

THE USE OF MULTIMODALITY IN “AXE” TV COMMERCIALS TO COMMUNICATE MASCULINITY

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Abstract.

Advertisements in the digital era creatively make use of writing, speech, images, and music to promote goods and services. This multimodality is used to persuade customers. Likewise, TV commercials have adopted multimodality for “a creatively communicative interaction” to support the goods and services advertised. Some studies on multimodality on media have been conducted but those on advertisements are still scarcely done, especially in Indonesia. Importantly, advertisements as sample of short functional texts belongs to curriculum aspects of the English subject for the students of the ninth grade in Indonesia (the Ministry of Education and Culture, 68, 2013). The TV commercials of “Axe” perfume product attracted the writer to conduct a research on multimodality. The English version of “Axe” TV commercials was chosen as the case under study. The analysis done indicated that “Axe” TV commercials contained a set of chronologically effective organization of multimodality which represented a set of creative sequence of the use of language, images and music to signify a persuasive, advertisement discourse attribute.

Key words: *Multimodality, TV Commercial, Axe*

Introduction

In general, advertisement as a sample of discourse can be primarily divided into three major groups: print (newspapers, magazines, and so forth), audio (radio), and audio-visual (internet websites and TV) ads. As reflected by its name, advertisement is creatively designed to communicate meanings or messages through the proper use of a language, relevant pictures or images, and or with a piece of illustrative music to effectively persuade people to buy, consume, or use the services and goods under promotion.

Neglecting the plus and minus of an advertisement, the production of an advertisement through which meanings are rooted from the inclusion of multi-modes of communication have attracted scholars of persuasive discourse to have hot discussions on it. The persuasive messages of advertisements can be presented in numerous ways, such as factual messages, scientific/technical evidence, demonstration, comparison, life testimony,

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animation, personality symbol, imagery, dramatization, humor, and combination of these ways (Belch, 2012; Fill, 2009; Wells et al., 2006; Duncan, 2005). Thus, pictures, words, tone (general atmosphere or manner expression), and style (somewhat identical with the ways of building “consumer” identity) form multimodality which is then unified by the message of storytelling and consistency, creating an attention-getting and memorable message with which pictures, language and music are elaborated to develop informational/rational appeals and specific attributes (ibid). Dealing with advertisement features on TV ads, the ideal integrity of visual images, sound, motion, and color are necessarily developed to produce the most creative and imaginative appeals to present the advertising message (Belch, 2012; Fill, 2009; Wells et al., 2006; Duncan, 2005). Consequently, people nowadays are faced towards easy-listening audio (verbal actions of spoken slogans or dialogues or monologues, or music), imaginative and persuasive visual images (written slogans, dialogues, monologues, a series of non-verbal actions (gestures), states (backgrounds, settings) in a diversity of TV commercials.

The use of multi modes in TV ads production attracted the researcher to conduct a study on the use of the multimodality in conveying TV commercials. The use of writing, speech, images and sounds of TV commercials show somewhat greater tendency of interesting realization of multimodality issues compared to printed and audio ads. A perfume product of “Axe” drew the researcher’s attention to conduct a critical discourse study because the feasibility of the interesting arrangement of multimodality showed a tendency to denote a possibility of discourse theme, that was, masculineness identity. The researcher was interested in “Axe” because its ads often appeared on TV commercial channels. Besides, the ads had also been uploaded to YouTube and watched by numerous internet visitors (see appendix 1). This study was intended to understand in depth how multimodality was creatively used to produce Axe TV commercials in English version, particularly at understanding deeply how multimodality is used to reflect masculinity.

In line with the title and the background of this study, a major research is formulated as follows: How is multimodality used to communicate adult identity persuasively in “Axe” TV commercials?

The, to answer the major research question, three sub-research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is language (both spoken and written) as a component of modality used to express the adult identity in the “Axe” TV ads?
2. How is visualization as a component of modality used to express the adult identity in the “Axe” TV ads?
3. How is music as a component of modality used to express the adult identity in the “Axe” TV ads?

The Origin of Persuasive Discourse

The superseding perspectives on persuasive discourse from various experts might happen, but the goal of this theoretical adoption of persuasive discourse is important to support the recent study and, therefore, persistently lies on the origin of persuasive discourse paradigms. Preliminary, Hovland, one of the earliest modern researchers who has done versatile research on persuasion and attitude change, developed the Social Judgment Theory stating that one has a statement or message and that one either accepts or rejects it on the basis of one's cognitive map (Hovland, et al., 1953). A part of the theory is Source Credibility Theory according to which people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible (Sherif & Hovland, 1961), interpreting that individuals have three zones in which they accept or reject specific messages or attitudes, viz. acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment.

The Theory of Social Judgment, then, has expanded to contribute the development of persuasive discourse. Lakoff (1982) has defined persuasive discourse as a type of discourse that non-reciprocally attempts to effect persuasion, that is, to change the behavior, feelings, intentions or viewpoint of another by communicative means that may be linguistic or nonlinguistic (say, gestures), abstract and symbolic. Lakoff exemplified types of discourse to fall into this category, namely, advertising, propaganda, political rhetoric and religious sermons. From Lakoff's idea, it can be implied that persuasive discourse is closely related to any type of discourse that calls for "persuasion" from other.

The Nature of Advertisement

The meanings of advertisement have been connected with the five strategic goals: attracting prospective customer's attention, arousing interest, stimulating desire, creating conviction, and getting a positive a (Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985). Advertisement has a close relation to language and situation (Leech 1966). Language and situation of advertisement are identified as elements of modes of communication to execute its particular meanings or messages.

In details, the meanings, with which pictures and language (both representing multimodality) are elaborated to develop informational/rational appeals and specific attributes, can be presented or executed in numerous ways, given examples, straight sell or factual message, scientific/technical evidence, demonstration, comparison, testimonial slice of life, animation, personality symbol, imagery, dramatization, humor, and combination (Belch, 2012).

Relatedly, Wells et al. (2006) propose a set of advertisement message transfer strategies covering perception (attention and awareness, interest and memory), cognition (information understanding), emotion (psychological appeals), persuasion (attractive, interesting and logical appeals and conviction), brand as product transformation, and action (trial or purchase), all

of which image (visual cues) and language are probably collaborated.

The Nature of Multimodality

Iedema (2001, 2003) defines multimodality as the ways of highlighting the importance of figuring out semiotics other than language-in-use, such as image, gesture, etc. Again, it is supplementary to Gee's (1999, 2011). The inclusion of the social semiotic analysis of multimodal discourse discusses language (talk), visuals, and sound to centralize a particular discourse as a reaction to a certain set of events to attempt the facilitation of the events (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996, 2001). Furthermore, Kress (2010) adds that image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack, and 3D objects are modes that contribute to make meaning and, therefore, multimodality can tell the utilization of modes. Once, modes indicate a set of shaped and culturally given social semiotic resources for making meaning through representation and communication (ibid).

Similarly, Gee (1999, 2011) points out that multimodality which combines words and images as well as music possibly appear in ads, music, videos and video games. Logically, ads can work in general areas of TV commercials, internet, newspapers, magazine, learning materials, and so forth. Gee also proposes that the discussion of multimodality be done under (critical) discourse analysis to describe the way of using language to explain thoroughly social or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world. From this point, Gee tries to connect the discussion of text with its social surroundings, and, therefore, the analysis accommodates the details of speech (gaze, gesture and action) or writing that contextually works on both spoken and written communication. In conclusion, Gee tries to connect text and its outside factors to communicate a social message.

The Meaning Creation in Advertisement Media using Multimodality

The present study attempts to confirm the phenomenon of multimodality in TV commercials, particularly of Axe in which language (written or spoken) are accompanied by images and music to be medium to transform meaning of a hypothetically presumed reality of adult identity. The advertisement language is differently depicted through a number of tokens. For example, Cameron (2001) suggests that the communicative function of an utterance (or word or phrase or sentence) can describe what it is running in a particular setting in order to allow a discourse label to the utterance (or word or phrase or sentence) in the place of the whole discourse, for example TV ads. Word(s) or phrase(s) or sentence(s) is/are attached jointly to slogan or dialogue or monologue that arises along with images and music to transform a message of advertisement (ibid). Advertisement language for a campaign theme should involve a strong idea because it shows the powerful message which will be conveyed in all the advertising slogan or tagline of few words or a concise statement (Belch, 2012; Fill, 2009; Wells et al., 2006).

Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis on Multimodality to claim Adult Identity

Looking at a wide range of research tools for (critical) discourse analysis which best fit the present study is somewhat challenging because there is a heap of choices of scholars' theories. Thus, the following experts' proposals of (critical) discourse analysis are worthy contribution and become resourceful as well as supplementary. In contrast, they are sometimes overlapping each other. Gee's (1999, 2011), Cutting's (2002), Paltridge's (2008), and Fairclough's (2010) perspectives are applicable to this study. Besides, Machin and Thornborrow's (2003), Chouliaraki's (2004), Bezemer and Kress's (2008), and Buckingham's (2013) deep and informative masterpieces of multimodality guided the researcher to present, analyze and discuss the data so that the conclusive findings could be achievable and robust. The investigation of the multimodality in the Axe TV commercials was carried out with the reflexive property of the context, and the sign systems and knowledge building which operated as the tools for a critical discourse analysis.

Finally, the investigation result of the multimodality in the ads was associated with a presumably hypothetical reality of adult identity. The linkage between the realization of multimodality and adult identity was drawn by a set of theoretical views of critical discourse analysis. The following grand and supplementary discourse analysis theories were used as the bases for investigating the phenomena of multimodality in the Axe TV commercials.

Some Previous Studies on Multimodality in Diverse Media

First, Machin and Thornborrow (2003) analyzed the use of multimodality to express globalization (global branding) of *Cosmopolitan* magazine which are distributed around the planet by the 44 different national localized-versions. They applied a multimodal discourse analytic approach to understand the global branding in account for globalization, and tried to find out if the localized versions of *Cosmopolitan* could represent the account of globalization through the use of multimodality. They succeeded to show how the magazine created a fantasy world through the use of low modality images, which allowed a particular kind of agency, mainly sex, to signify power. They inferred that the multimodal realizations of *Cosmo* discourse enabled women to signify their alignment with the *Cosmo* world through such things as the cafes they frequently visited, the clothes they wore, and the way they danced. Second, Chouliaraki (2004) explored multimodality from the semiotic elements (the images) and the verbal reports of the film "11 September." The use of video footage which contained the images (as representation of semiotic elements) to accompany the verbal report (as representation of oral language) of three topics of diverse time dimensions tied up could make meaning of something and affect the spectator's moral horizon. She confirmed that the reported event came to mean something as well as how to

generates intelligibility through television's meaning-making operation. She made identification of the ways in which the television spectacle engaged the affective potentials of the spectator and provoked a specific mood to act upon the suffering. Again, Chouliaraki's (2004) investigation was limited simply to the multimodality of film.

Third, Bezemer and Kress (2008) investigated the presentation of multimodality in learning materials—textbooks, web-based resources, teacher-produced materials. They argued that writing as well as moving images significantly played prominent roles to create meaning for learning resources. They confirmed that the uses and forms of writing had undergone great changes over the last decades, and, thus, the digital media as a representation of semiotic account of designing learning materials superseded the (text) book and showed more distribution of learning resources. They concluded there was a displacement between writing and image as the central mode for representation. They investigated the phenomena of multimodality within a research project with a corpus of learning resources for secondary school in Science, Mathematics, and English from the 1930s, the 1980s, and from the first decade of the 21st century, as well as digitally represented and online learning resources from the year 2000 onward. Similar to the two previous masterpieces of research, Bezemer and Kress's (2008) discussion is simplified to the area of multimodality in learning materials for education.

Method

The focus of this study was the use of multimodality to communicate masculine identity (masculinity) in Axe TV Commercials. That was why Axe TV ads were selected to be the case of this study. Among the available Axe TV ads, the researcher decided to analyze some of them to obtain sufficient research data. The following are the Axe TV ads which were selected to be analyzed:

1. Axe Peace (Make Love, No War)—a one-minute video published in Jan 15, 2014
2. Axe Apollo (Fireman)—a 1.10-minute video published in Feb 3, 2013
3. Axe Bom Chika Wah-wah (Evening Class)—a 30-second, published in October 25, 2010;
4. Axe Effect (Women Billions)—a 58-second video published in October 3, 2006.

The modality covers the use of written and spoken language, the images, and the music. Thus, the data of this research are those elements (language, images, and music) contained in the four videos of the Axe TV ads.

In analyzing the research data, the researcher watched each of the video a couple of times. First, he watched the video to have overall understanding of the message communicated in the video. He watched again to identify the data, record them, and categorize them into the spoken and written language, the images, and the music. All the data elicited from the videos were the primary data. The collected data were then labeled as the

video 1's data, video 2's data, video 3's data, and video 4's data.

The collected and categorized data (the written and spoken language, the images, and the music) of each video (video 1 to 4) were analyzed by using two (critical) discourse analytic tools, the reflexive property of the context, and the sign systems and knowledge building.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

The Analysis of Video 1

The embodiment of the masculinity was, in part, understood from several attributes of the adult story-lines of the Axe TV commercial.

1. The sequential events of the commercial were closely associated with the narrative models of the multimodality elements as communication modes.
2. The language of the prescribed slogans evidently denoted the naming of the product Axe (New Axe Peace supporting peace one day, peace one day and monologues of Make Love, Not War with New Axe Peace) which is a representative of masculinity sprayed to the body.
3. The image/visualization was made by having the reality of the daily adult activity as masculine identity happened in a real life, stylized of the adult's performance, and fanciful development of the storyboards of alert in-war situation and preparation; the look of the commercial/product in the end of the commercial; the appropriate casting talents of the adults of the males and females; and the actual filming or taping of the young presidents in the war preparation and soldiers in the battle fields to fittingly epitomized the partial routines of the adults especially men, (intimate kissing on the tank, hot kissing on the rice field near people and playing with children, interesting posting thousands of postcards of the nice couple of the president, and pressing a fake bomb of firework; spraying style of the perfume) and, thus, to uphold the conveyance of the persuasive deliverance message through the language and music assembly to entitle the product, the powerful message of success of the Axe commercials as well,
4. The commercial music through the originality of the music represented the product, the fitness of the various instruments used to support the story line of the ads and ideal without-words music deliverances which developed the scene or copy-line; and the fit assembly of the scenes or audio or slogans and monolog of the musical references to symbolize the alert, happy and romantic structure, the classic motifs, the watchful, pleasing and loving themes, the culture of a whole classic style, the culture of classic epoch, and the musical theatre of musical genre to robust the "dramatic" language and image structure and, at a time, to rise the influential commercial degree. The researcher saw the language of the slogans and monologs of the commercials rather than dialog moreover long dialog purposefully attached to robust the effective configuration of televisual animated image (of settings, objects, physical appearance, interactions of the actors) with the given referential music (to sound structures or motifs or themes, the culture of a whole style, an epoch and the

genre) to boost the transfer of persuasive message of the image to express masculinity imaginatively or creatively.

It proved that the Axe commercials of video 1 clearly adopted the multimodality components (the language, image and music) to express the masculinity. The finding could answer the major question and three sub-research questions of the “how” of this study.

The Analysis of Video 2

The organization of the masculinity was commonly seen from cues of the adulthood’s story-lines of the Axe commercials of video 2. The phased happenings of the commercials were closely related with the narrative models of the multimodality aspects as communication modes, for instances,

1. The language undoubtedly indicated the naming of the product Axe ‘Apollo’ which was unbeatable perfume product by the prescribed slogan—Nothing beats an astronaut even when the Axe Apollo Space Academy leaves a man, come back a hero and monologues The Axe Apollo Space Academy Join now at Axe Apollo.Com for your chance to go to space which represented the incredible astronaut flying the aircraft Apollo.
2. The image/visualization of the masculinity aimed to transfer the persuasive message of the language and music to label the product, so that the evocative commercial message was communicated successfully through the communication of the daily adult identity life which happened in a real life, the adult’s performance, and a fanciful outlook of the storyboards of a fireman saving a trapped young girl in the fire, the look of the commercial/product in the end of the commercial, the proper casting talents of the adults of the males and female, and the real filming or taping of a fireman saving a young girl from a fire, and the girl’s negligence of the fireman as she saw an adult astronaut) to properly show the specific actions (heroic running through a great fire of a two-floor building to save the trapped girl inside, giving an intimate touch of the girl’s face, gazing at the girl eyes romantically running to approach the young male astronaut, and the romantic touching on the astronaut.
3. The commercial music of the originality, the fitness of the various instruments and ideal without-words music deliverances constructed the scene or copy-line; and the fit organization of the scenes, audio, slogans and monolog of the musical references to carry out the critical, happy and romantic structure, the classic motifs, the serious, pleasing and loving themes, the culture of a whole classic style, the culture of classic epoch, and the musical theatre of musical genre to robust the “dramatic” language and image structure and, at a time, to fortify the influential commercial intensity. The researcher thought the language of the slogans and monologs of the commercial usefully elaborated to enhance the “fanciful” circumstance of televisual indigenous image (of settings, objects, physical appearance, interactions of the actors) with the prescribed referential music (to sound structures or motifs or themes) to

express the “masculineness” characteristics as identity.

In brief, the “Axe” commercial of video 2 distinctly used the multimodality (the language, image and music) to express persuasively the masculinity, and this finding answered the major research question and the three sub-research questions.

The Analysis of Video 3

The representation of the masculinity was possibly discernable from properties of the adulthood’s story-lines of the “Axe” commercial of the video 3. The following are the multimodality components as communication modes:

1. The language through the highlighted dialogs Bom Chika Wah-wah and the monologs improved fragrances of New Axe Now that, it) to apparently determine the naming of the product A—Axe.
2. The image/visualization of the reality of the daily adult life as identity, stylized masculinity performances, and fanciful outlook of the storyboards of a female teacher’s conducting English lesson for adult in the classroom, the look of the commercial/product in the end of the commercial, the proper casting talents of the male and female adults, and the real filming or taping of the female teacher’s conducting English lesson for adult in the classroom when all of sudden she inhaled the late young male student’s perfume.
3. The commercial music (the originality, fitness of the various instruments and ideal without-words music deliverances which construct the scene or copy-line; and the fit organization of the scenes or audio or slogans and monolog) of the musical references to carry out the parody and romantic structure, the classic motifs, the parody and romantic themes, the culture of a whole classic style, the culture of classic epoch, and the parody music as genre to build the “memorable” language and image stance and, in turn, to improve the convincing commercial scale.

The researcher, to some extent, perceived the language of the slogans and monologs of the commercial intentionally bounded to augment the striking situation of televisual alive image (of settings, objects, physical appearance, interactions of the actors) with the prescribed referential music (to sound structures or motifs or themes, the culture of a whole style, an epoch, the genre) to deliver the inspiring message of the image to communicate the “adult” features as identity represented to propose to the costumer of the product itself.

In short, the Axe commercial of video 3 outstandingly used multimodality of the language, image and music to point out the masculinity; this finding provides the answers to the major and three sub-research questions.

The Analysis of Video 4

The masculinity was detectable from the hints of the adulthood’s story-lines

of the diverse conditions of the Axe commercial of the video 4, and attractively posed into the narrative models of the multimodality as communication modes, i.e.,

1. The language (the slogan The Axe Effect and the monologs of Spray More Get more) to label the product with no dialogs during the ads showed that the images became more important to persuade customers to use the product.
2. The image/visualization of the reality of adult's life, stylized masculinity appearance, and fanciful framework of the storyboards of a hundreds of young girls, inhaling the man's perfume odor from a part in another island, the appearance of the product in the end of the commercials; the right casting talents of the male and female adults, and the real filming or taping of hundreds of young girls inhaling the man's perfume odor from a part in another island to compete one another to reach the man while the young man repeated his spraying on his body to invite the girls to come from entire directions of the hills and ocean to dramatically establish the unique deeds of the adults, and, therefore, to support the conveyance and configuration of the language and music of the ads to label the product; the ease of the visible commercial message was delivered persuasively as well,
3. The commercial music by its originality, fitness of the various instruments to support the narrative story line of the ads and ideal without-words music transfers which developed the scene or copy-line, and the fit organization of the scenes or audio or slogans and monolog of the musical references to define the competing, happy, and romantic structure, the classic motifs, the culture of a whole classic style, and the culture of a whole classic style, the culture of classic, epoch and the genre of musical theatre to create the brain-storming language and image nuance and, in order, to back up the interesting commercial level of the ads. The commercial language of the slogan and monologs might be organized to place the observable conditions of televisual successful delivery of persuasive message of the image (of settings, objects, physical appearance, interactions of the actors) with the outlined referential music (to sound structures or motifs or themes, the culture of a whole style, an epoch, the genre) to transfer the inspiring message of the image to manifest the masculinity.

Eventually, the researcher could expose the data of video 4 to include the use of multimodality of the language, image and music to figure out the masculineness identity persuasively, and this finding answers the major and three sub research questions.

Conclusion

Advertisement is a product of persuasive discourse that needs communicative process based on both textual and visual entities/modes or multimodality. Likewise, Axe TV commercials have emerged to exemplify a sample of persuasive discourse in which the modes or multimodality

elements involve words of language (slogans, dialogs and monologs) indicating the textual manifestation, images (of settings, objects, physical appearance, interactions of the actors) marking the visual and music (musical references to sound structures or motifs or themes, the culture of a whole style, an epoch, the genre) indicating auditory multi-modal entities. The presentation of the outlined communicative modes of the Axe commercials have established interesting degree of persuasive endeavors, at a time also resulting in the greater number of the internet viewers in Youtube.

The reflexive property of the context on the analysis of contextual situations (of the language, image and music) and of the sign systems and knowledge building on cultural tradition of language performance and interpretation in communicating and describing the world of masculinity in the Axe commercials was found to be helpful to uncover the masculinity that lies behind the commercials. The interesting multimodality structures of the Axe commercials were inserted to create epic and imaginative commercials with the inclusion of the product name through language (of slogans, monologs and dialogs) and referential music to enliven the persuasive nuances of the commercials to grab the viewers' attention, though the attributes of masculinity tended to be sensually greater choices of illustrative image representation, say, showing hot kissing, gorgeous underbelly or body, or breast, sexy under-wears, and erotic body movements/gestures to highlight persuasive discourse of the Axe commercials. Again, this study confirmed the multimodality existence to happen in a genre of persuasive discourse, particularly Axe TV commercials as the case of the recent study.

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