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Culture and metaphors in advertisements: France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States

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Culture in Advertisements: France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, United States

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Abstract

Using a content analysis of 87 French, German, Italian, Dutch, and American magazine ads, variations in metaphors and cultural attributes were examined from culture-bound groups: food/beverages, automobiles, insurance/finance, and personal care.

Findings provide examples for how culture is reflected in language and symbols. The study shows metaphors are exploited in headlines to capture attention throughout all countries. However, metaphors and cultural attributes are used strategically within nations to deliver persuasive messages.

Metaphors

- Understanding one concept in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Nelson & Hitchen, 1999; Sapir 1977)

- Part of the human conceptual system (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

- Pervasive, can't do without (Berlin, 1981; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Leary 1995)

Metaphors

- Important in public communications:
  - Speeches (Bowers & Osborn, 1966; Fearing 1963; Reinsch, 1971; Siltanen, 1981)
  - Ads (Hitchen, 1991; Nelson & Hitchon 1995, 1999)
- Main types (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Reddy 1979)
  - Orientation
  - Ontological
  - Structural
  - Conduit/Container

Culture Dimensions

Hofstede (1980, 1991)
- Individualism/Collectivism
- Masculine/Feminine
- Power Distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Long/Short-term Orientation

Hall & Hall (1990)
- Low/High Context
- Information Flow
- Time-orientation
- Space-orientation

Culture Dimensions

Masculine/Feminine

1. Italy
2. United States (UK scores used)
3. Germany
4. France
5. Netherlands

Uncertainty Avoidance

1. France
2. Italy
3. Germany
4. Netherlands
5. United States (UK scores used)

Culture Dimensions

Individualism/Collectivism (Italy not included)
1. United States (UK scores used)
2. Netherlands
3. France
4. Germany

Power Distance
1. France
2. Italy
3. Netherlands
4. Germany
5. United States (UK scores used)

Culture and Advertising

- Ads use symbols, common practices to get messages across (Jhally, 1995; Lester, 1997)

- Ads reflect/construct culture (Dyer, 1982; Lester, 1997; Valdivia, 1997)

- Product categories can be placed on continuum (de Mooij, 1998, 2000)
  - Culture-free (cigarettes, hard liquor, perfume)
  - Culture-bound (food/beverages, autos, insurance/finance, personal care)

Research Questions

- What metaphors are used and why?

- How do metaphors differ across nations?

- What cultural attributes are used in conjunction with metaphors to create ad messages?

Method

- **Content analysis of magazine ads**
  - Purposive/Convenient, Popular, General Interest, Read by Men & Women
- **Ads chosen from 4 culture-bound categories**
  - Food/Beverages, Autos, Finance/Insurance, Personal Care
- **Ads reviewed for 4 metaphor types**
  - Orientation, Ontological, Structural, Conduit/Container
  - Translation/Interpretation with native speakers

Publications

- **France** – *Le Point*, December 10, 2009; *L'Express*, May 28, June 4, August 6, 20, October 8, 2009
- **Germany** – *Der Spiegel*, October 10, 2009; *Stern*, June 10, 2009
- **Italy** – *L'espresso*, June 11, 2009; *Oggi*, June 10, 2009;
- **Netherlands** – *Elsevier*, May 16, June 27, July 4, 2009; *Vrij Nederland (VN)*, April 18, June 6, July 18, 2009;
- **United States** – *Newsweek*, October 12, 2009; *Time*, June 15, 2009

Results

	France	Germany	Italy	Holland	U.S.
# Pages	*488*	*212*	*372*	*532*	*136*
# Ads					
Food/Bev	4	3	6	0	5
Autos	5	8	4	6	2
Ins/Finance	3	7	3	11	10
Personal Care	0	1	9	0	0
Total	12	19	22	17	17

Results

	France	Germany	Italy	Holland	U.S.	Total
Metaphor Type						
# Ads						
Orientation	3	2	4	3	2	14
Ontological	5	7	6	5	3	26
Structural	1	6	7	2	6	22
Conduit/	4	4	5	7	5	25
Total	13	19	22	17	16	87

Beverages

Coffee

Pellini

Particolare e Inconfondibile.

Armonia ed intensità di profumi,
un gusto delicato e raffinato che emoziona.
Pellini Top, Arabica 100%:
uno straordinario caffè, un'esperienza da sogno.

CAFFÈ
**PELLINI
TOP**

Arabica 100%

Oggi, June 10, 2009, p. 15

jura
SWISS ✦ MADE

If you love coffee

Roger Federer, erfolgreichster Tennis-Champion aller Zeiten

**Cappuccino auf Knopfdruck –
frisch gemahlen, frisch gebrüht.**

Für Tennis-Champion Roger Federer ist es selbst-
verständlich, dass alles perfekt auf ihn abgestimmt
ist. Auch der Kaffee seiner JURA IMPRESSA Z7. Den
genießt er am liebsten aus ganzen Bohnen, auf
Knopfdruck frisch gemahlen und perfekt gebrüht als
Espresso, Latte macchiato, Cappuccino, Ristretto.

www.jura.com

Neuheit: IMPRESSA Z7 – für Latte macchiato-Gläser bis 153 mm Höhe

Autos

Autos

Finance/Insurance

PEACE
OF
MIND

Think of life insurance from New York Life as a gift of financial protection. Since 1845, we've provided peace of mind through the toughest times. And we have the highest ratings for financial strength.* You see, as a mutual company, owned by our policyholders, we share your goal of providing for your family's long-term security. Give them the most selfless gift of all, a more secure future.

NEW YORK LIFE

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP®
www.newyorklife.com

*Standard & Poor's (AAA), A. M. Best (A++), Moody's (Aaa) and Fitch (AAA) for financial strength. Source: Individual Third Party Ratings Reports (as of 3/18/09).
© 2009 New York Life Insurance Company, 51 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010

Time, June 15, 2009 p. 70

GROTER
WONEN?

**Profiteer óók van de verhoogde
Nationale Hypotheek Garantie!**

De Nationale Hypotheek Garantie (NHG) is verhoogd naar € 350.000,-. U kunt daardoor veel makkelijker de overstap maken naar een grotere of leukere woning. U betaalt onder andere met de NHG vaak tot wel 0,6% minder rente. En dat is goed nieuws voor u en andere kopers in de markt. Bespaar veel tijd, geld en zorgen. Maak daarom vandaag nog een afspraak met een NVM-aankoopmakelaar. Hij laat u graag zien hoe ook ú kunt profiteren van de verhoogde NHG. Kijk op www.nvm.nl.

Goed gevoel
NVM

NVM

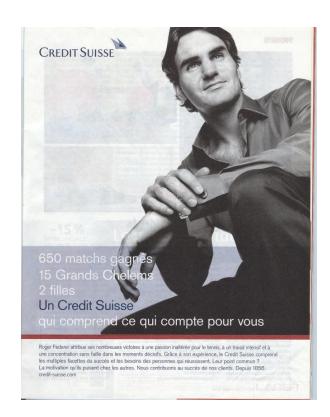VN July 18, 2009, p. 84

Finance/Insurance

Personal Care

Discussion

- Metaphors used in headlines
- Metaphors capture attention, aid understanding, create bond between product and audience - branding
- Metaphors play a key role based on culture
- Effectiveness enhance through strategic use of metaphors

Discussion

- Language used for branding, English found throughout

- In times of globalization, cultures still differ

- Culture is an important consideration in advertising and communication development