

# Multimodal Metaphor Analysis of Print Advertisements Based on the Conceptual Blending Theory

## *Exploring the Hidden Ideology---Sign-Consumption*

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### Abstract

In today's industrial society with great affluence in material goods, consumption in our mind no longer aims at objective function, but at the sign-value connoted in the objects. Advertisement is the main carrier of sign-consumption ideology with rich multimodal metaphorical resources. This study follows the analytical mode of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), by analyzing multimodal metaphor in print magazine advertisement from the perspective of Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) to explore the hidden sign-consumption ideology. The main findings of the research are: 1) metaphors in selected ads are all novel metaphors, in which the target domain is always presented by the advertised products while source domain is always presented in form of image; 2) counterpart correspondences mapped between two input spaces are the imposed selling points and sign-value, which take the main marketing functions; 3) relegating and weakening the objective function but advocating sign-value of goods is essentially because of people's desire for differentiation in homogenized industrial society, which would allow the market more space to conduct secondary exploitation to people instead of labor exploitation. This interdisciplinary study not only adds new content to linguistics but also provides new perspective to consumption issue of sociology and economics. Besides, it provides a rational warning for people to reflect their consumption behavior.

**Keywords:** Conceptual Blending Theory, CDA, multimodal metaphor, print advertisement, sign-consumption

### 1. Introduction

#### *1.1 Rationale of the Study*

Today's world has stepped into a highly industrialized society which brings the great affluence of material goods to our life. There is all around us today a kind of fantastic conspicuousness of consumption and abundance, constituted by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods, and this represents something of a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species (Baudrillard, 1970).

In illustrating the relationship of people's needs and satisfactions to objects, Jean Baudrillard (1970) explains that outside the field of its objective function, where it is irreplaceable, outside the field of its denotation, the object becomes substitutable in a more or less unlimited way within the field of connotations, where it assumes sign-value. For instance, the washing machine, in the field of its objective functions, serves as an appliance to reduce household chores and lighten housewives' burden; while in the field of its denotation, it acts as an element of prestige, comfort, etc. In our today's society, consumption in our mind no longer aims at the former field, but at the sign-value connoted in objects. No matter in the logic of signs or in that of symbols, objects are no longer linked in any sense to a definite function or needs. Precisely because objects here respond to the social logic or the logic of desire, in which objects are regarded as unconscious and changeable sign system (Baudrillard, 1970).

Nowadays, what people need is never so much the need for a particular object but the need for difference, or the desire for the social meaning. In most people's mind, consumption is of their own free will. However, no matter

from the perspective of sociology or economics, consumption is not an individual behavior for enjoyment or satisfaction, but a collective behavior controlled by the society, and the market, which to some extent corresponds to John Kenneth Galbraith's "revised sequence" theory. The manufacturers control market behavior, and guide and model social attitudes and needs, which is opposed to the "accepted sequence", where the initiative is supposed to lie with the consumer who has needs first and then brings feedback back to the manufacturers through the market (Baudrillard, 1970). The "revised sequence" also presents the total dictatorship of the order of production and to some extent reveals the origin and motivation of marketing and consumerism. It is notice-worthy that people conduct sign-consumption even without realizing it because consumption is not an individual behavior, but a social and collective behavior. The society and market exert a subtle influence on people's mind and ideology even without being noticed.

Based on the above statement, consumption is a social activity and sign-consumption, to some extent, is an illusion or a trick created by the society and market. If people are always guided by such ideology and never realize the truth of consumption and without a correct and comprehensive understanding of it, on the individual level, it will cause some irrational consuming behaviors, such as comparison consumption, conspicuous consumption, etc. And on the social level, it even causes some social unsettlement or economic crisis.

Mass media is one of the most common, powerful and efficient tools for seller to reach customer, to propagate the consumption concepts and new consumption patterns and, to a large degree, to help the consumerism grow in the whole society. It is a strong and dominate tool to shape and influence people's belief and ideology in today's life of great affluence. Magazine, as an influential and enduringly popular media, takes on great marketing function of material goods. Usually in an issue of magazine, there will be many verbal and pictorial advertisements being inserted as a way to attract customer's attention, stimulate customer's needs or desire. Among these advertisements, there are plenty of multimodal metaphorical resources employed to persuade customer, to instill the sign-consumption thoughts to customer's mind.

### *1.2 Objectives and Significance of the Study*

Metaphor is an important cognitive tool. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) further develop the concept of metaphor, where it is not merely a linguistic characteristic, but a way in people's mind to understand the world better. Taking this into consideration, this study, under the research framework of Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA),by finding linguistic resources used in multimodal metaphors, disclosing the cognitive operation mechanism behind multimodal metaphors with the help of conceptual blending theory, tentatively explores the sign-consumption ideology hidden in multimodal metaphors of print magazine advertisements.

The significance of this study can be demonstrated in terms of its theoretical and practical values.

Theoretically, conducting an analysis of print magazine advertisements from the perspective of cognitive linguistics can contribute greatly to the development of metaphor study because these advertisements deploy rich metaphorical resources and different modes which provide a good and typical research subject for metaphor research. Besides, existing researches on sign-consumption mainly from economic, sociological or philosophical field, it is rarely touched upon from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and few researches give interdisciplinary account to it. The author of this study attempts to uncover sign-consumption ideology from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. The study enlarges the academic vision of sign-consumption and the sociocultural vision of metaphor and provides enlightenment for relevant study in the future.

Practically, conducting cognitive analysis of the multimodal metaphor in print advertisements is conducive to reproduce the cognitive working process of people's mind and therefore, to figure out how sign-consumption are instilled in people. In this way, this study can make more people understand consumption, especially sign-consumption correctly. From individual perspective, it helps people keep rational when facing various marketing strategies. From social perspective, it helps to uphold healthy market order and harmonious social atmosphere in the long run.

### *1.3 Research Questions*

This paper, based on the hypothesis: there is sign-consumption ideology connoted in multimodal metaphor of ad, follows the research path of CDA which involves three dimensions---text, discourse practice and social practice. Therefore, this study analyzes multimodal metaphors in print advertisements by figuring out the following questions from three levels.

In micro-level, it identifies multimodal metaphor of advertisement to answer the question:

1. What multimodal metaphors are manifested in the print advertisements and how do visual and verbal modes interact to present source and target domain?

In meso-level, it analyzes multimodal metaphor with conceptual blending theory to answer the second question:

2. What features are mapped from one input space on to the other in the process of blending? How do multimodal metaphors reach marketing effects in ads?

In macro-level, it gives sociocultural account to multimodal metaphor, aiming to answer the third question:

3. Whether is there sign-consumption ideology hidden in the ads? If there is, why does sign-consumption ideology exist in society?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies on Multimodal Metaphor

The last few decades have witnessed a growing interest in metaphor. However, the vast majority of relevant publications focus on verbal metaphors, or at least on verbal manifestations of metaphor (Forceville, 1996). The Cognitive Metaphor Theory developed by Lakoff and other scholars is a landmark in metaphor investigation. The view that metaphor is not primarily a matter of language, but structures thought and action is systematically presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's influential book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), which signposts promising scholarly avenues for investigating whether other media than language can manifest metaphor as well. Charles Forceville (2009) believes that a healthy theory of cognitive metaphor must systematically study non-verbal and multimodal metaphor, and that the excessive emphasis on the verbal manifestations of metaphorical thought has blinded researchers.

It is Charles Forceville who has extended studies on metaphor into the realm of multimodality and has exerted a considerable influence on metaphor studies. Forceville & Urios-Aparisi's collection *Multimodal Metaphor* (2009) shows all the latest research results at abroad. All scholars are primarily concerned with the respects like the value and effect of modality as well as its interaction, dynamic interplay of metaphor and metonymy, stylistic dimensions of metaphor as well as the cultural and the embodiment foundation of metaphor. The term multimodal metaphor refers to "metaphors whose target and source are rendered exclusively or predominantly in two different modes/modalities" (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Multimodal discourse is a vast territory, comprising a multitude of material carriers (paper, celluloid, videotape, bits and bytes, stone, cloth...), modes (written language, spoken language, visuals, sound, music, gesture, smell, touch), and genres (art, advertising, instruction manual) (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). In recent decade, more and more scholars have turned their attention to multimodal metaphor in various genres, like advertising, political cartoons, comics, animation, musical compositions, oral conversations and lectures, feature films, etc. Among which, advertising attracts most scholarly attention for that it can at the same time integrate with the modes of language, visuals and sound/music and that it has vast group of target audience. In the following, a rather detailed review of the research on multimodal metaphor in advertisements will be stated.

### 2.2 Previous Studies on Multimodal Metaphor in Advertisements

The previous studies concerning multimodal metaphor in advertising can be tentatively classified into three aspects.

Firstly, some of the studies focus on the distribution of multimodal metaphor and metonymy and how the two mechanisms interact to fulfil different cognitive and persuasive roles. Pan & Zhang (2013), Liu & Yang (2017), Zhang & Zhan (2011), Pan & Zheng (2017) and Qiu (2013) propose that metaphor and metonymy are important representation of mind and society, based on which social reality is reconstructed and which are also mechanisms for multimodal discourses to achieve textual cohesion and coherence, to increase ads' persuasiveness and vividness. Urios-Aparisi (2009) argues that how metaphor and metonymy interact hinges on cognitive as well as communicative roles and motivations.

Secondly, some of the studies note what modes are chosen to represent conceptual operations and the advertised product and how these different modes interact. In early years, researches on print ads are followed with interest. Forceville's book *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising* (1996) shows us how metaphor can occur in pictures and how to analyze pictorial metaphor. The communicative effect of many (print) ads is to be found in the combination of the visual and verbal modes. The image-text integration makes it possible to construe the metaphor and metonymy underpinning the adverts (Alousque, 2013). In recent years, more attention shifts to dynamic video TV ads. Lan & Cai (2013), Wang & Wang (2018), Huang & He (2019), Zhang & Xu (2018) and Sweetser (2017) explore dynamic TV ads and conclude that visuals, sound and words coordinate to represent multimodal metaphor in TV ads. Multimodal metaphor represented by visuals, sound and words has both similarity and difference with monomodal metaphor mainly constructed by verbal modes, which exactly indicates the adaptability of conceptual metaphor to different modes.

Thirdly, few of the studies notice the pragmatic functions of multimodal metaphor in ads, especially the marketing effects. Multimodal metaphor can contribute to product promotion (Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Zhang & Xu (2018), by analyzing a video commercial concerning a Chinese tobacco brand, argue that multimodal metaphorical argumentation helps to highlight the positive aspect of smoking this brand and overshadows its side-effects, and it can be regarded as a strategy to evade sanctions for ignoring institutional constraints. Caballero (2009) illustrates multimodal metaphor plays a role in wine jargon and audiovisual promotion by translating a sensorial and highly subjective experience into comprehensible and shareable terms. Some notice the cultural background behind multimodal metaphor in ads. Chen & Sun (2018) suppose that multimodal metaphor become the carrier and reinforcer of the social identity and gender stereotype of a consumer group on the one hand, and a positioning implement for shaping its brand personality by a company on the other.

From the above, we can conclude that most studies work on either the interaction of metonymy and metaphor or the coordination of different modes, both of which are explained in figurative or semiotic level. In recent years, some attention is turned to the pragmatic functions and social meanings of multimodal metaphor in ads, delineating systematically and critically how multimodal metaphor of ads work to position the brands or increase the persuasiveness. Unlike most of the existing research, seemingly dedicated to finding ways to maximize the marketing effects, this paper, other than putting emphasis on linguistic analysis on multimodal metaphor, also takes a critical metaphor blending perspective to reveal the sign-consuming ideology articulated in the multimodal metaphor and the potential social and ethical impact these ads have on audience.

### 3. Theoretical Basis

#### 3.1 Conceptual Blending Theory

##### 3.1.1 Development

Conceptual Blending Theory (hereafter this paper will be abbreviated as CBT), also named conceptual integration theory, was firstly put forward by Gills Fauconnier. This theory initially sprouted from the Mental Space Theory. Building an integration network inevitably involves setting up mental spaces, matching across spaces, projecting selectively to a blend, etc. Therefore, mental space is the foundation for people to constructing a blended network. The publication of a book named *Mapping in Thought and Language* (Fauconnier,1997) marks the formal establishment of CBT. Fauconnier(1997) proposes that that mappings among spaces are at the heart of the unique human cognitive faculty of producing, transferring, and processing meaning which yields general procedures and principles for a wide array of meaning and reasoning phenomena, including conceptual projection, conceptual integration and blending, analogy, reference, and counterfactuals, etc. In the book *The Way We Think* (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), the authors further develop CBT into a more systematic, mature and adaptive theory. They devote to applying conceptual blending to more fields and argue that blending underlies and makes possible all these diverse human accomplishments, that it is responsible for the origins of language, art, religion, science, and other singular human feats, and that it is as indispensable for basic everyday thought as it is for artistic and scientific abilities.

##### 3.1.2 Operation Mechanism of CBT

Fauconnier (1997) defines Mental Spaces as “the domains that discourse builds up to provide a cognitive substrate for reasoning and for interfacing with the world”. In 2002, he once again illustrates the definition as “a small conceptual package built during the process of human thinking and acting to get a local understanding of the actions and conversations.” Meaning construction is a cornerstone of cognitive science (Fauconnier,1997). Between the language expression and the real or metaphysical world, there should be a construction of cognitive level, which is neither the simple representation of language expression, nor the faithful representation of the world. Mental spaces are the state of the cognitive construction, which are built up when the language expression arises. They also connect the discourse with the context, which includes social framing, pragmatic conditions. Mental spaces, as a cognitive mechanism, interconnect the semantic and pragmatic meaning with the real world. Blends arise in networks of mental spaces.

Conceptual blending is a dynamic cognition process, which is constructed according to the real-time context and complexity of the knowledge patterns. Therefore, a conceptual blending network can be composed of several input spaces and even multiple blended spaces. But in order to make the operating mechanism of conceptual blending easier to understand and apply, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) explain it in form of basic diagram of blending network containing essential and indispensable features (see Figure 1), which is composed of four mental spaces. Two input spaces are organized through information from individual domains of knowledge, playing the role of base structures to transfer needed information to other spaces. One is generic space which covers something in common from two inputs, and one is blended space which contains selected aspects of

information from both two inputs as well as an emergent structure of its own. As illustrated in Figure 1, in basic diagram, one circle represents one mental space, the solid lines suggest the matching and cross-space mapping between the inputs, the dotted lines imply connections between inputs and either generic or blended spaces, and the solid square in the blended space represents emergent structure.

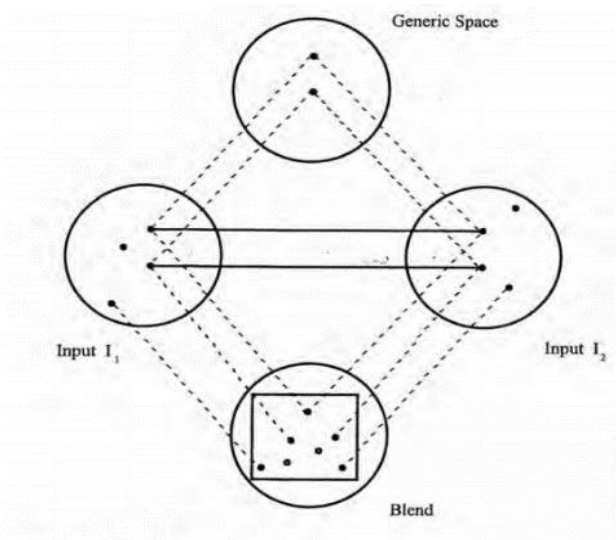


Figure 1. The Basic Diagram of CBT (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002)

Mapping is a general cognitive procedures and principles for many meaning and reasoning phenomena including conceptual projection, conceptual integration, analogy, reference, and counterfactuals, which in turn is vital to understanding of metaphor and metonymy, narrative structure, speech acts, rhetoric, and general reasoning (Fauconnier, 1997). Mapping also grants us an access to the black box of cognitive domains which we usually are unconscious of. But here, it works, on narrow sense, as a cognitive procedure to connect and match counterparts among the input mental spaces. Through mapping and projection, the four spaces (taking the Basic Diagram as instance) interconnect and construct a conceptual blending network.

Emergent structure arises in the blended space (also the blend), which is the final product of creativity and novelty of conceptual blending process. The blend is selective projection from two input spaces, and the emergent structure is not copied directly from any inputs. Fauconnier (2002) pointed out that emergent structure is generated in three ways: the first way is COMPOSITION that composes elements from the input spaces to create relations that do not exist in the any inputs. The second way is COMPLETION. Blends recruit great ranges of background knowledge and structure. Knowledge of background frames, cognitive and cultural models will inevitably make us project the composite structure into the blend from the inputs. Such composite structure is viewed as a part of a larger independent structure in the blend. The pattern in the blend triggered by the inherited structures is "completed into the larger, emergent structure". The third way is ELABORATION. The structure in the blend can then be elaborated. This is the so-called "running the blend." It consists in cognitive work performed within the blend, according to its own emergent logic. The emergent structure is a dynamic and complex cognitive process which requires not only vivid imagination but also subtle understanding to the world. In the cognitive process of conceptual blending, context is an indispensable part for understanding the concepts and we will mainly take it as the starting point. Besides, we will dynamically blend concepts according to layered logic and inherited knowledge.

In this study, CBT is used in meso-level to interpret pragmatism practice of multimodal metaphors in ads. Firstly, under the guide of mental space thought, this study pinpoints two main base inputs which cover most of ideas the advertiser aims to convey. Secondly, connecting with pictorial context, this study deduces features mapped from one input space on to the other with the help of the cognitive procedure---cross-space mapping. Based on the information transferred from inputs, this study concludes common places composing generic space and emergent structure. Basic diagram is applied here to clearly demonstrate the cognitive blending process. Through the cognitive analysis, we can get selling points or sign-value the advertiser imposes on products. Consequently, marketing functions performed by multimodal metaphors in ads can be revealed.

## 4. Research Method and Data Collection

### 4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not so much a direction, school, or specialization next to the many other "approaches" in discourse studies. Rather, it aims to offer a different "mode" or "perspective" of theorizing, analysis, and application throughout the whole field (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). It is considered as an interdisciplinary analysis tool to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice.

Fairclough (1995) illustrates the distinction between text and discourse. In his opinion, text is the end product of the text (written or spoken) producing process while discourse refers to the whole process of social interaction. Fairclough's three-dimensional model clearly explain the relationship between text and discourse. He (1995) suggests that discourse or any specific discursive practice is simultaneously: 1) a language text (written or spoken); 2) discursive practice (text production, distribution and consumption); 3) social practice (any discourse is embedded within sociocultural practice at a number of levels: in the immediate situation, in the wide institution or organization, and at a societal level).

The three-dimensional concept of discourse corresponds to the three-stage critical discourse analysis put forward by Fairclough (1992) ---description, interpretation and explanation. This study adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional model to build its whole research framework.

Description centers on the analysis of text---the end product of discourse producing process, giving linguistic description to language text. Here in this study, description focus on the end product of advertising---the print pictorial ad. It works in the micro-level to conduct a semiotic description of what elements and modes are employed in the ads. After making clear metaphorical resources, metaphors can be tentatively identified and visual and verbal representations to source and target domain can be figured out.

Interpretation concerns with the analysis of discourse practice, interpreting the relationship between the interpretative discursive processes and the text, with attention paid to the situational contexts in which text production, distribution and consumption occurs. In this study, interpretation works in the meso-level by conducting pragmatical and cognitive analysis of ads with the aid of CBT. Combining with the pictorial context and the genre in which the metaphor occurs, we get the specific counterpart correspondences mapped between the two spaces and marketing effects created by metaphors in the specific context.

Explanation, focus on the analysis of social practice, explaining the relationship between the discursive process and the social process. It aims to analyze the discourse within a wider social practice or identify the social determination and social effects of the discourse. In this study, explanation works in the macro-level by exploring the underlying ideology---sign-consumption ideology connoted in ads. Jean Baudrillard's thought to consumerism allows us to give a sociological explanation to sign-consumption phenomenon behind discourse with a critical perspective.

### 4.2 Data Collection

To illustrate how multimodal metaphor works in advertising, the author has selected some print advertisements from two famous international fashion magazines---*Vogue* and *Bazaar*, which boast a huge international reader base, having rich advertisements in it. The two magazines are acknowledged as "fashion Bible" in many young people's mind for they leading new trend and pioneering new consumption concepts. Advertisements retrieved from the two monthly magazines are published between January and December, 2019, 12 issues, covering industries like garment, jewelry and beauty.

Three ads with typical metaphorical manifestation are selected as research subjects and our choice is justified on the following grounds:

- a) Selected adverts should bring into full play the modes of language and visuals.
- b) Selected adverts should differ from each other in terms of their types.
- c) The selection of ads has been determined by their figurative potential.

## 5. Analysis of the Data

As illustrated above, the whole research framework follows Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model. Analysis of multimodal metaphors in ads will also be conducted in three stages, aiming to answer three-level research questions accordingly. The first stage is giving semiotic description to metaphorical resources in pictorial ads and then identifying the metaphors. The second stage is conducting pragmatical interpretation of metaphors with the help of CBT. On the one hand, through cognitive analysis in conceptual blending network,

we can reach the black box of people’s cognition to metaphors. On the other hand, taking the pictorial context and marketing function of advertisement genre into consideration, we can get the selling points or sign-value the advertiser imposes on material goods. The third stage is giving sociological explanation to sign-consumption ideology by digging out social causes behind it.

The first ad is about CLOUDNINE hair straightener. In the critical analysis of this ad, we will first give a semiotic description of the metaphor used in the ad.

AD 1. CLOUDNINE Straightener (British *Vogue*, December 2019)



Semiotic Description

In the center of AD 1 is the product advertised---CLOUDNINE hair straightener. As is depicted in the picture, a special liquid looks like shiny gold paint flowing through the straightener, with the color of gold occupying most of the picture, catching people’s eyes in first glance and creating modern and noble atmosphere. In common sense, we know that straightener is used to straighten our hair while here this special liquid flows across it. Therefore, readers easily associate such liquid with hair in this context even though hair is not presented here. Metaphor employed in this advert is HAIR IS SPECIAL LIQUID. The target domain is HAIR, more specially, the hair after using CLOUDNINE straightener, namely the product effect. Hair after using the straightener is not presented visually but in form of word below the figure---“the mastery to create your best hair yet”. However, it is too abstract to imagine how ‘best’ the hair is. The source domain is LIQUID, the touch sense to which is familiar to us. Besides, visual representation of it also helps a lot to understand and imagine the hair quality. The above semiotic description can be illustrated in Figure 1a.

Cognitive analysis	<b>Metaphor: HAIR IS SPECIAL LIQUID</b>
	- <b>Source domain:</b> liquid
	- <b>Target domain:</b> hair
Modality	<b>Multimodal</b>
	- Visual representation of the source
	- Verbal representation of the target

Figure 1a. Metaphor description of AD1

Pragmatical Interpretation

In this example, there are two mental spaces constructed through the cognitive process to this advert---HAIR Space and LIQUIDE Space, and the straighter belongs to the former. We connect the two space by cross-space mapping in our mind. The whole cognitive operation process is presented as Figure 1b. The gold color of liquid occupies almost all of the figure, which makes people naturally associate it with blond hair in this context. Blond hair is always regarded as the fashionable and modern symbol. Besides, gold color also represents noble, luxurious and glorious. Liquid here is special one with dull sheen in it, so it looks shiny and lustrous. Mapped into the HAIR Space, we will think of hair with a healthy sheen. As for the sense of touch to liquid, it is not strange to everyone. Most liquid in daily life flows freely and feels soft and gentle. The liquid here in this picture also has these features. Besides, it looks smooth and soft which is similar to the quality of great hair. Liquid in this advert is not static but is flowing or moving, which can remind us about supple and healthy hair fluttering with the breeze in the HAIR Space. Straighter is an electronic product whose working principle is to heat the board to about 200 Celsius to straighten hair. Therefore, it is always criticized for its high temperature which damages the hair and makes it dry and dull. Generic space in this example mainly contains the similar characteristics between HAIR Space and LIQUID Space. What are mapped between the two inputs are the concerns of straighter buyers and also the selling points the advertiser wants to convey. Besides, sign-value like modern, charming and confident images are built with the aid of multimodal metaphor. Based on information transferred from two inputs and considering the context and the marketing purpose, the emergent structure in blended space can be expressed as that CLOUDNINE Straighter provides solutions to your hairdos, not only changing your hairstyle, but also keeping hair shiny, lustrous, smooth and making you charming and unique. This metaphor’s conceptual blending process is demonstrated as in Figure 1b below:

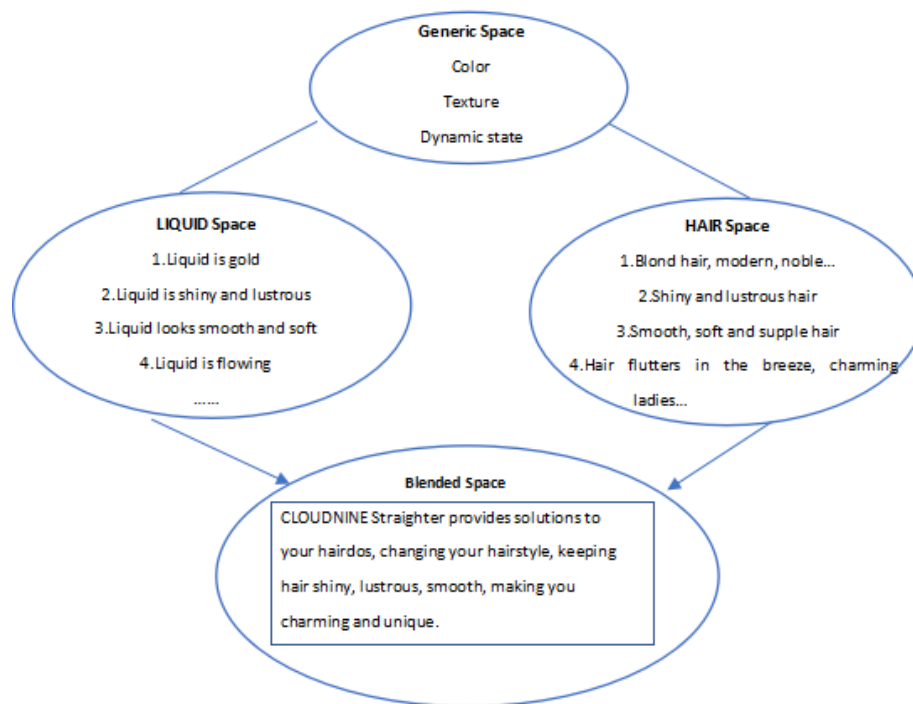


Figure 1b. Conceptual Blending Network of AD1

Sociological Explanation

“The confidence to experiment. The power to transform. The mastery to create your best hair yet.” The caption of the product perfectly accords with the meaning connoted in metaphor. Changing hairstyle is an important moment because it symbolizes a transform not only in appearance but even in mental state. Therefore, it is self-evident that people has little tolerance to hairdos fault because they all want to present their gorgeous and perfect side to others. But CLOUDNINE Straighter is the special tool making people brave to transform and confident to experiment because it brings no hurt to hair as the metaphor conveys. However, only a straighter cannot give your power and confidence and make you become as modern and lustrous as a pretty blond girl. All



it can do is just straightening hair, which is its objective function. And the other ‘functions’ as expressed in the advert are imposed on the product by seller, advertiser and other operator in market, which accords with the ‘functionalization’ of an object put forward by Jean Baudrillard (1970). Functionalization is a coherent abstraction which superimposes itself upon or substitutes for its objective function and ‘functionality’ is not use-value, but sign-value (Baudrillard,1970). It is an old trick of market to connect products with beautiful, elegant and different things, instead of directly selling material goods. By employing multimodal metaphor in ad, it inconspicuously but vividly stimulates people’s desire, persuades them to buy and meanwhile instills sign-consumption ideology into their minds.

The next is a perfume ad which is a typical example because perfume is born with rich connotation imposed by people.

AD 2. AMAFFI Perfume (British *Vogue*, December 2019)



### Semiotic Description

As presented in AD 2, there is the perfume for man with gold and diamond-like bottle standing in the middle. The background against it looks like black backdrop of stage, and the foreground before it is the pulling back red curtain. The configuration of light and shade is center-surrounding structure. From center to surround, light fades out to total dark, while in the center around the Amaffi perfume is brightest with purple halo, which is like a protagonist in the limelight of stage. There is a conventionalized metaphor that underlies this ad---LIFE IS A STAGE. Conventionalized metaphoric patterns stored in long-term memory may provide “ready-made” counterpart connections for the real-time construction of blends, which allows us to combine conceptual material with astonishing speed, fluency and freedom (Grady, 2006). With the help of this conventionalized metaphor in our mind, we can immediately recognize that this ad promotes the perfume brand by attempting to render a view of the Amaffi Perfume as a protagonist in stage, which is also a personified expression. The ad conveys the metaphor A PERFUME IS A PROTAGONIST, which is incorporated into LIFE IS A STAGE. The source domain is PROTAGONIST of STAGE cued by visual form, the target domain is PERFUME. Specially speaking, it is the person possessing PERFUME cued by language and image simultaneously. It is notice-worthy that in this example, the caption to this perfume is limited to only pointing out the brand name and product name. The interaction of visual and verbal modes is listed in the following Figure 2a:

Cognitive analysis	<p><b>Metaphor:</b> LIFE IS A STAGE</p> <p>A PERFUME IS A PROTAGONIST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Source domain:</b> stage; protagonist</li> <li>- <b>Target domain:</b> life; Amaffi perfume</li> </ul>
Modality	<p><b>Multimodal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual representation of the source</li> <li>- Visual/Verbal representation of the target</li> </ul>

Figure 2a. Metaphor description of AD2

Pragmatical Interpretation

There are two mental space encoded in this ad as Figure 2b presented. In the STAGE Space, black backdrop and red curtain implies that it is a formal occasion like theater, in which all gentlemen and ladies wear decent clothes and exquisite accessories. This feature mapped into PERFUME Space will make people believe that this perfume is suit for important and formal occasion. Protagonist in STAGE Space stands in the center, on which light converges. Mapped into the PERFUME Space, our mind will connect it with people possessing Amaffi perfume who is in the limelight, wherever he goes, he can earn enough attentions. Around the protagonist is purple halo which represents dignity, nobility and mystery. Our mind maps it into PERFUME Space by thinking of a man with this perfume who has an aura of dignity, nobility and mystery. The red curtain is pulling back which implies the show time begins and important person shows up. The personified perfume stands behind the pulling back curtain means a person in PERFUME Space will be the important one. What are mapped between the two spaces are the selling points of Amaffi perfume the advertiser wants consumers get. That is also the counterpart common features composing generic space. A person with Amaffi perfume can earn as much attention as the protagonist of the stage. The perfume helps to build up an attractive, noble and important image like the protagonist. It is suitable for formal and important occasion. In this context, combining these counterpart conceptual materials, we can conclude the emergent structure as that Amaffi perfume can manifest your unique taste and style and help you earn as much attention as a protagonist, and that important figure deserves possessing it for formal occasion. The metaphorical blending between STAGE Space and PERFUME Space is illustrated as the following Figure 2b:

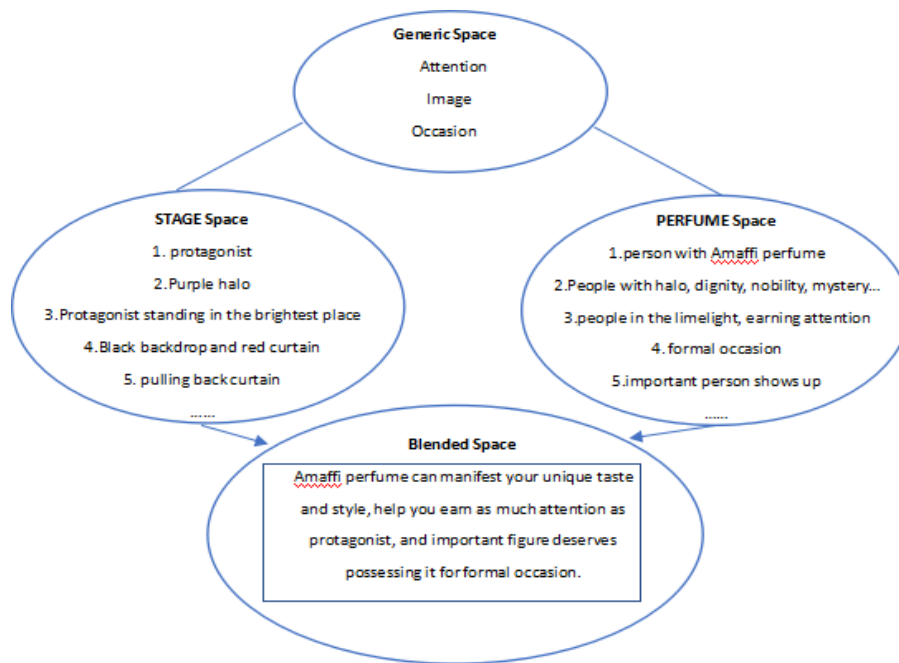


Figure 2b. Conceptual Blending Network of AD 2

### Sociological Explanation

Perfume is just a liquid put on skin to make people smell nice, which is its fundamental objective function. Even we ourselves cannot make clear why our mind will connect perfume automatically with elegance, delicacy and civility. These symbolic meanings are unconsciously stored in our mind since we first know what perfume is, and most people take it for granted without realizing that they are paying for its sign-value added artificially. Market makes a lot effort to increase its sign-value by designing complicated and dazzling packet and bottle, building up different brand image, developing various product lines and different scent. In this example, no matter the design of this perfume bottle or the counterpart materials mapped between the two spaces tells people that this perfume is more than a liquid making you smell well but a symbol of unique status and taste, a way to differentiate you from others. However, according to Baudrillard (1970), such 'differentiation' adheres to the order of the industrial production of differences which defines system of consumption. This is an absurd formula: monopoly and difference are logically incompatible. However, in our today's society, it seems that they can be combined. It is precisely because the differences are not true differences. Instead of marking a person out as someone singular, these differences mark his conformity with a code, his integration into a sliding scale of values. It is upon the loss of differences that the cult of difference is founded. When we are struggling to seek the difference which will make us ourselves, can we realize that we fell into the trap of industrial production? Besides, the hierarchy behind some marginal difference are deep-rooted. Though we can afford a particular object because all men are equal before objects as use-value, but they are by no means equal before objects as signs and differences, which are profoundly hierarchical. Same way with this example, though we can possess this perfume, we may not change our status or become important figures just because of possessing it. The next example is a jewelry ad, whose connotation is as rich as perfume.

### AD 3. CHAUMET Jewelry (American *Bazaar*, December 2019)



**CHAUMET**  
PARIS

### Semiotic Description

In this ad, CHAUMET ring advertised is in the up-middle placed above three cubes, behind which is the famous Vendôme Column erecting in Place Vendôme, the original one was completed in 1810 at Napoleon's direction to celebrate the victory of Austerlitz. A statue of Napoleon, bare-headed, crowned with laurels and holding a sword in his right hand and a globe surmounted with a statue of Victory in his left hand, was placed atop the column. In 1874, the column was re-erected at the center of Place Vendôme with a copy of the original statue on top. Overall color of the ad is dark blue bringing out the shiny diamond of ring. Both the ring and the statue of Napoleon are at the top part of the figure, and it seems that we need to look up to them. Napoleon, as a famous French emperor in history, is the symbol of power. The conventionalized orientation metaphor---MORE IS UP, GOOD IS UP enables us to fast get the metaphor POWER IS UP in this ad. As the Vendôme Column stands farther away from

us than the ring, presenting just its vague outline, it is a far echo to the ring which standing in the center of attention. And our mind will inevitably regard the statue of Napoleon as counterpart of ring. In this context, sign-value behind RING is abstract, thus it should be taken as target domain. While POWER based on the conventionalized metaphor and with the knowledge background of Napoleon is more concrete, thus it should be taken as source domain. RING in this ad is visually presented, and the brand name and origin of brand are verbally pointed out. POWER is presented visually by various conceptual materials. Basic description to metaphors in this ad is concluded as below:

Cognitive analysis	<p><b>Metaphor: POWER IS UP</b>  <b>RING IS POWER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Source domain: power</b></li> <li>- <b>Target domain: ring</b></li> </ul>
Modality	<p><b>Multimodal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual representation of the source</li> <li>- Visual/Verbal representation of the target</li> </ul>

Figure 3a. Metaphor description of AD3

**Pragmatical Interpretation**

POWER Space and RING Space are two main corresponding mental spaces in this ad. Emperor standing in the top of the column mapped into the RING Space will make people think of that people with luxurious ring has high status. The emperor stands so high that people should look up to him, which is a behavior representing respect. This feature is mapped into RING Space as a prestigious and respectable person. There is no doubt that an emperor possesses great affluence, which is mapped into RING Space as a wealthy person.

What deserves to be more mentioned is the long historical background behind this metaphor. CHAUMET is a time-honored jewelry brand originated in Place Vendôme, the center of high jewelry of the world. It has been creating tiaras, high jewelry pieces and unique timepieces since 1780. Chaumet’s founder, Marie-Etienne Nitot, was Napoleon’s official jeweler. He designed jewelries for Napoleon’s two marriage, for which Nitot became the most sought-after jeweler in Europe and established a loyal and prestigious clientele. This brand’s deeply connecting to Napoleon endows it unmeasured brand value and rich brand history. Mapping this feature into RING Space, it will be understood as that people having ring of this brand gets cultural identity because he or she agrees with the brand history and brand value. Generic space here contains counterpart correspondence between two inputs, which is also the underlying values expressed by mapping between two inputs---the seeking to status, prestige, wealth and cultural identity. We can understand the emergent structure as CHAUMET Ring is the symbol of status, prestige, wealth and knowledge. The following Figure 3b illustrates the metaphorical blending between Power Space and Ring pace:

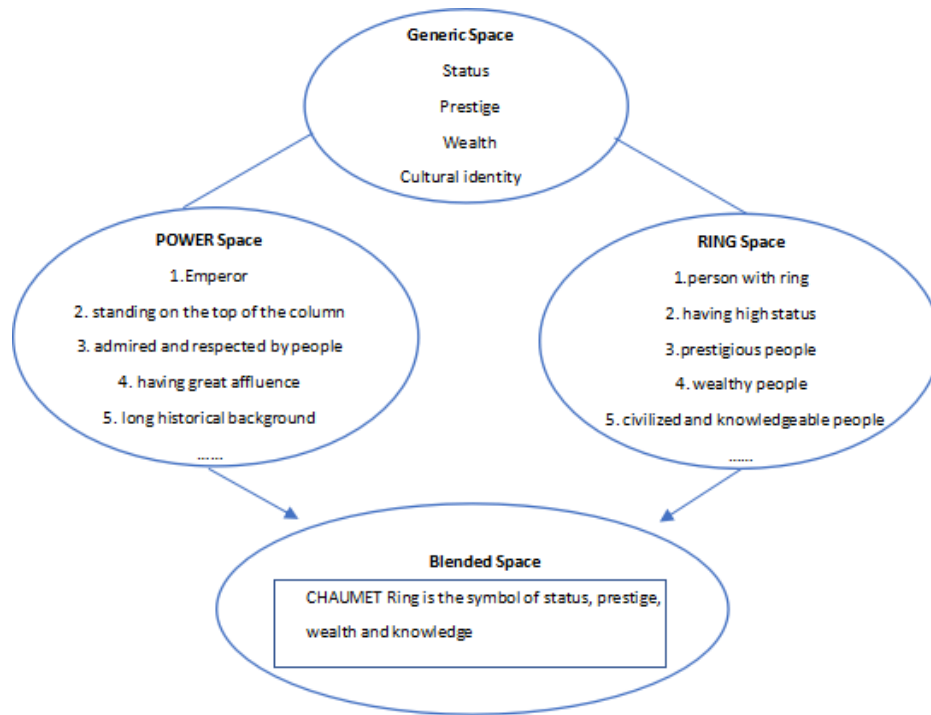


Figure 3b. Conceptual Blending Process of AD 3

**Sociological Explanation**

In daily life, we are even unable to give a concrete definition to jewelry’s objective function. It has long been closely connected with beauty, luxury, elegance and romance. The exploitation of objects as differential, as signs - the level which alone specifically defines consumption - is precisely established upon the relegation of their use-value (Baudrillard, 1970). Many consumption behaviors nowadays care few about use-value or objective function, which is the result of market’s creating various sign-concepts and instilling relative aesthetic standards, thoughts and ideology gradually and inconspicuously. People get accustomed to such consumption patterns even without noticing that their choice and behaviors are guided by others.

Culture consumption is a phenomenon which deserves to be discussed. More and more brands keen on advertising themselves as boasting a long history or having relationship with art so as to differentiate themselves. In this way, they build up brand image and satisfy customers’ need to differentiation. Cultural consumption may thus be defined as the time and place of the caricatural resurrection, the parodic evocation of what already no longer exists - of what is not so much 'consumed' as 'consummated' (completed, past and gone) (Baudrillard, 1970). The logic of “culturalization” is the same as “personalization” and “differentiation”. It is industrial monopoly concentration which abolishes the real differences between human beings and homogenizes persons and products. Therefore, people urgently require signals of differences in their mind. However, as illustrated before, the differences are not true differences. Possessing this ring doesn’t mean we have status, prestige, wealth or knowledge, but maybe it is an evident of succumbing to sign-codes and sign-value encoded by market.

**6. Conclusion**

Through analyzing multimodal metaphor from three dimensions, the hypothesis that there is sign-consumption ideology connoted in ads is verified. In the micro-level, metaphors in selected ads are all novel metaphors, some of which need be understood based on conventionalized metaphor. Products advertised or elements connecting with it always represent target domain because underlying sign-value is abstract to reach. Source domain, as an important media to understand target domain, is always presented in form of image because it should be concrete. Multimodal metaphor is a more practical tool to express thoughts in unconscious but vivid way than verbal metaphor. In the meso-level, counterpart correspondences mapped between two input spaces are the imposed selling points and sign-values, which take the main marketing functions. Through conceptual blending process, we can efficiently get the selling point and sign-consumption ideology the advertiser wants to convey. In the

macro-level, delicately wrapped with multimodal metaphor, sign-value conceals itself perfectly. No matter what value it connotes: beauty, confidence, status, attractiveness, wealth or prestige, it essentially satisfies people's desire for differentiation in homogenized industrial society. Relegating and weakening the objective function but advocating sign-value of goods allows the market more space to stimulate people's desire and conduct secondary exploitation to people (the first is labor exploitation).

This study is an interdisciplinary attempt in studying multimodal metaphor. Three-dimensional analysis to pictorial cases requires relatively large space, therefore, the amount of cases analyzed is insufficient and advertisements selected as research cases cover limited industries. Therefore, the persuasion and universality are limited, even if typical cases can provide us with a window to see the vast and colorful metaphor world. Besides, as the qualitative method is the one which requires high researchers' involvement, the process of analyzing data may be influenced by researcher bias. Considering the insufficient amount of cases, corpus method will be a practical solution to overcome it. With the aid of some multimodal corpus tool, more pictorial cases can be collected. Collecting more typical cases, classifying them into different categories and analyzing systematically are the goals which multimodal metaphor research should strive for. As for the influence of researcher bias, triangular verification to analysis can be applied to reduce subjectiveness, for example, collecting other people's understanding to the hidden message conveyed in ads.

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