

## Multimodal Metaphors in American Tea TV Commercials

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ictep.2332>

Received: 03/11/2022

Revision: 07/12/2022

Accepted: 13/12/2022

Online: 06/01/2023

### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

multimodal metaphors,  
domain choices, tea  
TV commercials,  
America

In this paper, it is shown that multimodal metaphors occurring in American tea TV commercials usually draw on a combination of visual, verbal and sonic modes (Forceville, 2007). The descriptive and comparative methods are employed in order to evaluate research on a theoretical background involved in the analysis of multimodal metaphors and the role of three modes in ten cases. This paper is put forward with three main aims: (1) the choices of target and source domains, (2) the frequency of modality, and (3) the metaphors with the representation of the target customers in American tea TV commercials. The findings of the preceding study contribute to the results of Forceville (2007) and serve as the first parameter in the analysis of multimodal metaphors in American beverage advertising.

### Introduction

To appeal to targeted customers in TV commercials, copywriters and artists typically employ two rhetorical devices to communicate with people: metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor and metonymy, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), are the two most important methods by which individuals transmit meaning. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also stated that metaphors are primarily a phenomenon of thought rather than of language, so a number of researches on conceptual metaphors under the light of cognitive linguistics have been studied in the world. However, technology, on the other hand, is rapidly evolving and infiltrating every aspect of life. Besides, the use of television as a driving force motivates scientists in general, and linguists in particular, to adopt a new method that is in step with the current trend. Print ads were a rich supply of information for advertising scholars in the past, but with the invention of television, a successful commercial must have vibrant sound, appealing graphics, and a logical and short message to captivate the audience. This demonstrates the conceptual metaphors' limitations. As a result, based on characteristics of TV advertisements, Forceville (2007) laid the groundwork for multimodal metaphors examining the roles of visual, sonic and verbal modes. In other words, conceptual metaphor researches texts in light of perception, and multimodal metaphors study how modes (visual, sonic, and verbal) impact the target and domain choices in mapping. It is meant that multimodal metaphors supplement conceptual metaphors. Since then, studies of multimodal metaphors have been done in different areas, yet in beverage advertising, especially in television commercials, there have been just a few. Besides, tea is

common and used anytime in America, so tea advertising on television has played a certain role in market share as well as in the hearts of the audience. For the aforementioned explanations, the study will concentrate on analyzing the multimodal metaphors used in American TVC of tea within the Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

## Literature review

Forceville (2006: 4) defines "mode" as a sign system that can be deciphered through a certain perceptual process. The ability of one mode to produce "meaning" can never be fully "translated" into another mode. In metaphor, according to Forceville (2009), there are eight modes: spoken language, written language, visuals, music, nonverbal sound, smell, taste, and touch. In reality, commercial metaphors frequently use more than one medium of communication, including (1) visual; (2) written language; (3) spoken language; (4) nonverbal sound; and (5) music (Forceville, 2008). The classification of modes used in this study is primarily based on Forceville's (2007: 20) as illustrated:

- Because advertising plays out in real-time, the target and source do not have to be shown (or implied) at the same time; they can be shown in any order.
- A metaphorical phrase (target or source) can be expressed acoustically, through a musical theme or nonverbal sound, in addition to visually or audibly.
- Framing and camera movement provide formal tools to generate metaphoric resemblance that single static images do not.

In the realm of multimodal metaphors, although the implications from the source domains in the metaphors are significant in their interpretation, as Forceville (2006: 389) (cited in Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009) admits, they also allow greater opportunity for interpretation. This undertaking also necessitates knowledge of the target domain (in this case, wine) as well as the schemas that underpin the wine community's distinctive worldview. According to Forceville (2009), systematic patterns and correlations may be found between distinct source domains and product types. In order to investigate the many items to which researchers may apply, there is also a range of a specific source domains. The link between language, marketing, and culture is also highlighted. While product advertisers may be confident in their ability to elicit specific schemas or embodied components of metaphor in their target audience, other individual and culturally bound schemas would be out of their hands. Forceville (2007) showed three characteristics of multimodal metaphors in commercials. First, the metaphor's target domain is represented within the text itself, and the products/targets are all represented graphically - however, a product with a particularly specific sound may be depicted with merely an acoustic target. Second, the source domain is cued first, followed by the target domain. This discovery first looks perplexing since it differs from normal forms of verbal metaphors, in which the target often occurs before the source. Last, the features mapped from source to target are always favorable - unless the target is not the marketed product but a competitor brand to be disparaged. It is meant that the source domain must have a higher status in the relevant dimension than the target - the promoted product. Therefore, the foundation for the paper in the process of data analysis and assessment of study outcomes are the three above key features in

multimodal metaphors.

In terms of methods of the identification of metaphors, Bobrova's (2015) approach is taken into account in order to build a framework for assessing multimodal conversation. The three criteria of Forceville (2006, 2008) and Forceville, C., & Urios-Aparisi, E.(2009) established in the number of research for recognizing multimodal metaphors are supplemented by Bobrova's proposed set of identification procedures. Bobrova's approach to identifying multimodal metaphors consists of three parts. *Step 1 (The identification of potential metaphors in TV ads)*, according to her clarification, solves Forceville's initial query by looking for images of objects, events, or scenarios made using three filmic techniques - compelling context, juxtaposition, and transformation). *Step 2 (Identification of cognitively prominent projected features)* responds to Forceville's third question by comparing and contrasting the schemas of commercially created objects, scenes, or events created through context manipulation, juxtaposition, and transformation with the schemas of these entities as they are perceived in reality. *Step 3 (Identification of source and target domains and verbal formulation of cross-domain mapping)* addresses Forceville's second question by determining which of two entities participating in one of three metaphorical contexts serves as the source and target domains. It also intends to convert a detected cross-domain mapping into words and assess the modality status of the discovered metaphor. Therefore, Bobrova's approach is an excellent source of reference and framework for the study.

### *Research Questions*

This paper is put forward with three main aims: (1) the choices of source domains, (2) the frequency of modality, and (3) the metaphors with the representation of the target customers in American tea TV commercials. Therefore, the study raises the following research questions:

1. What domains are used in American tea TV commercials?
2. How are the domains generated multimodally in American tea TV commercials?

## **Methods**

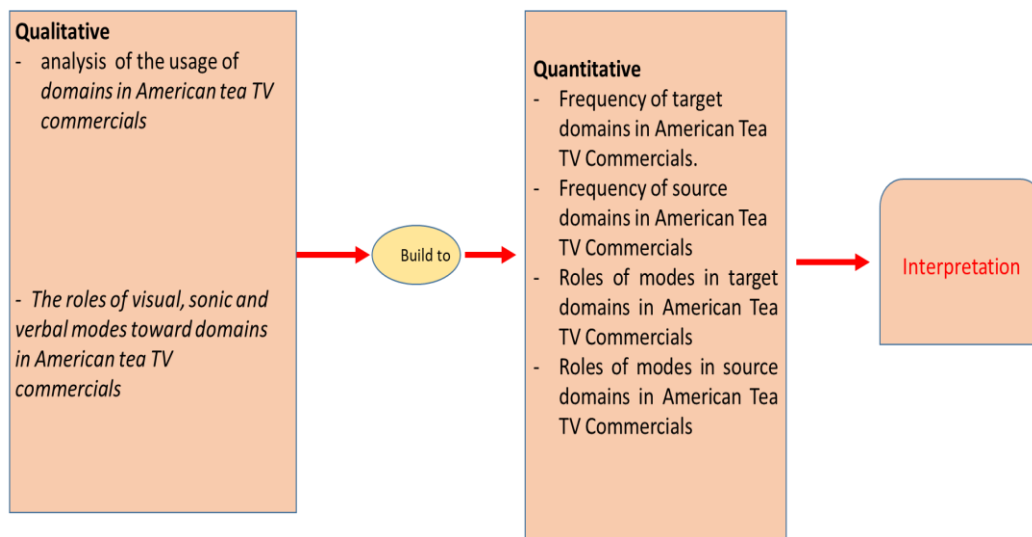
### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

The data contains ten TV ads from 2020 to April 2022. 10 advertisements which consisted of three modes (visual, music and verbal modes) were created in America from the website of iSpotTV. Unlike historical and ad hoc alternatives, iSpotTV is created with the specific intent of measuring each television advertisement's success in real-time with digital-like precision and granularity. Advertisers can act quickly and confidently to consistently deliver business results thanks to always-on performance insights that are harmonized across linear and streaming TV. Therefore, this is a trustworthy website that gathers statistics on US advertising with accurate information about each commercial, including the music, actors, marketing campaigns, and other data for research. Moreover, the length of the advertisements is from 15 to 30 seconds. The advertisements collected are typed and encoded from A1 to A10. For the convenience of the study, advertising on television is converted into text and translated by the author of this study.

### Design of the Study

The author examines modes' roles in promotional videos, identifies target and source domains, and then counts how frequently the modes appear. Following that, statistics on the occurrence of domain choices are generated. As a result, the mixed approach used in this investigation is an *exploratory sequential mixed methods design*. It is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1. The exploratory sequential mixed methods design of the study



### Data collection & analysis

The steps of the data collection procedure were as follows:

- Step 1: Raw materials are TV beverage commercials. These TV commercials were examined the origin, publishers, length and marketing campaigns related to them. After that, they were coded American tea TV commercials. Then, they were transcribed into written texts; and the author translated American TV beverage commercials into Vietnamese.
- Step 2: 10 commercials were closely watched to identify roles of modes (visual, sonic and verbal)
- Step 3: 10 commercials were visualized to collect target and source domains.
- Step 4: A closer analysis of modalities and their relationships was carried out by clearly stating which modalities cue the target and the source domains.

In this study, qualitative analysis is adopted in research questions 1 and 2. The qualitative analysis takes into consideration how metaphor is specifically realized from each mode. In addition, such factors as contextual features of the commercials are also analyzed so that the meaning of the metaphor could be more thoroughly interpreted. Besides, quantitative analysis is applied in detail, such as in two research questions, the frequency and percentage of domain choices in American tea commercials are investigated. In research question 2, the frequency and percentage of modes of multimodal metaphors are also explored. In short, the data gathering technique serves as a road map to guide data analysis and so establish a data analysis procedure. The analytic sample is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. The analytic sample of the study

<b>Compelling Context</b>	<b>Modes</b>			<b>Metaphors</b>	
<p>One of the Bigelow family's granddaughters recalls how her grandmother founded their tea business in New York. The business is still owned by the family today. She thinks that drinking Bigelow tea will help you have a private moment.</p>	<b>visual</b>	visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* image of a girl going down a New York street, her eyes raised and reminiscing</li> <li>* Her grandmother and she are inspecting the quality of the coffee beans in this photograph.</li> <li>* A female worker is shown holding a tea box.</li> <li>* Coffee cup image with logo and brand tagline</li> </ul>	<p>Each of her activities is accompanied by photographs. And those activities are analogous to human actions. Furthermore, the visuals and written material at the end of the promotional movie all underline the girl's sense of pride in the product, as well as the sense of pride that the product gives to consumers. This is also a human emotion. It meant that "A drink is a person"</p>	
		<b>verbal</b>	spoken		female voice- beginning: think, compromising, won't let, expect, cover, hope
	written		written text at the end: tea proudly		
	<b>sonic</b>	sonic	no		
		music	*Youthful music expressing a love of life.		
	<b>visual</b>	visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The image of a company employee carrying a tea box with care and respect. She has a pleasant and adorable smile.</li> <li>* image of people having fun with the goods</li> <li>*The image of her discussing the worth of the goods, her calm and truthful demeanor</li> </ul>		<p>The image of a company employee carrying a tea box with care and respect. She has a warm and charming grin. This could imply that this item is a valuable gift. The subsequent visual modes in this commercial then complement the verbal modes. Her statements appear to have the term "give" as the act of providing a present, then "especially for you" in her remark, implying that the corporation is the gift provider, and the consumer is the gift recipient. It meant that "a drink is a gift."</p>
			<b>verbal</b>		
	written	no			
	<b>sonic</b>	sonic	no		
		music	no		

	<b>visual</b>	visual	* The image of the girl remembering when her grandmother began the company here *Photograph of her grandparents and her inspecting the quality of coffee beans *Image of a female worker holding a coffee box. *Photographs of people drinking coffee	Every image in the girl's stream of thoughts about her home tea enterprise supports the words. The adventure begins with the establishment of a tea firm. The process of the journey begins while the company is still maintained and run as a family business. The experience gained during the trip is a moment that the product brings to the customer. Her grandmother founded the company, and she is now an operator as the journey's leader; the company's customers as passengers. It is meant that "A drink is a journey."
	<b>verbal</b>	spoken	female voice: * start here in New York *we're still a family company *a Moment just for you	
		written	no	
	<b>sonic</b>	sonic	no	
music		no		

Source: <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/Z0b1/bigelow-tea-every-cup-counts>

## Results/Findings and Discussion

After identifying the conceptual metaphor, the author conducts statistics on target and source domains in American tea TV commercials. The frequency of target domains is listed in the following table:

Table 2. Frequency of target domains in American Tea TV Commercials

No	Target domains	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	a drink	1,2,4,1,3,5,1,4,6,6,6,7,7,7,8,8,9,9,10	19	65.5%
2	happiness	5,7,8,9,10	5	17.2%
3	quality	8	1	3.4%
4	beauty	7,9,10	3	10.3%
5	coldness	9	1	3.4%
<b>Total</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen from Table 2, the target domain - *a drink* ranks first with a high proportion (65.5%). This demonstrates that advertising videos emphasizing brand identification are incredibly effective. *Happiness* is placed second with a rating of 17.2%. This is regarded as the guiding philosophy of the tea advertising business in the United States, and drinking is a source of joy. Beauty ranks third place with a rate of 10.3%, which is seen as one method of touching viewers' emotions with themes that are always of interest to everyone. Furthermore, in TV advertising, the coldness of the tea bottle or the quality of the goods is figurative. The ratio of these two target domains is the same (3,4 %). Target domains illustrate the product, its usage,

and benefits toward customers, which attract viewers with images, speeches, and sound and music. Then, customers understand the functions of the products and desire to buy them. Next, source domain choices are shown in the next table:

Table 3. Frequency of source domains in American Tea TV Commercials

No	Source domains	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	a person	A1, 2,4,7,9,10	6	26.09%
2	drinking	5,7,8,9,10	5	21.74%
3	a dose	6,7	2	8.70%
4	a friend	5,6,8	3	13.04%
5	journey	1,3	2	8.70%
6	Gift	1	1	4.35%
7	dish	4,7,8,9	4	17.39%
8	a container of pureness	7,9,10	3	13.04%
9	Ice	9	1	4.35%
10	the sun	8	1	4.35%
11	a musical instrument	6	1	4.35%
<b>Total</b>			<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentages of source domains in American tea TV advertisements. While *a person* ranks first with the highest portion (26.09%), *a friend* with three appearances was ranked fourth, and *a container of pureness* with 13,04%. Thus, the majority of source domains that are human or related to people are taken up conceptual metaphors. Besides, drinking ranked second place with 5 times appearances so this source domain aids in product recognition. Moreover, drinks are always accompanied by food, which leads to *a disk* ranked third with a rate of 17.39%. Then, *a dose* and *a journey* have the same proportion (8.7%). Last, *ice*, *the sun*, *gift* and *a musical instrument* take the same percentage (4.35%). Next, to identify the mix of audio, picture, and voice in the selection of source and source domains, we will first list the roles of modes in the target domain in American Tea TV advertisements in table 4:

Table 4. Roles of modes in target domains in American Tea TV Commercials

Number	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	IVS	19	36.5%
2	IV	24	46.2%
3	IS	2	3.8%
4	VS	1	1.9%
5	I	6	11.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>

I: image

V: verbal

S: sonic

The combination of visuals and words placed top out of five types of mode combinations, with



46.2%. The combination of all three modalities comes in second with a rate of 36.5%. Notably, product photos may still wow the audience on their own. Therefore the image's part contributes to 11.5%, placing third. With two times frequency, the combination of pictures and sounds ranks fourth. Finally, the combination of voice and sound accounts for a modest proportion (1.9%). As a result, visuals' role in product identification serves as a closure and is the most effective technique in movie advertising. Images can be paired with sounds and words, or simply one of the two, or alone, to assist viewers in grasping what this product is, causing them to be drawn to and fall in love with it. Besides, the following table examines the roles of modes in source domains in American Tea TV Commercials:

Table 5. Roles of modes in source domains in American Tea TV Commercials

Number	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	IVS	17	63.0%
2	IV	9	33.3%
3	IS	0	0.0%
4	VS	1	3.7%
5	I	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

I: image      V: verbal      S: sonic

As you can see from table 5, when representing the source domain, there are three potential mode combinations: IVS, IV, and VS. The combination of all three modalities ranks first, accounting for 63% of all appearances. In second place is the combination of pictures and words that has fewer than half the number of appearances as the first-place combination. Finally, the combination of voice and sound occurs just once, accounting for 3.7% of the total.

Based on the findings, there are some major results to answer the research questions of the study

#### *Question 1: What domains are used in American tea TV commercials?*

In terms of target domains, *a drink* ranks top with a substantial share (65.5%). This illustrates how powerful advertising videos promoting brand recognition are. *Happiness* comes in second place with a rating of 17.2%. Drinking is a source of delight, according to the guiding idea of the tea advertising sector in the United States. *Beauty* ranks third with a rate of 10.3% and is viewed as one manner of reaching viewers' emotions with topics that are always of interest to everyone. Furthermore, the *tea bottle's coolness* or *the items' quality* is symbolic in TV advertising. Thus, five target domains demonstrate the product, its utilization, and its benefits to clients, attracting viewers using images, voices, sound, and music. Customers then comprehend the purposes of the items and aspire to purchase them. This is also the purpose of tea advertisements in general, and beverage advertisements in particular.

In terms of source domains, while *a person* has the biggest part (26.09%), *a friend* with three appearances is placed fourth, and *a container of pureness* is ranked fifth with 13,04%. As a result, conceptual metaphors are used in the majority of source domains that are human or connected to humans. Furthermore, *drinking* was placed second with 5 times appearances,



suggesting this source domain assists in product awareness. Furthermore, drinks are always served with meals *a dish*, which contributes to a disk ranking third. The percentage of *a dose* and *a journey* is hence the same (8.7%). Last but not least, *ice*, *the sun*, *a gift*, and *a musical instrument* all have the lowest proportion. Thus, 11 source domains are existing in tea advertising in the US, with a focus on *a person (appearance, activities, emotions, and body) and issues related to a person (a friend- relationship)*. Things close to people are also included to optimize the source domain, making it easier for viewers to understand the uses and functions of the product.

In conclusion, the number of representations in the source domain is roughly twice as large as that in the target domain, which supplements the findings of Forceville (2007). First, the metaphor's target domain is indicated within the text, and the products/targets are all visually portrayed - however, keep in mind that a product with a very specific sound may be shown with only an acoustic target. Second, the source domain is cued before the target domain. This result appears odd at first because it contrasts with standard forms of verbal metaphors in which the target frequently comes before the source.

#### *Question 2: How are the domains generated multimodally in American tea TV commercials?*

In terms of the roles of modes toward target domains, with 46.2%, the combination of pictures and words ranked first among five sorts of mode pairings. With a rate of 36.5%, the combination of all three modalities comes in second. Notably, product photographs may still dazzle the audience on their own. Therefore the image's component ranks third. The combination of images and sounds ranks fourth. Finally, a small amount (1.9%) is accounted for by the combination of voice and sound. As a consequence, the role of visuals in product identification serves as closing and is the most effective strategy in tea advertising.

In terms of the roles of modes toward source domains, there are three possible mode combinations for expressing the source domain: IVS, IV, and VS. The combination of all three modalities comes in first, with 63% of all appearances. The combination of photos and text in second place has fewer than half the amount of appearances as the first-place combination. Finally, voice and sound are combined just once, accounting for 3.7% of the total.

In a word, when representing both source and destination domains in metaphors, the significance of pictures is always important. However, when expressing the target domain, the types of expression are slightly richer than when expressing the source domain, which differs slightly from Forceville (2007). As a result, even if the target domain is simply an image of the product, the source domain throws additional light on it. This may also be explained by advertising makers focusing on presenting the source domain most clearly by combining all three modes in order to assist viewers in comprehending and effectively touching the emotions of buyers.

## Conclusion

The paper gave a core picture of multimodal metaphors in 10 American tea TV commercials. An exploratory sequential mixed methods design is employed in order to proceed with three main objectives: (1) the choices of domains, (2) the frequency of modality, and (3) the metaphors with the representation of the target customers in American tea TV commercials.

Besides, the data is still restricted (10 cases), which has an impact on the results, and this is merely a case study with no general review of the full corpus of beverage TV advertising. However, the findings of the preceding study serve as the next stage in the investigation of multimodal metaphors in American and Vietnamese beverage advertising. The corpus will eventually be expanded to include nonalcoholic and alcoholic beverage ads, affording a complete view of multimodal metaphors in American and Vietnamese beverage commercials.

## Acknowledgment

The author of this research acknowledged was wholeheartedly supported by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hoang Tuyet Minh, VNU- International School, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Viet Nam

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## Data

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A3 [https://www.ispot.tv/ad/qws\\_/red-diamond-sweet-tea-tea-leaves-from-everywhere](https://www.ispot.tv/ad/qws_/red-diamond-sweet-tea-tea-leaves-from-everywhere)  
A4 <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/OzOF/snapple-produce>  
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