Evripides ZANTIDES*

Visual Metaphors in Communication:
Intertextual Semiosis and Déjà Vu in Print Advertising

Abstract

Metaphor, as a concept in which a signified is applied to a signifier that is not literally applicable, does not only refer to speech or verbal language, but also to a wide use of practical applications in visual communication, particularly in advertising design and communication. The metaphorical rhetoric in advertisements is a common practice often used to attract the viewers' attention, as well as enhance the persuasiveness of messages. From a cognitive perspective, semiosis in the process of visual metaphors in communication, is a complex subject with often a variety of subjective interpretations on behalf of the viewers. Intertextuality, as another form of metaphoric communication that depends on pre-existing texts (verbal or non-verbal), produces meanings that often deal with parody, sarcasm or irony. Additionally, they are also frequently characterised as anarchistic and provocative, because of the anti-advertising or anti-consumerism/social statements they make.

The current study aims to present a literature review on how visual metaphors are defined in print-advertising, and build on this to examine the notion of intertextuality as a form of déjà vu-metaphor that is popular in advertising and graphic communication.

Semiotic analysis as a methodology is used on a purposive sample of print advertisements—including examples of logotypes as well—in order to categorize thematically the major typological references, in respect of intertextual advertising, as well as extract ideological conclusions.

The results show that intertextuality in advertising draws its sources of meaning mainly from the Film industry, Art, Monuments and places, Literary texts and Graphic and Advertising itself, whilst, as far as logos is concerned, the source of meaning is purely linguistic. The study also shows that Intertextual visual metaphor semiosis has a variety of popular verbal or non-verbal references and depends on the socio-political context of the sample under investigation.

Keywords: visual metaphors; intertextuality; semiotics; advertising; logos.

Introduction

Metaphor is conversation. Its meaning comes from an interaction between the target (an abstract or unfamiliar concept), the source (something concrete and already known) and between the qualities and properties that each of these entails. Both target and source, however, are part of a whole network of related meanings, meanings that can usually be conveyed

* Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus; evripides.zantides@cut.ac.cy.

by words (Forceville, 2005). But the network consists of more than mere words or concepts and their denotations; it also covers these words' connotations and attitudes toward them. The network of which target and source of a metaphor are part, then, cannot be fully described exclusively in terms of denotations; it also requires taking into account connotations and pragmatic considerations (Forceville, 2005). The network is thus a category, and as Lakoff (1987) shows, categories are anything but unstable and subjective. A network embodies a wealth of related concepts, attitudes, cultural values, beliefs and potential actions.

The concepts of conversation and imagination form the core of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). This theory reconstructs the foundation in which metaphor was seen as merely literary or rhetorical in contrast with the real literal and scientific world. In Cognitive Theory, metaphor is not only a way of seeing or saying; it is a way of thinking and knowing. It molds our understanding, our reasoning, and our evaluation in persuasive and invisible ways. If metaphor is not merely a literary device but instead creates meaning, it is a particularly powerful and inescapable method of using language to persuade.

In order to construct and interpret a phenomenon as a metaphor, recipients must conclude that two phenomena which belong to different categories, are presented as one. They also need to assess which of the two phenomena is the target and which is the source. They also have to decide which facts and connotations adhering to the source domain can be mapped onto the target domain and finally make appropriate adjustments to optimize the match between target and source. The last is important for the interpretation of the metaphor and the determination of which characteristics of the source domain are "transferred" to the target (Forceville, 2003).

A concept or object can be represented via a word, but in many cases also via a picture. Visual metaphors are similar to verbal metaphors yet visual metaphors can also be characterized as visual argumentation, in that it employs the syntactic structure of visual persuasion (Messaris, 1997). In other words, instead of verbally stating two objects or concepts that are linked analogically, visual metaphors juxtapose two images often without accompanying verbal explanations. Visual metaphors, thus, tend to be more implicit and complex than verbal metaphors and allow for several possible interpretations (Jeong, 2008). In the case of metaphors involving one or two domains that are pictorially represented, such domains are inevitably rendered in highly concrete ways, involving specific forms, textures, and colors, all of which may play a role in the mapping. In addition, the manner of representation and the material used to render it (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Forceville, 1999), may influence the construal of the metaphor as well as its interpretation.

Visual Metaphors in Print Ads

For a long time, metaphor studies focused almost exclusively on language, but over the past fifteen years, the concept of visual metaphor has been fairly well developed, particularly in the realm of print advertising. The emphasis on pictures over words has steadily increased throughout the last century (Philips & McQuarrie, 2004).

Advertisers' primary task is to make positive claims for brands, products, and services, in order to induce prospective consumers to buy them. These claims must always be pitched in a limited space or time slot. Moreover, the message should attract attention, and ideally stick in people's memories, for instance by being humorous, or beautiful, or intriguing. This latter

requirement is particularly important given that competition for audience attention is fierce. One way to meet this requirement is to deploy a good metaphor (Forceville, 2008).

Adequate uptake of a metaphor occurring in advertising requires first of all that the product or brand is recognized. Typically, the identification of the product is ensured by simply depicting it. If the product has an immediately recognizable unique design or logo (for instance the Nike "swoosh" or Heineken beer's red star), depiction alone may suffice for recognition. This recognition may be restricted to a certain country, region, subculture, or community, and is thus by no means necessarily universal. To aid identification, the product type and name is often conveyed verbally, via the name of the product as well as visually (Forceville, 2008). Forceville (1994; 1996; 2000; 2005) analyzed pictorial metaphor in advertisements and distinguished different types of visual metaphor.

Many specimens, however, may share features of two or more types. According to the model, pictorial metaphor in a static representation can take different forms, giving rise to at least the following subcategories: 1) hybrid metaphor, 2) contextual metaphor, 3) pictorial simile and 4) integrated metaphor (Forceville, 2002).

The *hybrid type* of pictorial metaphor is experienced as a unified object or gestalt which consists of two different parts that are usually considered as belonging to different domains, and not as parts of a single whole. The interpretation of this hybrid depends on understanding one of the two parts in terms of the other (ibid). In the example of the print advertisement for the 130 years old Ketchup known as "Heinz-Balloon" by BMB we can observe that there is, what Philips & McQuarrie (2004) define as *fusion* between a balloon and a tomato. For Forceville (2002), 'In a hybrid metaphor, then, one term (the target) is simultaneously another thing (the source)'. A hybrid visual sign is constructed and a new signifier and signified comes into existence to communicate the celebrations of 130 years old of Ketchup.

The *contextual type* of pictorial metaphor is experienced as a unified object or gestalt and it is understood as being something else due to the visual context in which it is depicted (ibid). In the anti-smoking advertisement, titled "Smoking Kills" by RemiGarciaPhoto on DeviantArt, cigarettes are the metaphor's target. It is a unified "gestalt," easily detachable from its surroundings. The source domain, bullets, are not depicted but forcefully suggested by the pictorial context which is an open gun on a white surface. For Forceville (2002), 'The contextual metaphor represents one term, usually the target, in its entirety.' In the same way, we can argue that this type of metaphor is what Philips & McQuarrie (2004) define as *replacement*, in this specific example of bullets with cigarettes.

The *pictorial simile* is experienced as a unified object. It is juxtaposed with a unified object belonging to a different category in such a manner that the first is understood in terms of the second (Forceville, 2002). In the advertisement example for the Buenos Aires Zoo by Del Campo Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency, Buenos Aires Zoo is the target; the stuffed animal juxtaposed to it is the source. The feature mapped from source to target is something like "motivation to experience the real thing with less money." According to Forceville (2002), 'The simile, by contrast, depicts the source itself.' Likewise, we can argue that Philips & McQuarrie (2004) refer to *juxtaposition* to describe two side-by-side images that form metaphoric visual structures in the same way. Similarly, in another advertisement example with tagline "Want help? Phone the smoke line on 0800 848484" we can observe that when cigarettes are the target; the bullet juxtaposed to it is the source. The feature mapped from source to target is that "at the end of the day, cigarettes do the same job as bullets".

Finally, the *integrated metaphor* is experienced as a unified object or gestalt and it is represented in its entirety in such a manner that it resembles another object or gestalt even without contextual cues (Forceville, 2002). In the print advertisement "No sin. More tomatoes, less sugar." by Mark BBDO, Prague, Czech Republic, we notice that the tomato bitten in the same way as the apple mac logotype alludes us to the classic biblical apple temptation of Adam and Eve, whereby the fruit as a tomato/apple/sin functions simultaneously as a source targeting the 'Heinz-Fit Ketchup' with the aid of the bold emphasized in capital letters linguistic message 'No Sin'. The specific rhetoric seems to align with what Forceville (2002) describes, as 'The integrated metaphor, by contrast, has a target that is represented in a physically possible way, such that it resembles another thing (the source)'. In this example for instance, the tomato/source resembles physically the apple/source of Mackintosh without any fusional interference.

The Notion of Intertextuality

Intertextuality as a notion introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1966 describes that meaning in a text can be understood in relation to other pre-existing texts that are culturally profound. Interestingly, it does not only exist in literature, for example in the work of *Ulysses* of James Joyce that endures an intertextual relationship to Homer's *Odyssey,* but also in everyday popular culture, music, film, graphic design or advertising. For example, we might come across popular phrases or media titles like '50 shades of taste' based on the pre-text of the known novel and film '50 shades of grey' or graphic signs that define new linguistic messages in respect of the brand they are targeting. In this respect, we often see the world known Coca-Cola logo intertextualised, with exactly the same form of writing and typography, into other various political and ideological messages on an attempt to question and provoke the motivations and profile of the company. Logotypes tend to be intertextualised using linguistic meanings as sources, with exactly the same number of letters, typefaces, colours and shapes of targets. 'This ability to evoke and allude to pre-existing familiar images, ideas, or sounds through previous cultural experiences, is an effective way of arousing and getting the viewer's or listener's attention. Familiar sounds or visual arrangements can draw them into paying attention to the desired but still intertextual message (Zantides, 2002, p. 418).

It is obvious that for an intertextual linguistic metaphor, then, the target meaning is linguistically modified by the signified of the source. Additionally, in terms of semiosis for any type of Intertextuality to be successful, the viewer needs to be aware of the pre-text. As mentioned previously, metaphor is also an imagination which employs our capacity to see one thing as another. This type of imagination which does not project physical experience onto abstract domains, but seems to be rather culturally grounded is called *intertextual metaphor* (Zinken, Hellsten & Nerlich, 2003). Intertextual metaphors are not the product of a singularly creative mind; rather, they are the product of a specific cultural situatedness of the metaphor producer. They are motivated by the speaker's adaptation to a certain cultural structure or substructure, which provides specific imaginative resources (Zinken, 2003).

According to Allen (2000), intertextuality is not restricted to discussion in literary arts. It is found in discussions of cinema, painting, music, architecture, photography and in virtually all cultural and artistic productions. Intertextuality exists in every text, including advertising texts, and it can explain the relation between different texts and an advertisement text

itself, and help to interpret the meaning of an advertisement, in that the original text is referred to could establish a message which the second text can use and elaborate on. Therefore, the second text does not have to work so hard (Liu & Le, 2013). Intertextuality is a kind of relationship by which texts are interwoven with each other, that is, every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts. By intertextuality, texts are connected and repeated. The intertextual relationship in advertising can arouse people's attention, memory, interest and desire, and then stimulate their purchasing action, as it is natural for people to accept things they are familiar with.

Intertextuality Using Verbal Messages in Advertising

According to Liu & Le, 'The purpose of an advertisement is to persuade the audience into buying the product by means of reforming those unconcerned people, thus advertisements must have selling power which can arouse people's interest in or desire for the products. To achieve this, advertisements should have attention value that impresses people and make them memorize the product. Advertisers often use intertextuality, which encourages readers to ponder and make association with their previous knowledge, and arouse their feeling of familiarity, facilitating memorization.' (Liu & Le, 2013, p. 14). Additionally, they also claim that there are three explicit forms of intertextuality in advertisements as follows:

The first one is *quotation*. Interestingly for this category, "The advantage of quotation relies on its popularity and public acceptance. Quotation is a very effective way to realize intertextuality in advertising and help achieve the advertising goal in a concise and appealing way. Proverbs, historical events, literary works, films or songs are the sources to be quoted." (Liu & Le, 2013, p. 15), therefore this approach would benefit from the familiarity and acquaintance that users have when they come across with it.

In the anti-smoking advertising example of Hospital Do Cancer, by J. Walter Thompson Sao Paulo, Brazil, we can easily see how the already known phrase 'Until death do us part' is used to communicate an anti-smoking message, when is placed with white upper-case letters on a black and white image of a smoker in ecstatic mode. The same form of quotation can also be found in the 'Until death do us part.' campaign for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by the Portuguese APAV-The Portuguese Association for Victim Support. The linguistic message is placed with typographic irony next to a smiling beaten-up bride to bring up issues of violence. In both cases, a vernacular phrase used for bonding and eternal love, is intertextualised to communicate the opposite, deconstructing in this way the mythical meaning that carries in its original context.

The second is *parody*. "Parody is a process of generating new expressions by changing or borrowing some parts of the original sources, such as adding or taking out some words, or combining two or several of them together. It is one of the most commonly used techniques in advertisements writing." (Liu & Le, 2013, p. 16).

In an anti-drinking advertisement, the familiar Johnnie Walker walking man is seated on a wheelchair implying that if you walk and drive with Johnnie more than you should, you would probably stop walking. In this case the changing of the existing text 'Keep Walking' to 'Johnnie Walked' does all the sarcastic parody around the issue of drinking alcohol and driving.

The third is *allusion*. "The writer uses allusion to explain, illustrate or reinforce his point, he just selects the key words or phrases without indicating their sources. It is left to the read-

er or hearer to make the connection. Like quotation and parody, allusion gives readers the pleasure that comes from seeing similarities or hearing echoes of ideas. Employed in advertisements, allusion also functions as intertextual links between advertisements and source texts. Most source texts of allusion come from literary works, the Bible, historical events, famous figures, fairy tales, mythologies and so on." (Liu & Le, 2013, p.17).

In the Emirates Airlines ads promoting trips to China we can straightforwardly argue that the main headline 'Beijing. Once forbidden. Now daily.' alludes to the Chinese Forbidden City-the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming dynasty.

Scholars have noticed the intertextual relation in advertisements. Cook (1992) focused on shared knowledge between advertisers and readers, and he pointed out that by shared knowledge, readers can grasp the convert meaning of advertisements. Tanaka (1994) illustrated how communication forms between advertisers and readers by investigating the nature of the communication, and aspects of communication in advertising language. In exploring how readers are able to decode advertisers' intentions, she adopted Relevance Theory as a theoretical framework to discuss the intertextual relation of advertising, such as ostensive-inferential communication, relevance and cognition and covert communication in advertising.

Therefore, many linguists and scholars show a great interest in intertextuality in advertising and have also done research on the forms and functions of intertextuality in advertising language (Xin, 2000; Cook, 2001; Chen, 2006; Han, 2005).

However, the purpose of the present study is to examine intertextuality as a form of déjà vu-metaphor in respect of the non-verbal messages in advertising and graphic communication. Semiotic analysis as a methodology is used on a purposive sample of print advertisements –including examples of logotypes as well – in order to thematically categorize the major connotative references in respect of intertextual advertising, as well as extract ideological conclusions.

Intertextuality Using Non-Verbal Messages in Advertising

Much has been said and examined in respect of the intertextual relationships that exist among verbal messages and the ways that texts make references to other texts, however, it is common knowledge that non-verbal messages can be viewed as 'texts' as well and image based advertisements can be intertextualised in similar ways too.

Can we speak of intertextuality when it comes to images? Gerlach (2014) claims that art history on an attempt to translate the literary concept of intertextuality to images, is systematically and currently, importing theory under the label of intericonicity (or interpictoriality/interpicturality) research. We also come across with the term Art Appropriation when in art the use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation is applied to them.

In respect of iconic/non-verbal intertextual advertising however, it seems more appropriate to suggest a categorization that is based on the sources of the non-verbal messages, in other words its originator context. Reading images as texts is a complex subject in respect of quotations, parodies and allusions as these ideas in visual forms might occur simultaneously and lead to confusing results. For these reasons, a new typology consisting of five thematic sources has been constructed to accommodate this semiotic attempt:

a. Cinematographic: Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from Film Sources

The film industry has always been a culturally profound medium with specific film scenes turning into popular iconic images, either because of their use in the promotional material of the movie or by the popularity of the scene in the actual movie.

Many advertising examples occur under this category, like in the case of stuffed toys for the company 'Toys R Us', posing in the same way as Leonardo Dicaprio and Kate Winslet did at the iconic Titanic "I'm flying" scene in 1997. Similarly, Brazil's 'Fit Light Yogurt' Ad Campaign depicts a kind of overweight woman recreating classic scenes from iconic films, such as the falling roses scene in "American Beauty" (1999), the famous moment when Sharon Stone crosses her legs in the interrogation scene of "Basic Instinct" (1992) and the famous "flying skirt" image of Marilyn Monroe in "The Seven Year Itch" (1955). The 'Eternity' perfume advert of Calvin Cline with Christy Turlington (2014) is another example with intertextual reference of the classic scene with Burt Lancaster and Donna Reed in the movie "From here to Eternity" (1953) functioning in double semiotic meaning with intertextual references to the brand name of the perfume as well. From the same perspective we can see the classic pose and look of Rita Hayworth in "Gilda" (1946) in the advertisement for the "Dita Von Teese" perfume.

b. Artistic: Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from Fine-Art Sources

Like in the case of films, well known paintings, photographs and other over exposed fine art images in popular culture, have always provided convenient illustrations for intertextual notifications and consumer use.

Examples under this category would be the 'Lego' advertisement depicting Leonardo Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" (1503-1505) as an image made out of Lego bricks, the 'Coffee with Milk Renaissance' advert by Sviezia Cava portraying "The Creation of Adam" by Michelangelo (1512), "The Great Wave off Kanagawa", (1829-1832) of Katsushika Hokusai used as an image basis for 'Butter Good sea salt butter' or "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" (1946) of Salvador Dali for an investment company.

c. Spatial: Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from Monumental Area Sources

The third category refers to well-known places and monuments, either promoted from the countries themselves as part of their tourism campaigns and their destination branding practices or by tourist themselves, through social networks. National landscapes and famous locations of touristic interest are already structured in the memory of viewers and these places are often intertextualised to promote goods and services.

Some examples that fall under this category would be the 'Heineken Beer' advertisement for a fresher world that employs 'Christ the Redeemer' in Brazil by having a wine opener in the same place and structural-position of the Christ, facing the city from the classical view. The classic locations of Stonehenge in Ireland, Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Rialto Bridge in Venice are used as the basis for 'AT & T telephone coverage' advertisements. Interestingly the same idea and approach is also implemented in the example whereby the well-known Hollywood landscape is used as a flat background, and not a hill, to advertise the 'Subaru Forester' car.

d. Literary: Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from Literary Sources

This fourth category refers to literature, books, mythology or fairy tales that mainly incorporate illustrations, thus already providing a kind of existing visual material in the context of their specific narrative. However, under the aforementioned paradigms, classic literary scenes in the form of texts, without being accompanied by illustrations, can still provide the basis of intertextual images to occur.

An example for this category would be 'The Volvo XC90. With Seven seats. Sorry.' Advertisement (Euro RSCG South Africa agency), where Snow white, as we already know her through representations from the classic fairytale illustrations and Disney, looks angry hitchhiking in a deserted country-style street. The same character is also used to advertise 'More Fruit than Before-Kellogg's All Bran' where she is presented astonished in a room full of red apples, all referential to the fairytale texts. In a fascinating aesthetic way, another example in this category would be the mythological figure of love, 'Eros' used for a 'dating company' advertisement.

e. Advertising and Graphic Communication: Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from Advertising and Graphic Sources

This final fifth category is probably the most popular, mainly among typographic designers, graphic and visual communicators. It deals with well known, familiar advertising and graphic design material that is widespread and rooted in popular visual culture. The intertextual references employed with this approach are often used for protest, play, humor or sarcasm.

Typical examples under this category would be to substitute the text of logos with exactly the same number of letters and typefaces but with different linguistic meaning in order to provoke thought, for example the logo of 'Pepsi' into 'Sexsi' or the logo of 'Starbucks Coffee' into 'Star Wars Coffee' etc. Under the same framework of thinking, existing advertisements are also intertextualised, especially in the service of anti-advertising messages. Using this methodology, the group 'AdBusters' are widely known for their work in anti-smoking, anti-consumerism, anti-political or anti-drinking campaigns. A typical example would be the 'Absolute Vodka' advertisement turned into 'Absolute Impotence' with a distorted bottle as an image to warn about possible consequences of excessive drinking for men's sexuality.

Conclusion

Intertextual thinking in advertising, as a form of metaphoric semiosis in visual communication that depends on pre-existing texts, does not only refer to verbal messages but also to non-verbal-iconic elements to construct messages. The five categories suggested in this study can be used as a methodological tool to further explore the idea of Intertextuality as well as to provide a design perspective/platform for the creation of other advertisements. 'If there is no awareness of the pre-text, then intertextuality becomes enigmatic without necessarily losing its interest to be decoded' (Zantides, 2002, p. 418) therefore it seems that in either case, theoretical or practical, the subject is worth further investigation. However, one has to bear in mind the cultural norms and significations of the advertising context so that meaning is not misleading, confusing or provoking to any deontological and ethical values. From the exam-

ples discussed in the article, Intertextuality as 'an already seen' metaphor often produces meanings that deal with humor, parody, sarcasm or irony, to grasp the viewers' attention. Additionally, they are also frequently characterized as anarchistic and provocative, because of the anti-advertising or anti-consumerism/social statements they sometimes make.

Further research can be done by expanding and combining the five categories suggested in this paper (Intertextual Non-Verbal Messages from: a. Film Sources, b. Fine-Art Sources, c. Monumental Area Sources, d. Literary Sources and e. Advertising and Graphic Sources) in the framework of a systematic content and semiotic analysis, using a bigger sample of advertisements and extract additional ideological conclusions.

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