

MATCHING ADVERTISEMENT LAYOUT WITH METAPHOR FACILITATES COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to advance metaphor theory in the domain of consumer behaviour by demonstrating that deep-rooted metaphors can have a measurable impact on comprehension and ad liking. Everyday expressions such as "I'm feeling up/down" reveal that people assign spatial orientations to some abstract concepts: for example, "happy is up". In line with the view that metaphor is an integral part of our conceptual system, our results demonstrate that comprehension of advertisements is significantly facilitated when the spatial organisation of ad components (e.g., headline, product image, visuals) follows the mental spatial arrangement of their corresponding orientational metaphor. This metaphor-consistency effect was confirmed for three orientational metaphors relating to the concepts of happiness, power, and time. Although results were mixed, our findings seem to further suggest that metaphor-consistency can have an impact on attitudes towards the ad when the (metaphorically structured) concept is valued by consumers. We conclude by suggesting that metaphor research can significantly enrich advertising theory and provide the basis for questioning some well-established advertising practices.