

The Psycho-Semantico Moxie of Metaphorical Drives in Advert Texting

Author:

Prof. Rafi' Mahmood Hussein

Abstract

This paper investigates metaphorical usages in advertising from a psycho-semantic perspective. It argues that metaphor is employed in advertising texts deliberately to conceptualize one concept in terms of another which has well-defined and structured experience-able effect. Semantically, one semantic domain is expanded to another in a process of simulation to the targeted concept. Usually, source domain is concrete so it can be extended semantically to paste some well-selected plausible associative meanings on the target domain. All is meant for manipulating attitudes: affective, cognitive, and behavioral on the benefit of the advertising campaign. Intentionally, metaphorical expressions are to map unpredictable yet meaningful imagistic textuality of adverts. In most cases relational and sentential innovations are supportive and additives in the process of texting meant for persuasive functions in specific and for interactive quest in general. However, conceptual metaphor is highly loaded with mentalistic drives of conceptualization and reformulation of perceptive iconic images. Thus, by manipulating and emulating attitudinal modes, advert texting can be modulated to submit a crux of mentalistic moot, conscious and unconscious, of the portrayed textuality of the adverts. Per se, adverts' texting is dependent on the observability, of the linguisticity of texts and on the persuasiveness motifs of the discursal matching.

Tag words: advertising, metaphor, cognitive approach, attitudes.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses itself to the analysis of metaphorical expressions employed in adverts and their effects on adverts' accessibility, acceptability, and effectiveness from a psycho- semantico perspective.

Advertising is a distinct genre which has its communicative, purposeful, preplanned structure. Advertisers are cautious about adverts' textuality, deliberately targeting some accessible psychological effects to highlight the highest level of persuasion. Metaphor is one of the common rhetorical devices used in adverts due to its effective, persuasive language. Constantly, rhetorical devices, in general, are exploited in advert texts to achieve plausible effects, i.e. to convey meanings in fresh innovated ways. (Hussein, 2009).

Advert's creativity is meant, implicitly or explicitly, to communicate notions in a special way by keeping vagueness and obscurity as factors of suspense (ibid). Advertising language employs a variety of tropes which can be defined as artful deviations from the ordinary norms and principles of signification. Advertisers use this strategy to get a more imaginative attractive and economic way of promoting (Bakanauskas, 2004). Accordingly, intentional metaphorical expressions are intended to map unpredictable yet meaningful imagistic textuality of adverts. In essence, relational and sentential innovations, expanded or extended, are supportive and additives in forming up adverts textuality.

This paper is meant to investigate the metaphorical usages in advertising, their persuasive functions, effective meaning, commutative power and uniqueness of textuality. Being a purposeful strategy used by advertisers, metaphor in adverts will be analyzed from a psycho perspective and semantic perspective,too.



The approach of the analysis is purely cognitive. Lackoff & Johnson's approach (1980 a) of conceptual metaphor is best modeled for the analysis which fits the aims of the research. It is all about cognition, conceptualization of thoughts. Cognitive psychology is concerned with internal mental processes when thinking, perception, and retrieval occur. Also, it is concerned with inferring conclusions made about mental processes through observed behavior. This part is what relates advert's texting to the act of persuasion through language by manipulating, modulating and emulating attitudinal modes (RE educate, 2016 a). The advertiser, at least, keeps a set of attitudes for granted. The analysis is trying to provide a schema- mental framework explaining the process of conceptualizing a thought by activation network of mentalistic images.

The advertiser activates a desired thought (promoted object, service, idea) in terms of another, which is more concrete and experienceable having an effect which relates to sensory register, sensation etc. Such type of special, purposeful way of conceptualizing thoughts for a promoted object is to achieve unique conceptualization of that concept, service, or product to keep it memorable, distinct, and plausible. Perceptually, attitudes have the greatest role in advert's texting as a genre of the trading process.

Attitudes are learned tendency to evaluate things, people, issues, events etc. in a highly selective manner; it is a state of mind, state of views, and thoughts. Hence, attitudes are changeable, temporally, to achieve cognitive emotional and behavioral change. Consequently, attitudes are much related and dependent on the psycho-dynamics of human mind (Mills, 2017). Mostly, our attitudes are the interplay of our Id, ego, and super ego. They are composed of conscious and unconscious drives, needs, and wishes. However, the flexibility of these attitudes depends, generally, on our defensive mechanisms we develop to keep a set of attitudes as part of our personalities (RE educate, 2016 b). Attitude works on social cognition: the mental processes involved in acquiring knowledge. People process their experiences in accordance with specific pre- existing views of reality. Attitudes involve reactions of likes, dislikes and preferences. Strong attitudes (affect ones' self- interest) are easily brought to mind, yet they are not the only contributor to our behavior. Whatever your attitude is, determines the experience you can have (Mills, 2017). Hence, advertisers try to change attitudes positively. The more specific and positive the targeted attitude in quest is the better it predicts behavior (persuade to buy). However, advertiser's acceptability of adverts' texts depends on the observability of the linguisticity of texts, suggestivity of content and persuasiveness of discourse.

2. Metaphor

Metaphor is considered as a typical example of deviations made intentionally to get a condensed, suggestive text for advertising. Lackoff and Johnson (1980a, p. 3) argue that " metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish- a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language". It constitutes both thought and action. They believe that our conceptual system, the way we think and act, are fundamentally metaphorical in its nature. "Human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined."(Lackoff and Johnson, 1980b, p.7). Also, they believe that "the essence of metaphor is understanding one kind of thing in terms of another". It is all about thought, thinking, and understanding one kind of things in terms of another. It is all about passing a concept from one semantic domain into another as semantics is the first step to conceptualize a concept. Advertisers always try to define and convey unfamiliar topics, complex phenomena or any less well-structured semantic domain by a stronger one. Psycho-cognitively speaking, it is to strengthen certain paths in one's mind to formulate such special logos for the promoted object by stimulating ones of high frequency, familiarity or of positive effects on attitudes. A system of related metaphors in the conceptual system can be stimulated to promote concepts used in adverts. This applies for conceptual level, i.e. when the advertisers conceptualize the idea. Then, in the formulation and reformulation



stages to follow, they tend to shape such conceptions into metaphorical linguistic forms to give memorable, interesting, unique, and economic textuality (Scovel, 1998).

Metaphor highlights certain aspects of the concept and implicitly hides others which keep the advertisees in suspense to configure the meant. However, metaphorical concepts are best understood in relation to their experiential bases. Without them we could get very little beyond our direct physical experience.

Ortony (1993, p. 307) describes metaphor as "a solar eclipse". It hides the object of study, revealing the most prominent and interesting features when viewed through "the right telescope". This aims at obscuring its literal and common place aspects, allowing a new, subtle and unique understanding to be configured. Targeting layers of meaning is in the benefit of the promoted concept as it provides more chances for the advertisers to match the promoted object with advertisee's attitudes and needs. Advertisers usually would try to keep a set of attitudes; affective, cognitive, or behavioral for granted by structuring advertising text in a memorable, attractive, and emotion- arousing representation of perceived experience. This implicates cognitive processes.

Furthermore, Al- Najjar (1984) argues that a metaphor constitutes a thought, i.e. it maps meaning which otherwise cannot be mapped by simple language. This mostly would lead to a different distance thought as it is the case of no absolute synonyms. Metaphor is not only a rhetorical way of mapping meaning but also "an effective tool for communicating particular meanings" (Al- Najjar, 1984, p. 225).

Psychologically, metaphor is exploited in adverts on the basis that "two stimuli may have a common effect upon a responding organism, which mediates the extension of the response" (Skinner, 2014, p. 97). This works successfully in making advertising texts persuasive. Accordingly, metaphor is an unpredictable yet meaningful extension of meaning which has already been expanded.

Semantically, extension and expansion of meanings of metaphor are analyzed in terms of the correspondences between source to target (vehicle to topic). What this adds to the advert will be taken in consideration for its persuasive power. Metaphor, par excellence, provides a compact way of representing a set of conceptual and perceptual features that are salient to it allowing the meaning to be transferred from the source domain to the target domain. Source- target relation, being indirect, is highly suggestive relation in that it provides the advertiser with a centralistic space to induce the meant in a plausible metaphorical rebus.

Associative meanings; conceptual, connotative, stylistic, effective, reflected, collective and thematic meaning are exploited to manipulate unpredictable, yet meaningful extension and expansion of meaning. It is, par example, a matter of semantic distribution, difference and similarity, maintained in metaphor and exploited in adverts texting. Metaphor maps indirect source- target relation to convey concepts that are suggested or represented by others (Leech, 1981). Perceptually, this is often a more subconscious than conscious "associative recall" (Boyed, 2016). However, associations are tied to the social norms, values, feelings, prestige, mental modes of excitement and relaxation, positive or negative (behavior/ condition) (O' Shaughnessy, 2004).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, advertisers would try an indirect prime- target relation linking the idea behind the metaphorical expression used within the advert (source) with the promoted object, idea or service (target). It depends on the remoteness of the associations between the two concepts compared, i.e. their position in the hierarchy of associations to the key terms. Advertisers usually activate common and frequent concepts leading implicitly to other targeted ones. This can provide an associative account for "the asymmetry puzzle in metaphor comprehension" (Ortony, 1993,



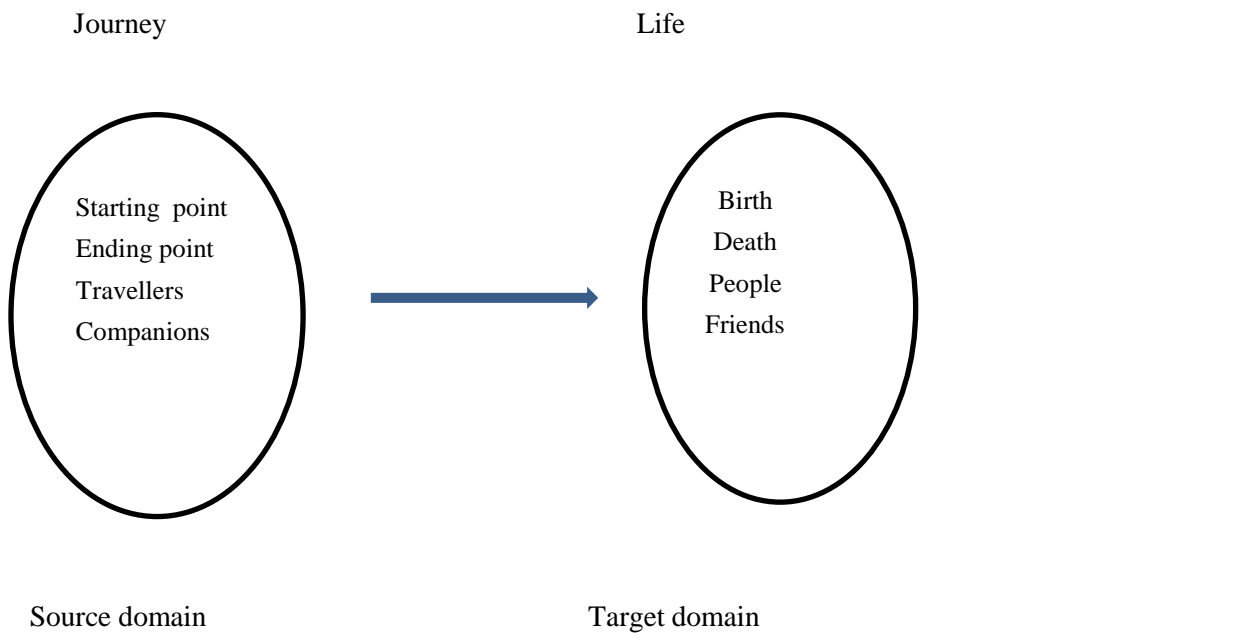
p. 330). Yet, metaphorical advertising texts are not functionally enigmatic; but the riddle-puzzle fresco of meaning is the maze element which contributes in enhancing the perceived similarity between concepts (of the source and target).

3. Discussion:

These examples of advertising texts incorporate metaphorical expressions at the creative reformulation stage of texting explaining the mental cognitive processes of formulating thoughts, as well as, producing a linguistic condensed, economic, suggestive text.

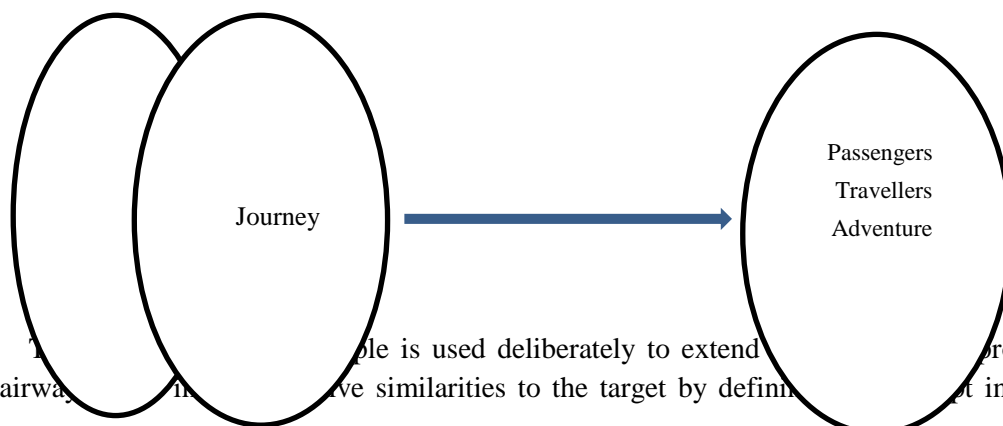
EX 1. Life is A Journey. Contact Us! (Emirate fly)

In this advert, the advertiser conceptualizes (Emirate fly) airways in terms of a metaphor for travelling, wondering, experiencing new treks of life. The metaphor (Life is a journey) is extended from source domain (journey) (experienceable) to the concept of (life) (abstract).



Life is a journey
(Source domain)

Travelling by Airplane
(Target domain)



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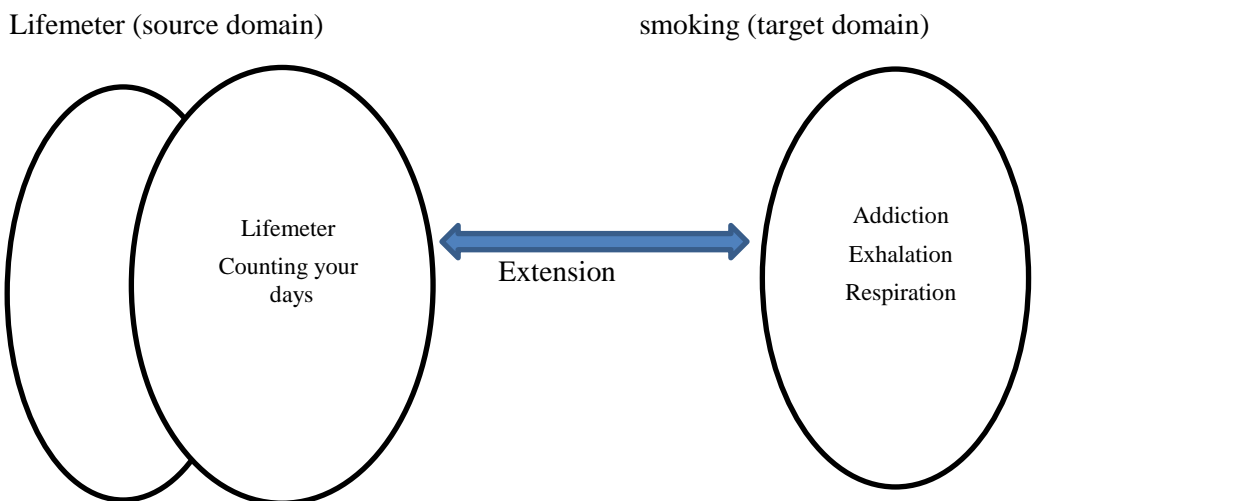
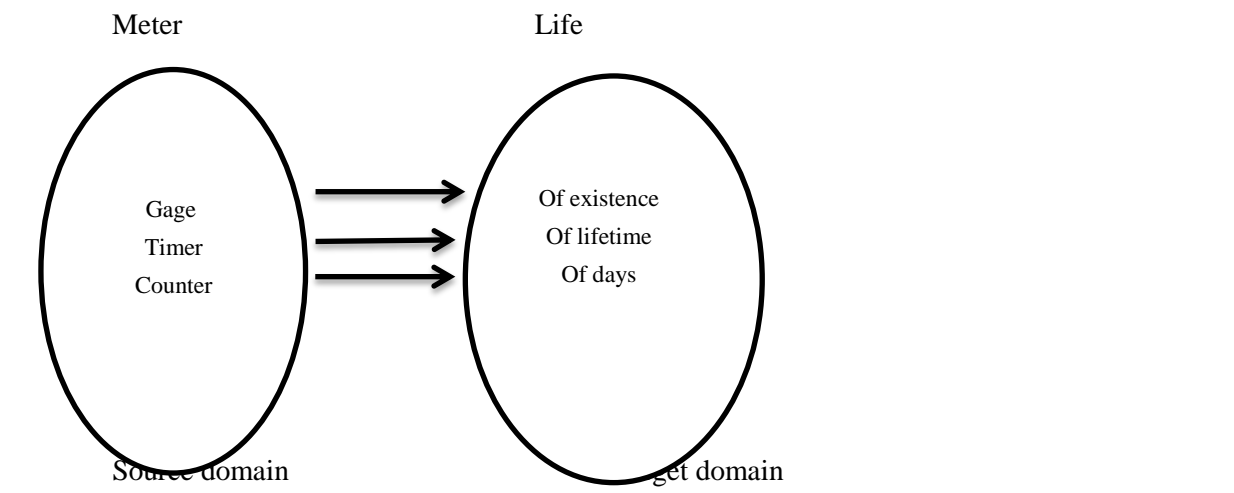


within the framework of metaphor. The correspondence between the source (journey) and the target (life) is the thought which is firstly conceptualized to extend its cognitive effect on the way we think about travelling by airplanes. The promotion implies that it would be interesting and full of adventures like a journey. The advertiser, here, formulates such a positive attitude towards travelling by airplanes through the stimulation of another thought (employing metaphor).

Tastily, the advertiser is trying to shape a cognitive attitude by giving his belief that "life is a trek". This would initiate such thought in the mind of the advertisee priming the ideas of travelling, journey, departure, fly, lifetime etc. Therefore, the advertisee would much easily make sense of the next words (contact us! Emirate fly). Also, the effective attitude is somehow tipped indirectly. The words (contact us) is to encourage such behavior.

It is a matter of successive simulation of thoughts; in a process of thinking by trying to keep at least two of the attitudes for granted and well presented. Direct ways of demanding or conveying a thought is always implausible. Hence, the use of metaphor here is purposeful, economic, memorable, interesting, and effective on attitudes' manipulation.

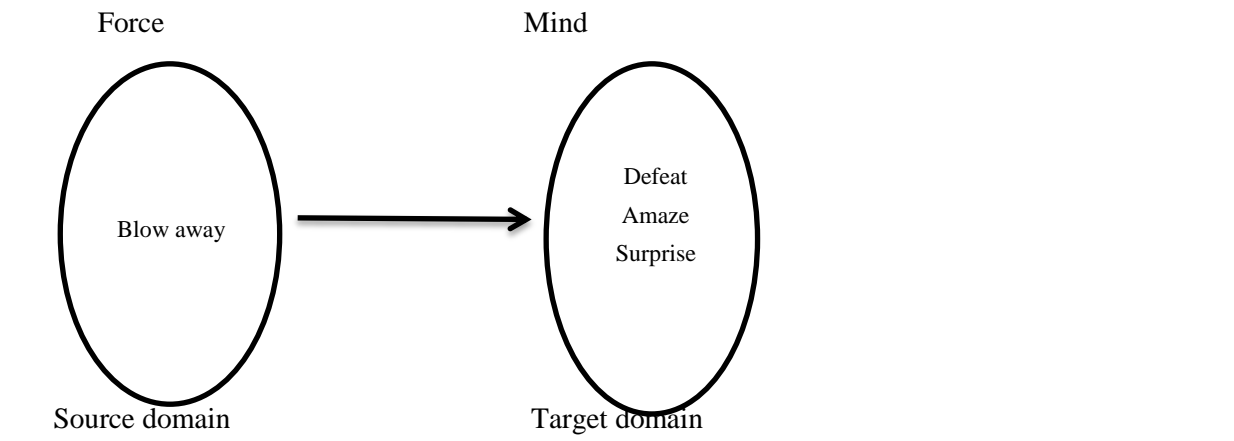
EX 2. Smoking is your lifemeter.





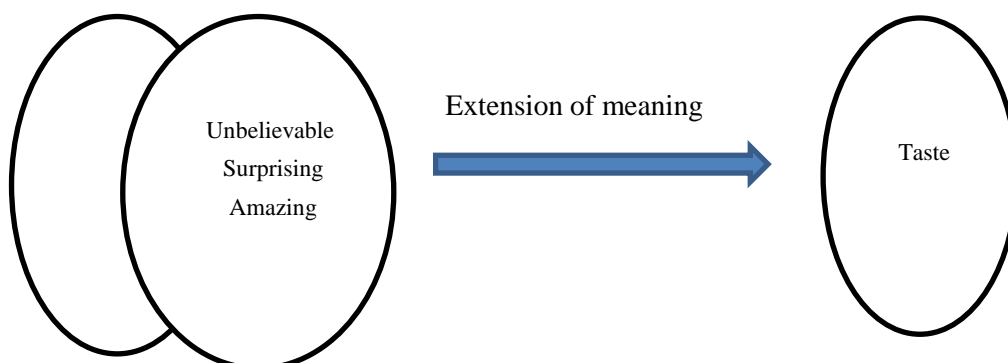
The use of metaphor in this advertising text example is interestingly structured and prudently executed through linguistic and non-linguistic factors (metaphoric image of a cigarette like a meter). Metaphor is expanded from the source domain of the concept of meter to the concept of life. The thought of the former is to activate the later. However, meaning is further extended to define this concept in terms of smoking and vice versa (notice the arrow is going both directions). The concept of smoking is experience-able and well defined. The concept of lifemeter is newly coined in a metaphorical expression. Yet, both of them can activate each other. However, the advertiser aims at strengthening the thought of lifemeter in association to the act of smoking. As for attitudes, the negative side of smoking is well added to the domain of the concept of smoking by coining the expression lifemeter. This metaphorical meaning is extended in a purposeful way to change the attitude of the advertisees. This targets the cognitive attitude directly, and implies the affective and behavioral ones hiding the offensive quest of the advert (stop smoking). Also, the image contributes to facilitate grasping the intended meaning in an interesting, attractive, creative, and affective way. It states the more you smoke, the more it burns your days of living.

EX 3: IT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND AWAY. King Burger.



Metaphor of
 (Blow your mind away) (source domain)

Food (Burger King)
 (target domain)





This advert extends the metaphorical meaning of the expression (blow your mind away) to the concept of delicious food. It is to define this concept (delicious food), which varies from one individual to another, by more well-structured and defined experienced concept (blowing away) which is in its turn expanded to the abstract concept of mind. It depicts (mind) as a tangible concrete object that can be blow away. This is to imply the amazing, surprising and unbelievable type of taste that will make you lose your mind and reason. However, a promising promoting for (Burger King) is embedded within the text targeting the cognitive attitude of the advertisee as well as the affective one. Indirect source target relation is maintained by the advert maker to extend meaning in a creative, affective, and persuasive way. The text would be memorable and attractive for the advertisees. It is all about changing, affecting, or at least targeting the attitudes of the advertisee on the benefit of the advertising campaign.

4- Conclusions:

- 1- Advertising, as a genre, is a parable process of emulation and stimulation of one concept in terms of another which is more familiar and affective by employing deviant's adds-on imagistic mosaic of metaphorical image.
- 2- Attitudes are the main factors on which the advertisers play on their tricks of persuasion and behavioral adaptation.
- 3- Semantic domains can be extended and expanded achieving a more vivid; well- structured and defined thought of the promoted object.
- 4- Advertising is all about cognition, psycho- dynamics, thinking processes, and thought formulation and reformulation.
- 5- Metaphor usages are all purposeful even in everyday life communication. They help one's mind to formulate most vivid image (logo) of conception by manipulating the perceptive phase of the comprehension dynamics.

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