

Cognitive Linguistics and Multimodal Models in Advertising Applications

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Abstract

Cognitive linguistics and multimodal models provide novel theoretical perspectives and analytical tools for advertising research. This paper explores their applications in advertising by analyzing fundamental concepts of cognitive linguistics—frame theory, metaphor and metonymy, image schemas—alongside the theoretical foundations of multimodal models. Through case studies of classic advertisements, this study reveals how cognitive linguistics and multimodal models enhance advertising effectiveness, stimulate consumer purchasing desire, and elevate brand competitiveness through the synergistic integration of language, imagery, sound, and other multimodal resources. The findings demonstrate that the integration of cognitive linguistics and multimodal models offers significant theoretical support and practical guidance for advertising creativity and communication strategies.

Keywords

Cognitive linguistics; multimodal models; metaphor and metonymy; frame theory; advertising.

1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the intrinsic connection between linguistic competence and human cognitive abilities, positing that language is not an isolated entity but grounded in perceptual experiences and cognitive processing. Therefore, interpreting language necessitates an understanding grounded in human perception and cognitive processing. Humans possess five sensory modalities—visual, gustatory, auditory, tactile, and olfactory—of which advertising primarily leverages visual and auditory modalities, constituting multimodality. Multimodal metaphors utilize multiple sensory modalities to compare abstract concepts with concrete, easily comprehensible counterparts. Classic advertising cases often integrate theories of cognitive linguistics and multimodal models to enhance vividness, stimulate consumer desire, and strengthen brand competitiveness.

2. Case Studies: Cognitive Linguistics in Advertising

2.1. Metaphor Theory in Advertising

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in **Metaphors We Live By**, propose that metaphors enable understanding of abstract concepts (target domains) through concrete, familiar concepts (source domains). For instance, Nike's "Just Do It" campaign metaphorically links sportswear to a "bold action" lifestyle, inspiring consumer motivation. The slogan transcends literal meaning, embodying a life philosophy—urging consumers to act courageously when facing challenges. According to Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, this mapping of abstract values ("bold action") onto concrete products ("sportswear") enhances the advertisement's emotional resonance, effectively merging product functionality with spiritual empowerment.



JUST DO IT.

2.2. Metonymy Theory in Advertising

Metonymy employs parts or related entities to represent wholes. The slogan 'Gives You Wings' metonymically represents Red Bull as a source of energy and vitality, encapsulating the brand's core value. The slogan transforms into a symbol of empowerment, suggesting that the drink provides consumers with the energy to transcend limits. By using "wings" (a part) to signify "energy" (the whole), the advertisement simplifies brand messaging and fosters consumer identification.

2.3. Image Schema Theory in Advertising

Wang Yin, in **What is Cognitive Linguistics?**, defines image schemas as abstract frameworks derived from repeated perceptual experiences and generalizations of similar instances. For example, Nongfu Spring's "Natural" campaign employs imagery of mountains, forests, and streams to construct a "pure water source" schema. This schema conveys the brand's commitment to natural, unpolluted water sources. Scenes of plant growth and animals drinking further establish a "natural vitality" schema, linking water to life and health. These schemas translate abstract concepts into tangible imagery, successfully communicating the brand's values.

3. Case Studies: Multimodal Models in Advertising

Multimodal models integrate at least two sensory modalities (e.g., visual, auditory) to convey information synergistically. Dove's "Indulge in New Silkiness" campaign combines visual and auditory modalities: slow-motion shots of melting chocolate, soft lighting, and a model's expressions of delight emphasize the product's texture. Gentle background music reinforces the theme of indulgence, creating multisensory immersion. This multimodal approach enhances emotional resonance and brand recall.

Applying Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework, Coca-Cola's advertisements exemplify multimodal cultural value transmission. The iconic red color evokes vitality and passion, while the curvaceous bottle design symbolizes heritage and trustworthiness. Slogans like "Taste the Feeling" forge multimodal metaphors equating taste with happiness. Scenes of diverse groups sharing Coke construct a "harmonious society" schema, embedding cultural values into commercial messaging.

4. Integrated Application: Cognitive Linguistics and Multimodal Models

The fusion of cognitive linguistics and multimodal models offers a robust analytical framework. Alibaba's "Double Eleven" campaign exemplifies this integration: metaphors frame the event as a "shopping carnival," metonymies highlight discounts, and image schemas of "celebration" and "surprise" build consumer anticipation. Visual elements like animated text ("Happiness Arrives Home") and auditory cues amplify excitement, driving purchasing behavior.



5. Conclusion

The application of cognitive linguistics and multimodal models enhances advertising effectiveness by engaging cognitive and sensory dimensions. Future research should explore cross-cultural advertising, technology-driven innovation, neuroscientific approaches, and sustainability. These directions will further advance theoretical and practical strategies in advertising creativity and communication.

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