraging advertisers to think outside the box and find unique ways to communicate their brand message /s

##### **- Visual Similes get your point across quickly**

Using visual Similes can save you the trouble of spending time describing something. It will result in less effort on your part while still attracting more attention from your viewers.

##### **- Visual Similes generate curiosity**

Similes inspire audiences to pay closer attention to what you're showing them. Once you've made your audience curious about your ad, they'll become more curious about your brand.

##### **- Visual Similes are memorable**

It helps simplify complex messages and makes them more relatable. Your target audience will remember ads that use visual similes because they are unique and original. Consequently, they will remember your brand.

##### **- Visual Similes help your brand stand out**

It can be challenging to distinguish yourself in the busy market. Luckily, visual similes can help you stand out from your competition.

##### **- Visual Similes improves audience engagements and emotional response**

By tapping into familiar objects or concepts, it enhances brand recall by creating a memorable connection between the product/service and the target audience.

##### **- Visual Similes add a sense of Simplicity and creativity to your ads**

By using visual metaphors, you're not only getting your audience's attention but also their admiration for how ingenious and unique you are. (Blakeman, 2007)

#### **Simile Types:**

Simile types are defined and based upon the understanding of the audience.

##### **- Standard Simile**

Where the comparison is done in a direct, clear and obvious way.

##### **- Juxtaposed Simile**

Juxtaposed means taking two objects, themes, or materials and combining them or placing them together to encourage viewers to conclude an implied conceptual link and to create a striking contrast. Juxtaposed similes use simile as a source of inspiration and this type needs a bit of thinking from the audience to get the similarity.(Etchegoyen, 2023)

In advertising design, the key visual or the main image; is considered as a fundamental element in visual figurative language. To implement visual simile successfully to craft a striking key visual or formulate a concept creatively certain tactics has to be followed.

#### Tactics for Creating Effective Visual Simile:

- 1- Think about the main message that you want to transmit through the key visual then brainstorm similar familiar elements that are strongly associated with the brand to use to illustrate the message visually.
- 2- Use familiar and relatable objects or concepts to create associations that evoke emotions.
- 3- Aim for simplicity and clarity in the visual representation to ensure easy understanding.
- 4- Make the connection between the two objects or concepts evident and instantly recognizable.
- 5- Balance creativity with relevance to the product or message being advertised.
- 6- It is vital to reach a balance between creativity and relevance to ensure that the visual simile resonates with the target audience. (Malamed, 2009)

#### Analytical Study

The following examples are successful international campaigns that incorporated visual similes in various ways to make objects look like the service or product advertised, or to be a source of inspiration in creating the key visual or the idea of the advert itself to capture their consumers' attention in a simple yet creative way.

#### Barilla Pasta: New Year Seasonal Advert

In the Barilla Pasta Advert the product itself was used to create the key image through utilizing standard simile and direct shape similarity. Spaghetti looking like a X-Mas fireworks display was a perfect way for pasta maker to ring in the new year.



Fig (1) Barilla Pasta: New Year Seasonal Advert

#### True Colors -Faber Castell:

Fiber-Castell visually formulated the concept that the colors of its pencils are as natural as the color of a purple eggplant using Juxtaposed visual Simile, where the objects were transformed into the nib of a color-matched pencil to assure artists who use color pencil and concerns about the quality of colors in their art piece.



Fig (2) True Colors -Faber Castell

#### Manipal hospital Walnut Brain:

This campaign was executed to give a boost and to highlight the Manipal's hospital Brain Stroke Unit. Utilizing similarity in shape as a walnut looks like a brain from top perspective. Standard visual simile was implemented, where a half cracked open walnut was used as the key visual to highlight the fact that no brain is a too tough nut to crack for neurologists at Manipal Hospital's Brain Stroke Unit.

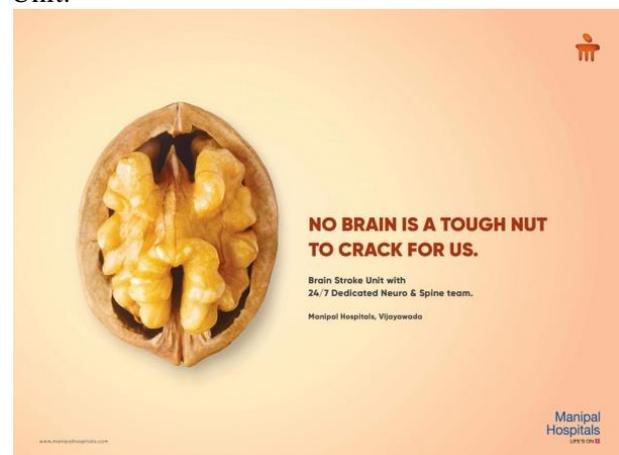


Fig (3) Manipal hospital Walnut Brain

#### ADFCA-Food Safety Campaign:

A large-scale campaign to raise public awareness and to communicate the severe dangers of unsafe food practices such as buying food from unlicensed vendors and cooking at home without care. The juxtaposed visual simile between the shape of a dangerous snake's head and poisonous tongue is used to compare the danger of fatal injury or may be death if we use a contaminated food with microbes.



Fig (4) ADFCA - Food Safety Campaign

### Colgate Toothpaste:

The key visual was crafted implementing standard visual simile through the similarity of shape between a toothbrush and a jaw. Where two toothbrushes were placed together demonstrating a set of healthy and bright teeth.



Fig (5) Colgate Toothpaste

### McDonalds Happy Holidays:

In order to show that McDonald's was in the Christmas spirit, actual McDonald's products were utilized to create key visuals that are identical with the festive season. The similarity between the shape of the famous McDonalds cone ice cream and Santa's white beard were juxtaposed to create a visual simile to represent the X-MAS spirit directly and creatively.



Fig (6) McDonalds Happy Holidays

### Elter Pharmaceutical: Tomato :

Elter pharmaceutical company launched a campaign that communicated a health message from its gastric and antibacterial therapy divisions against foodborne illness such as amoebiasis, dysentery and cholera. Where daily vegetables were transformed through visual similes into deadly weapons. Tomato was a smoking bomb to warn audience from the harm of unwashed vegetables, it even implied a war in our daily health through a cleverly juxtaposed visual simile. With a tag saying "Always wash vegetables in order to win the battle".



Fig (7) Elter Pharmaceutical: Tomato

### Kidney Health Awareness Ad:

In the year 2017, the world kidney day's theme was: How obesity causes kidney failure? Also, as it is worldwide known that one of the most effective ways to fight obesity is running. A juxtaposed visual simile was utilized to formulate the concept visually by placing two running shoes and making them look like the two kidneys look in an excretory system diagram; along with a tag line that says: "Run for them".



Fig (8) World Kidney Day

### McDonald's Mobile Delivery:

McDonald's advertising campaign promoting the mobile ordering and convincing viewers to stay

home and enjoy their favorite meal with their families. Standard Visual simile was implemented through using yellow cellphones placed next to one another to form a shape similar to the shape of the famous golden Mc Donalds French fries. Telling brand loyalists that they can order food any time anywhere from their mobiles with the Mc app.

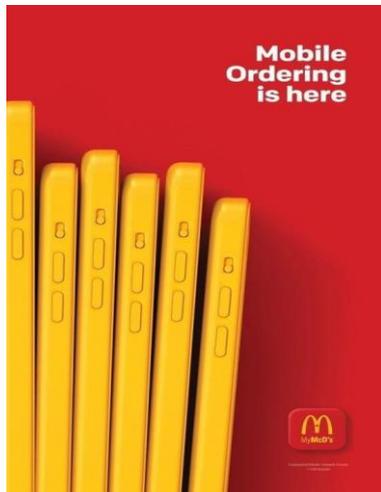


Fig (9) McDonald's Mobile Delivery

#### Nivea night:

Promoting their night cream, Nivea presents a half-opened container, the way the cover of the container is positioned illustrates the cream inside it as a crescent moon shape, strengthening the idea that this is a night cream. Straightforward, standard visual simile was incorporated based on the shape similarity between the shape of the round container with the half-opened lid and the white color of the cream. The navy blue background also works very well in creating the illusion of a night sky with a pleasing deep blue color. The area around the container is slightly lighter than the rest of the image, impressing the viewer that the lotion is glowing like the moon and will likewise give the skin an equally glow complexion.



Fig (10) Nivea Night Cream

#### No One Grows Ketchup Like Heinz:

The advert shows the picture of a ketchup's bottle bottom and a stem of a tomato. A visual simile that was simply juxtaposed to form a fresh tomato. On the bottom of the ad is a tagline that says: "No one grows ketchup like Heinz." to communicate the concept that Heinz delivers fresh ketchup. A direct and straightforward yet creative shape resemblance between the visual simile and the natural tomato shape. Green stem used at the top of the bottle emphasizes more freshness.

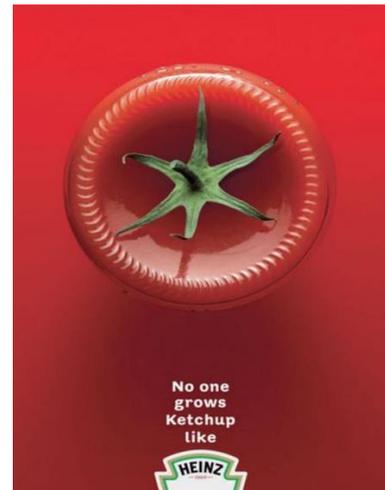


Fig (11) No One Grows Ketchup Like Heinz

#### Sony Earphone Make...Believe

A South Korean advertising agency imagined what Michael Jackson, Mozart and more music legends would look like as earbuds for a new campaign for Sony. It incorporated visual simile to create a series of musical icons looking like its advertised Sony earbuds. Juxtaposed Visual simile was done by 'dressing' the ear buds in various well-known characteristics related to each musician – recreating legends in the field such as Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, and Mozart to communicate a message that Sony earphones sound is realistic as you're listening to those music legends live.

In this example the Tagline says:

Hello, Michael

Like the King of pop who walked on the surface of the moon, feel the stage with full of vitality using XBA Sound."

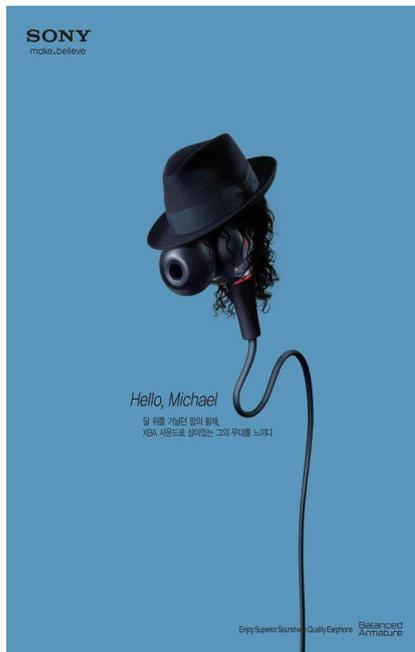


Fig (12) Sony Earphone Make... Believe

### Results:

- 1- Visual figurative language through similes is as an excellent communication tool that helps convey complex ideas or advertising concepts quickly and effectively.
- 2- Incorporating visual similes into advertising campaigns greatly enhance their creativity and impact by utilizing familiar and relatable objects ensuring simplicity and clarity and making the connection evident.
- 3- Visual Similes allow designers to present ideas in a way that target audience can immediately relate to and establish effective connections with their audience.
- 4- Incorporating visual similes in advertising creativity leads to effective recognition and association of brands or products easily leading to a faster communication process.
- 5- Similes demand less mental effort from the audience to interpret the message which guarantees instant attention.
- 6- Using visual similes helps designers give their audience a new fresh way to look at advertised products and more likely become more memorable.

### It should be concluded that:

Visual similes are a great balance between simplicity, similarity and comprehension. They are a very rich source of inspiration to advertising key visuals and fresh ideas. As long as designers use their strength of observation and clever visual association skills.

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