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Visual wine metaphor and metonymy in ads

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Abstract

The aim of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy a product or service. A distinct feature of advertising is its reliance on pictures to achieve this aim. Many ad images encode a metaphor. In this paper we posit the view that visual metaphor relies upon perceptual similarity, conceptual similarity, or in the combination of both types. We shall examine the ways in which visual metaphors in Spanish ads for wines are construed on the basis of formal and conceptual criteria. Two issues will be addressed: (i) the representation of the target and the source; (ii) the role of visual metaphor as a persuasive strategy which enhances the appeal of wine.

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1. Introduction

The goal of advertising is to persuade prospective consumers of the benefits or positive attributes of a product or service. A distinct feature of advertising is its reliance on pictures to achieve this goal. Many ad images instantiate a metaphor. In the last years visual (or pictorial) metaphor (e.g. Forceville, 2002) has been a research line within metaphor theory. Many studies have focused on the use of visual metaphor in specialised language, including economics (e.g. Rojo & Orts, 2010) political cartooning (e.g. El Refaie, 2003, 2009; Shiperoord & Maes, 2009) and advertising (Forceville, 1994, 1996, 2008; Cortés, 2001; Velasco-Sacristán & Fuertes-Olivera, 2004, 2006a,b; Caballero, 2009; Urios-Aparisi, 2009). The present article is concerned with the use of visual metaphor in ads for

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wines. The choice of the domain of wine is justified on the grounds of its cultural and linguistic relevance, which has given rise to a new genre, winespeak. Some investigations have shown the role of verbal metaphor (Amararitei, 2002; Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008; Negro, 2011; Bosio & Cubo, 2012, 2013) and visual metaphor (Caballero, 2009; Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2010) in Spanish, English and French wine discourse. This contribution examines visual wine metaphors in a corpus of Spanish and French ads.

Within the Cognitive Metaphor Theory (e.g. Lakoff, 1987, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Kövecses, 2002; cf. Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez, 2011 for assessment on the later versions), metaphor involves understanding a domain of experience (target) in terms of a concrete domain (source). Cross-domain mapping thus relies upon conceptual similarity.

In the cognitive view, visual metaphor is the pictorial representation of a metaphorical concept. It is the relationship between the source and the target that generates the metaphorical link between them.

Several models have been developed for the analysis of visual metaphors in terms of their formal and/or conceptual features. Most models highlight the importance of visual structure. Thus, Forceville's (1994, 1996) taxonomy of visual metaphor differentiates four types of pictorial metaphor on the basis of the way the target and the source are physically pictured in the ad:

1. Pictorial simile: the source and the target are present but shown separately.
2. Hybrid metaphor: the source and the target are merged into a new composite object.
3. Contextual metaphor: only the target is present, whereas the source can be inferred from the visual context.
4. Integrated (or verbo-pictorial) metaphor: the metaphor is cued visually and verbally.

Other researchers (e.g. Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004) further differentiate visual figures in terms of the meaning operation required to comprehend the image. They postulate three types of cognitive processing: connection ('A is associated with B'), comparison for similarity ('A is like B') and comparison for contrast ('A is not like B').

In this paper we shall examine visual metaphor in wine ads on both the formal and conceptual level. It is also argued that conceptual similarity can be grounded on perceptual similarity, i.e. direct physical similarity between the source object and the target object.

An important point to be mentioned is that advertising metaphors often have a metonymic basis. Metaphor-metonymy interaction has been discussed by a number of scholars (e.g. Ruiz de Mendoza & Ota, 2002; González, Peña & Pérez, 2011). We follow Ruiz de Mendoza and Ota's (2002) view that, whenever metaphor and metonymy interact, it is the latter that is subsidiary to the former.

2. Analysis of visual metaphor in wine ads

To illustrate the presence of visual metaphor in wine advertising, we have analysed a sample of online Spanish and French ads. The Spanish ads have been drawn from the online version of the magazine *Vino-Vinum* published between January and May 2011.

The first two ads (Fig. 1 and 2) enhance wine by drawing an analogy between wines and women, 'appeal' being the mappable feature. This is particularly noticeable in the ad for Vaudois wines (Fig. 1), where we see a sexy woman holding a glass of wine in her hand. In structural terms, we are thus confronted with a pictorial simile.



Fig. 1. Ad for Vaudois wines.

On the other hand, the ad for Foxy wines (Fig. 2) encodes a hybrid metaphor inasmuch as the woman's neckline is fused with a glass of Foxy wine to show the surface similarity between both objects in terms of shape. The conceptual similarity between the source and the target is thus perceptually grounded.



Fig. 2. Ad for Foxy Wine House.

The visual metaphors underlying the next set of ads enhance the quality of the wine advertised. In the ad for Pagos del Rey wines (Fig. 3) the product is promoted by establishing a relationship of similarity between the wines and king cards. The choice of these cards is meaningful in that it enhances the product's high quality. Structurally, the image is an instance of hybrid metaphor, since the bottles of wine are superimposed on the cards. It is worth mentioning that the visual metaphor is verbally backed up by the legend Póker de reyes 'Poker of kings'.



Fig. 3. Ad for Pagos del Rey wines.

The visual metaphors triggered by the images in the ads shown in Fig. 4, 5 and 6 work as more powerful promotional tools by presenting the wine as an upmarket high-quality product through a conceptual similarity between the domain of wines and the positively valued domains of top fashion design, sculpture and jewellery, respectively. They thus borrow the positive associations of wine: quality, social prestige, etc. No perceptual features back up the analogy drawn between source and target. In the ad in Fig. 4 the Taittinger champagne is compared to a mannequin. The link is supported by the text *Alta gastronomía* ('Top gastronomy'), a collocation formed from *alta costura* 'top fashion design', the source domain. The source object is absent; it is thus a contextual metaphor.



Fig. 4. Ad for the El Corte Inglés Club del Gourmet.

A similar visual metaphor is cued by the ad for the Louis Roederer champagne (Fig. 5). The picture establishes a conceptual similarity between the champagne and a sculpture. Structurally, we deal with a further case of hybrid metaphor inasmuch as the image depicts a sculpture with the shape of a bottle and the champagne label. Interestingly, the metaphor is also signaled verbally through the word *oeuvre* ‘work of art’ in the verbal tag.



Fig. 5. Ad for Louis Roederer champagne.

The last visual metaphor that highlights the high quality of a wine is activated by the image of the ad for the Pineau de Charentes wine brand (Fig. 6), where red and white wines are equated with ruby and gold earrings. The metaphor is also verbally rendered, as shown in the caption: *Bijoux d’or et de rubis* ‘Gold and ruby jewels’. From a structural point of view, it is pictorial simile: the source object (the earrings) is depicted above the target object (two glasses of wine). It is relevant to mention the function of colour in this ad. Colour is the basis for establishing a perceptual link between the source and the target objects in terms of a common attribute.



Fig. 6. Ad for the Pineau de Charentes wine brand.

In contrast with the previous ads, the visual metaphors manifested in the next ads contribute to product promotion by highlighting particular features of the wine advertised. Thus, in the ad for the Carat Luxury champagne (Fig. 7), the wine is pictured as a meteorite. The metaphor has a metonymic basis since the source object points to one of the wine components, i.e. solubilized dust from a meteorite from the moon or Mars. The metaphor thus relies on a whole-part metonymy.



Fig. 7. Ad for Carat Luxury champagne.

Although there seems to be a relatively high occurrence of visual metaphors in wine ads, we have encountered a few instances of metonymy. Like metaphor, metonymy presents an entity in terms of another entity. The difference lies in the nature of the two mappings. While a metaphor involves two conceptual domains, a metonymy involves just one. The image of the ad for Oregon wines (Fig. 8) instantiates a metonymy. In structural terms, we see a hybrid object that results from the fusion of a wine bottle with the roots of a vineyard. The metonymy is based on the production frame, involving a person (i.e. a wine-grower) making something (i.e. wine) from another entity (i.e. fruit). The metonymy places the emphasis on a particular feature of the fruit from which Oregon wine is made, namely ‘organic’, thus serving as a promotional strategy. This product feature is also highlighted by the verbal element: *All Agriculture Was Organic*.

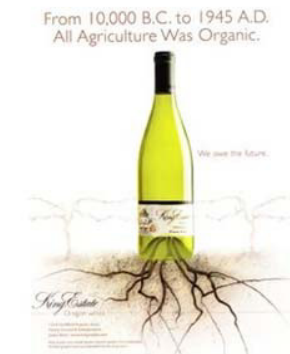


Fig. 8. Ad for Oregon wines.

3. Conclusion

The present article has explored the way metaphors are expressed in the visual mode in wine ads. We have provided a description of visual metaphor in terms of the underlying concepts, the representation of the source and target objects and the relationship between them. The analysis of a corpus of wine ads shows the following facts:

1. The study of visual metaphor involves both structural (i.e. the visual form of the metaphor) and conceptual (i.e. the meaning operation involved) considerations.
2. Visual metaphor contributes to the primary goal of advertising by promoting the product. Our study has illustrated the use of visual metaphor to enhance various aspects of wine: (a) its appeal; (b) its high quality, and (c) particular features.
3. Visual metaphor may be based on a metonymy.

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