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*To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem,
which derives from the pleasure of step-by-step discovery;
to suggest, that is the dream.*

*It is the perfect use of this mystery that constitutes the symbol:
to evoke an object little by little,
so as to bring to light a state of the soul or, inversely,
to choose an object and bring out of it a state of the soul through a series of unravelings*

Stéphane Mallarmé (1864)
(translated by Roger Pearson 164)

Parallel Chaining in Advertising Campaigns

1. Introduction

Advertisements do not normally explicitly tell the viewers to buy a product, especially when the product is harmful to health or legally restricted, such as tobacco, alcohol, or soft drinks containing added sweeteners. As Grandpre et al. (2003) have shown, overt or explicit advertising may in such cases be counter-productive. Thus, the claims made in advertisements are often implicit. This article shows how metaphors and metonymies in their verbal and visual dimensions let advertisers put a certain veil on the claims they make, communicate something indirectly and possibly also avoid legal implications. It also highlights the fact that the metonymic or metaphoric lens may help to make advertisements more appealing. Finally, the article follows Sullivan's observations (2007) and argues that metonymy and metaphor used in advertising may mutually reinforce each other through a process known as parallel chaining – a concept adapted from Goossens (2003).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Metaphor and Metonymy

The theoretical framework of this article is provided by the approach known as Cognitive Linguistics. The approach grew out of the work of scholars active in the 1970s and 1980s who investigated the relationship between language and cognition. Cognitive linguists typically see metaphor and metonymy not as mere rhetorical devices, but as important cognitive mechanisms, which structure our thinking, experiences, and daily actions (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Dirven 1993; Panther & Radden 1999; Dirven & Pörings 2003; Barcelona 2003; Haser 2005; Wachowski and Sullivan 2021).

Metaphor and metonymy might at first appear similar because both involve cognitive processes related to domains and mappings. However, research in Cognitive Linguistic highlights several differences between them (e.g. Goossens 1990; Dirven 1993; Panther & Radden 1999; Dirven & Pörings 2003; Barcelona 2003; Barnden 2010; Burkhardt & Nerlich 2010; Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2013; Littlemore 2015; Wachowski 2019). The first difference is the nature of the relationship: conceptual metaphors involve complex, systematic connections between elements of both the source and target domains, which reflect a deeper understanding of the concepts involved. In contrast, metonymies rely on a direct, single association between a specific element of the source domain and the target domain, which is normally based on some kind of proximity. Another distinction lies in reversibility. Metonymic mappings are generally reversible, e.g. a part can evoke the whole and the whole may evoke one of the parts. Metaphors on the other hand, especially those which structure a more abstract concept by means of some more concrete one, tend to be unidirectional. The third difference between metaphor and metonymy is the number of domains involved. Metaphor requires two distinct domains, with one being understood through the lens of the other. Metonymy, on the other hand relies on the connection within the same domain.

It is worth mentioning at this point that there is no consensus among cognitive linguists regarding the definitions of or distinctions between metaphor and metonymy (see, e.g. Barnden 2010 or Wachowski 2021). For instance, while metonymy is often reversible, it is not necessarily so, and metaphor does not always entail multiple structured conceptual correspondences between the source and the target. A detailed discussion of the problematic issues, however, is beyond the scope of the present article.

2.2. Parallel Chaining

Sullivan (2007) demonstrated how metaphors and metonymies (or invited inferencing (as discussed by Traugott and Dasher 2002)) mutually reinforce each other through a process of parallel chaining. The concept of parallel chaining was initially used by Goossens (2003) to describe cases where metaphor and metonymy interact or blend in conceptual mappings. Goossens (2003) introduced the concept of parallel

chaining as one of the mechanisms explaining how metaphor and metonymy are not strictly separate but can co-occur and reinforce each other in language. It challenges the idea that metaphor and metonymy work in isolation and shows that they overlap, blend, and interact dynamically. For example, in the sentence: *She's got a sharp tongue, tongue*, in a PART FOR WHOLE relation, metonymically stands for 'speech' (the tongue is involved in speaking) and *sharpness of speech* in turn is metaphorically understood as 'criticism' or 'harshness'.¹ Here the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy operates alongside the metaphor, and creates a parallel chain of conceptual mappings. Goossens (2003) has suggested the term parallel chaining to describe metonymic processes that operate in tandem, rather than sequentially, but I will follow Sullivan (2007) and use this term here to refer to a relationship between metaphor and metonymy. Sullivan uses the term 'parallel chaining' for two or more processes that lead to the same outcome and occur simultaneously, each contributing to that final outcome. In this article I will also use the term 'parallel chaining' for processes linked in a sequence, creating a step-by-step conceptual shift.

3. Examples of Parallel Chaining in Advertising Campaigns

Parallel chaining shows that metaphor and metonymy often do not operate separately, but may be intertwined in everyday language. Advertising often uses this strategy to reinforce brand messaging through layered meaning. This section analyses some examples.

3.1. Verbal Examples of Parallel Chaining

In 2009 Coca-Cola launched *Open Happiness* marketing campaign (created by the Coca-Cola Company in partnership with its advertising agency McCann Worldgroup). The commercial implies that happiness is something that can be accessed through the product – in a metonymic CAUSE FOR EFFECT relation – happiness is the feeling you experience when you drink Coca-Cola. The product (Coca-Cola) stands in for the experience it is meant to deliver (*happiness*). This shifts the focus from the drink itself to the emotional outcome that it promises and aligns the action of drinking the beverage with an emotional result. Happiness, being an abstract emotion or state of mind, is then metaphorically understood as a tangible object – something you can open or possibly release. The conceptual shift created by metonymy and metaphor enhances the idea that Coca-Cola is more than just a beverage.

¹ As Szwedek notes (2011), the pronoun *she* in the example can also be seen as an example of WHOLE FOR PART metonymy – it is more about 'sharp' character of the person, than, for example, their corporality. Similarly, e.g. in "Capt. Jones is a perfect iceberg," *Capt. Jones* refers to the person's character (not physicality), and the iceberg denotes the coolness of that character. More on this topic can be found e.g. in Szwedek (2011), where this type is described as a metonymy based metaphor.

In 2010 Nike used the slogan *Run the day, don't let it run you!* aimed at motivating people to take control of their lives and not let challenges hold them back. The first part of the slogan uses the verb *run* not in its literal sense but metonymically. The act of running is extended to represent a broader concept: 'living an active lifestyle' and 'being engaged and energetic'. In fact, the metonymic shift allows the word *run* to stand in for any form of action that gets one moving – both physically and mentally. The second part of the slogan, however, which says *don't let it run you*, makes us re-interpret the verb *run* and understand it in a metaphorical sense. It no longer refers to a physical activity, but to control or dominance. Here, *run* metaphorically suggests management or directing the course of your life. The message is that we should take control of our own destiny and not let external circumstances (metonymically represented by 'the day') control us. The metaphorical *running* is about empowerment, i.e. choosing to take charge rather than be passive or reactive. Here too metaphor and metonymy operating together reinforce the powerful, motivational message which is: 'embrace an active approach to life do not be overwhelmed by the daily grind.'

Also the marketing slogan *Red Bull Gives You Wings* instead of being direct and literal and instead of talking about the effects of caffeine, taurine, sugar, and other ingredients of the drink, implies – through a sequence of metonymic and metaphoric links – that the drink gives you energy and helps you perform better. The link between *wings* in the slogan can be viewed both from a metaphoric and metonymic perspective. The *wings* can be seen as a classic metaphor, where something tangible – *wings* – represents something abstract – energy or empowerment. Via another metaphor just as *wings* enable rapid movement and progress the drink gives you the energy to overcome mental or physical challenges with ease. We can also use *wings* in the context of the brain and metaphorically see the brain as a moving entity which gains the ability to move or function faster and more efficiently (to think, process, or solve problems) once it is given wings (once it is given the boost of energy). Alternatively, we could think of *wings* as being part of the flight experience, which involves fast movement and makes us feel empowered and possibly gives us a boost of energy. Thus, there may also be a metonymic CAUSE FOR EFFECT connection between having and using wings and feeling empowered and energized. As Sullivan notes (2007: 258), "[o]ne process may play a greater role for some speakers, and a different process, with similar effects, may play a greater role for others." However, the mere fact that we have access to multiple interpretations and some speakers can understand the slogan via metaphor and others via metonymy can reinforce the power of the slogan and make it resonate better with a wider audience.

3.2. Visual Examples of Parallel Chaining

In the previous section we could see examples of metaphor and metonymy linked one way or another in advertising slogans. Let us now discuss some parallelly chained visual metaphors and metonymies in advertising posters.

As Messaris notes (1997: XIX), it is “common practice for cigarette manufacturers to advertise their products by juxtaposing them with vigorous outdoor activity.” The advertisements of Marlboro cigarettes, an American brand owned and manufactured by Philip Morris USA, were quite typical in that respect. For example, the poster in Figure 1 features a silhouetted cowboy on horseback against a beautiful sunset, with the Marlboro brand name displayed in the background. In the metaphoric reading of the poster, smoking (Marlboro cigarettes) is linked to the liberating experience of riding a horse on the prairie at sunset. The poster may also metonymically link smoking to freedom, toughness, independence, and adventure – the qualities often attributed to cowboys or their way of life. Via the CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy the poster may build the idea that smoking leads to these desirable traits – it makes you free, tough, independent, and adventurous. Interestingly, the poster does not show cigarettes explicitly being smoked, but instead uses imagery and associations which implicitly link smoking to positive emotions and a desirable lifestyle.



Figure 1. Marlboro advertisement
artist: MC & Leo Burnett, Company: Philip Morris S.A.
adapted from www.artifich.com/en/posters/marlboro

Kwiatkowska (2007: 302) notes that advertisements for perfumes, alcoholic beverages, and other products often use sexually suggestive imagery, implying a causal connection between the use of these products and sexual attractiveness. Presumably, this is also the goal of Diesel's advertising campaign in Figure 2 – to create the impression that wearing Diesel underwear is linked to boldness, sensuality, and intimate relationships. As Kwiatkowska (2007: 302) observes, “*in real life, if two things appear together, there is a high probability of their being connected by a causal relation.*” Apart from the CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy, the campaign also employs the LOVE IS OWNERSHIP metaphor. The words *his* (on the woman's thigh) and *hers* (on the man's chest) metaphorically imply unity and a romantic and/or sexual relationship in which partners ‘own’ each other. The combination of metonymies and metaphors leads the viewer to see Diesel underwear not only as clothing, but as a statement of identity, confidence, and passion.

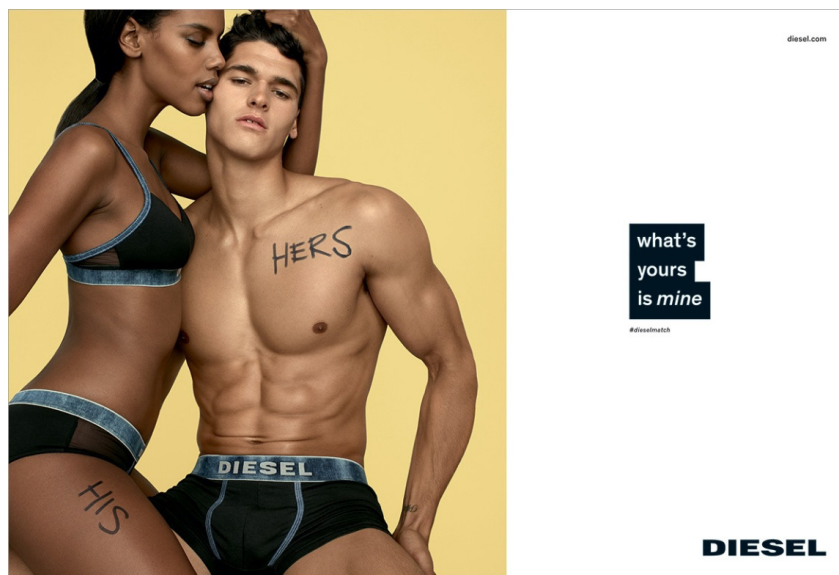


Figure 2. Diesel advertising campaign (www.diesel.com)

Finally, let us consider the visual and verbal examples in a Polish political campaign poster which emphasizes the importance of participating in elections (Figure 3).² The use of the word *głos* is a clever play on words. In Polish the literal meaning of *głos* is ‘voice’ and the metonymically derived one is ‘vote’ (speaking with one’s voice stands for expressing one’s opinion and then the meaning is extended further to any other form of expressed opinion, also non-verbal one). The message of the slogan is that if people do not use their voice (by voting), it might be taken away from them. The image reinforces this idea: the woman’s mouth is gagged with a beetroot, which meta-

² Source: www.psrp.org.pl.

phorically represents how her ability to speak (and vote) is being taken away from her. In addition, the image of a beetroot in the woman's mouth and the word *burak* (beetroot) metaphorically and/or metonymically suggest that your voice/vote may be taken away from you by 'less competent individuals.' The word *burak* ('beetroot' in Polish) is a socially charged term used for an unsophisticated, unpolished person possibly of rural background which might be metaphorically or metonymically read. For some speakers the metaphoric link may be more prominent, i.e. beetroots, when they are sold, are usually dirty with soil, which needs to be rinsed off them before they are eaten and similarly, people called *beetroots* may seem unpolished and unrefined and may seem to need schooling on how to behave in social situations. Still, other speakers may also notice a double metonymy reinforced by a metaphoric link in the expression. It may be argued that *burak* ('beetroot'), being one of the most popular vegetables in Poland (Poland is in the world's top ten beet producers),³ is metonymically used for people who grow it. And *yeoman farmer* may sometimes be reduced to the negative qualities stereotypically attributed by some people to country dwellers, i.e. lack of refinement or bad taste – as is often the case with the Polish word for *yeoman farmer* (*wieśniak*) which is now mainly used in a pejorative sense. Also the red colour of beetroots may for some people metaphorically map onto the stereotypical, derogatory image of sunburnt faces or necks of farmers. It should probably be said at this juncture that the term *burak* is so well-established in the Polish language that most speakers probably process it without constructing the above-mentioned metaphoric or metonymic links.



Figure 3. Polish political campaign which emphasizes the importance of participating in elections

³ Source: www.agro-info.org.pl.

Conclusion

This article explores how metaphor and metonymy function in advertising not as isolated devices but as connected mechanisms. Through verbal and visual examples from advertising campaigns of such brands as Coca-Cola, Nike, Red Bull, or Marlboro I demonstrate how conceptual metaphors and metonymies may work side by side and why this cognitive strategy is so useful in advertising. First, chained metaphors and metonymies reinforce each other and enhance the impact of advertisements. The interaction between metaphor and metonymy may help advertisements resonate with a broader audience and contribute to their memorability. Second, metaphor and metonymy may help advertisers avoid direct, overt claims – particularly in cases where such direct claims might be counterproductive (e.g. with products which are legally restricted) – and covertly associate their products with positive emotions – a sequence of metaphoric and metonymic links can create a narrative where a product becomes part of a lifestyle.

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Summary: This article explores the role of metaphors and metonymies in advertising and focuses on how these cognitive mechanisms function in tandem in a process known as *parallel chaining*. Drawing on the principles of Cognitive Linguistics, the article highlights how metaphor and metonymy can reinforce brand messaging, guide consumer perceptions and avoid explicit claims – particularly in products such as tobacco or sweetened beverages which have been proven to be harmful to health or are legally restricted. The concept of *parallel chaining* has been adapted from Goossens (2003) and Sullivan (2007) and illustrates how metaphor and metonymy operate side by side and enhance the impact of an advertisement. Through both verbal and visual examples of Coca-Cola's *Open Happiness* campaign, Nike's *Run the day* slogan, and *Red Bull Gives You Wings* slogan, the article demonstrates how advertisements use layered conceptual mappings to evoke emotions or shape consumer behaviour. In addition, the article examines how this process extends to visual advertising in commercial or political campaigns. The article stresses the significance of parallelly chained metaphors and metonymies in making advertisements more persuasive and appealing to a more diverse audience.

Keywords: metaphor, metonymy, parallel chaining, advertising, persuasion, CMT

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