

“Good Things Come to Those Who Wait”: a Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Guinness Printed Advertisement

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Abstract: As advertisements are progressively penetrating into and influencing people’s life, linguistic scholars are also interested in the relationship between the visual and lexical elements in advertisements and consumers’s conception and behaviour. And this analysis resort to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Visual Grammar (VG) to interpret one of the most famous commercial advertisement of Guinness from its ideal, interpersonal and textual meaning. This analysis found that although there are various semiotic resources within one advertisement, they cooperate together rather than separately to construct and convey the meaning. With the significance of this analysis, the further investigation still need to be taken from various sources from other aspects.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, advertisements can be found everywhere, like websites, newspapers, mobile phones and also flyer. Scholars are also increasingly aware that visual language becomes one of the vital elements in advertising, which can cooperate with lexical grammar to influence consumers’ conception and behaviour. Also, “the multimodal feature of advertising is an evidence of its use of various semiotic resources, such as language, image, sound and colour, to better convey the connotation and obtain the best advertising effect”^[13]. As the most featured multimodal discourse, many scholars have analyzed various advertisement by resorting to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which is widely used in the field of linguistics and social semiotics.

The current research tries to interpret one of the most famous commercial advertisement of Guinness, an Irish Brewery company, by using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is theorized by Halliday^[8], and Visual Grammar (VG) by Kress & van Leeuwen^[12] as the theoretical basis. Considering the previous linguistic studies on verbal and visual texts, the present study aims at conducting a multimodal analysis on lexical and visual texts to help understand the relationship between the text and image in communication.

This study consists of four sections and analyzes the lexical and visual texts, respectively. The first section of this paper will give a brief overview of previous research on the related topics; the second part is concerned with the methodology used for this study and also data collection. And

then, the discussion of the data will be undertaken in the third section. Finally, the overall conclusion of the paper will be presented in the last part.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Mda)

According to Jewitt, “Multimodality is an ‘interdisciplinary approach’ for understanding communication and representation”^[11], which is resorted to analyze how different meaning parts are combined into an integrated multimodal whole and function collectively. Based on this view, it can be seen that it is crucial to understand what and how all the modes are functioned for understanding communication. Therefore, MDA is usually used to analyze all kinds of media, including newspaper advertisements, web pages, and printed or online commercial brochures. According to Paltridge, “Multimodal discourse analysis considers how texts draw on modes of communication such as pictures, film, video, images and sound in combination with words to make meaning”^[16], which is drawn from Halliday’s concept of “social semiotic approach to language analysis. Halliday believed that language serves as one of the semiotic resources that people resort to communicate or make meaning^[7]. Therefore, language is not an isolated way to illustrate meaning, as Nelson & Kern stated that “language is a dynamic semiotic resource that individuals combine with other semiotic resources”^[15]. In order to understand meaning and communication, MDA “aims to describe the socially situated semiotic resources that we draw on communication”^[16].

2.2 Social Semiotics

Semiotics is referred to an interdisciplinary mode for examining phenomena in the ancient Greek, and now, van Leeuwen considered semiotic resources as modes, which are “the actions, materials and artifacts we use for communicative purposes, whether produced physiologically or technologically”^[22]. Pimenta & Natividade proposed that “social semiotics of visual communication involves the description of semiotic resources and how they can be interpreted”^[17]. And Hodge and Kress pointed out that “social semiotics is concerned with social meanings constructed through the full range of semiotic forms”^[10], with the development of multimodality, the need for social semiotics of visual representation and communication was noticed by Kress and van Leeuwen^[12]. Therefore, van Leeuwen believed that semiotics resources should be used to “investigate how these resources are used in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts, and how people talk about them in these contexts”^[22], and he also added later about the potential of semiotic resources for making meaning. Therefore, different semiotic resources in its particular context provide the modal logic of the integrated multimodal whole. What kinds of semiotic resources are choose determined by the social agents’ interests.

2.3 Systemic Functional Multimodal Analysis Framework

The analysis of multimodal text almost based on Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is theorized by Halliday to “identify three distinct but coexisting kinds of meanings that interplay within any text”^[23] by three meta-functions, including ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. The ideational function is aim at representing reality and the world, and also the individual experiences, which is resorted to analyze how semiotic resources are used to manifest some discourses. Interpersonal function means “language is used to enable people to participate in communications, take their roles, and express their own and understand others’ feelings, attitudes and judgement”^[13]. And in textual function, “language is used to relate what is said or written to the

real world or other linguistic events”^[13], which means the use of semiotic resources for organizational aims. Besides, as a part of the social semiotic approach to language originated by Halliday^[7], SFG is a form of grammatical description for text analysis.

2.4 Visual Grammar (Vg)

Language is only one of the different interrelated semiotic systems, and images are also part of the social-cultural constructs^[12]. And Kress & van Leeuwen also believed that “the reality structures are bound up with the interests of social institutions within which the pictures are produced, circulated and read”^[12]. Furthermore, Callow also stated that “texts draw a variety of communication modes, spoken, written, visual, spatial, at the same time”^[4]. Inspired by Halliday’s SFG system, Kress & van Leeuwen have proposed “a grammar of visual design that provides a multimodal perspective involving the meanings of pictures and diagrams”^[3]. And Unsworth also mentioned that “like language, the images also convey ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings simultaneously”^[19]. The ideational metafunction in images can be narrative and conceptual. Narrative image means transactional and non-transactional participants and also actions and reactions realized by lines and vectors, while conceptual image refers to classificational, analytical and symbolic meanings. Interpersonal meanings are conveyed by the interactional metafunction, showing the relationship between the viewers and what is viewed. “Textual meanings are conveyed by the compositional metafunction which is concerned with aspects of the layout”^[3].

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the social semiotics of the advertisement of Guinness, one of the most successful alcohol brands worldwide, interact and exert the effects. Therefore, the current analysis resorts to Multimodal Discourse Analysis and attempts to analyze this Guinness advertisement with Halliday’s SFL, and Kress and van Leeuwen’s VG to analyze four elements.

3.1 Content of the Text



(Sports Interactive Community, 2018)^[18]

“Good Things Comes to Those Who Wait” is the slogan used in this Guinness advertisement, which is used initially by the English poet Lady Mary Montgomerie Currie (1843-1905). Literally, this proverb means if people are persistent and patient, they will finally achieve their goal, which is mostly used when encouraging someone to be patient and wait. Guinness resorted this proverb to

promote Guinness-brand draught stout in the UK, which was proposed to turn around the negative consumer opinion of the length of time required to correctly pour a pint of Guinness from the tap, usually quoted as 119.5 seconds, and also to encourage bartenders to take time to make the perfect Guinness draught stout.

3.2 Discussion

The result of this analysis consisted of an explanation of the VG of Kress and van Leeuwen, and also Halliday's metaphy in the text-multimodal on the advertisement of the Irish beer giant Guinness, and also how inter-semiotic relationships between the lexical and visual texts.

3.3 Ideational Meaning

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ideational metafunction means the use of semiotic resources for representing reality and the world, and also constructing the own experience of the audience.

3.3.1 Ideational Meaning in Language

Halliday believed that the ideational metafunction consists of the logical and experiential metafunctions, the former refers to combine the grammatical unites into complexes, while the latter refers to constructing experiences through the unit of clauses^[9].

Due to the extensive use of this proverb in the UK and Ireland, Guinness try to seek the common ground on the identities and values with the consumers. "Good things" can be a perfect Guinness draught stout, and also can be everything in people's life. Besides, this proverb in Guinness advertisement foregrounds "Good" as the typical feature of their product as well as suppresses its negative conception of a time-consuming process. Therefore, based on consumers' interests and values, Guinness not only achieved the marketing promotion but also meet the needs of the customers. From this aspect, it can be seen that lexical texts can convey the implicit and indirect meaning to "underlying beliefs that are not openly, directly, completely, or precisely asserted"^[20]. Recently, this slogan was mentioned again by Guinness, "Good things come to those who wait with new Guinness-on-wheels service" during the quarantine of COVID-19, which was proving hugely popular^[14]. From the aspect of transitive analysis, the existential process is involved in this slogan, and the two nominalized actions, "comes" and "wait", are the participants, which means "Good things" that exist through the verbs "come" and "wait".

3.3.2 Ideational Meaning in Image

According to the semiotic theory of Barthes^[2], images can be denoted or connoted, the former shows particular events, people, places and things, while the latter indicates that images can be used to imply ideas and concepts. Therefore, the images used in Guinness's "Good Things..." advertisement posses connotative purposes. Firstly, there are three pints of Guinness draught tout in the picture with the different stages to make a perfect Guinness. It can be seen that the boundary between the beer and foam is gradually getting evident from the most remote to the nearest. And the nearest one is the most perfect, which indicates that a process is needed to make a pint of perfect Guinness. And the core value and idea of "Good Things Come to Those Who Wait" is communicated by the process that three pints of Guinness show. Therefore, this abstract image conveys its connotative meaning. Secondly, it is well known that black and white are the only two colours the perfect Guinness has, and there is only one who has apparent black and white, which is the most excellent. Besides, the nearest one is made salient by representing in sharp focus, which is

also regarded as the symbol of Guinness's good quality and services. Thirdly, there is no context in this Guinness's advertisement; however, the decontextualized image are significantly symbolizes the idea and value of Guinness, making the most perfect black beer. Additionally, in this advertisement, the carrier of meaning is not the specific action but the objects, which shows that it is not essential what this object does but what it is, therefore, the iconographical meaning can be explored. And also, the colour of "black" used to represent the black beer idea that Guinness produced.

3.4 Interpersonal Meaning

3.4.1 Interpersonal Meaning in Language

By using semiotic resources, the lexical text tries to enact social relationships, evaluations and interactions between participants. Besides, "the interpersonal metafunction relates to a text's aspect of tenor or interactivity^[1], which involves the speaker/writer persona, social distance, and relative social status^[5].

According to van Leeuwen's classification^[21], there are eight kinds of social actors, including personalization and impersonalization, individualization and collectivization, nomination and functionalization, use of honorifics, objectives, anonymization, aggregation and pronouns and nouns. However, not all social actors are involved in Guinness's draught tout advertisement. Firstly, a pint of perfect Guinness draught tout is impersonalized as "Good things", which is resorted to manifest the "good" quality of Guinness beer. Secondly, the participant in this text, also consumer, are anonymised as "those", which is used to avoid specification in text. Besides, the plural nouns "Good Things" also demonstrates that one pint of perfect Guinness can bring not only good taste but also other good joys such as friends, satisfaction and happiness. The modality of the text is also interpersonal, which expresses the speaker/writer's personal opinion^[6]. In "Good Things Come to Those Who Wait", although there are no markers of modalization, the intonation of the text also is relevant, and it can indicate a different level of modality, including assertive, confident but also tentative and hesitant. In this declarative sentence, the intonation is assertive to show the good things will definitely worth waiting.

3.4.2 Interpersonal Meaning in Image

Generally, the interpersonal meaning in image can be analyzed from three aspects, "Gaze", "Angle of interaction" and "Distance". Because of the lack of the alive participant, the current research analyzes the Guinness advertisement from "Angle of interaction" and "Distance". First of all, the angle from which the viewer sees the represented objects can suggest different relations between the viewer and the object. From the aspect of the horizontal angle, the viewer place in the frontal angle, which involved in the situation and aligned the viewer with the Guinness black beers. From the aspect of the vertical angle, the three pints of Guinness are shown at the same level as the viewer's eyes, which indicates that there is no power difference is involved. Besides, the distance also signifies social relations, the nearer the object placed, the more intimate it is. Therefore, in the image, the most perfect Guinness is the nearest to the viewer. As to the participants in this advertisement, only three pints of Guinness in the image, which put more emphasis on connecting the viewer with the participants, that is Guinness draught stout itself. In addition, the image of Guinness advertisement is high-modality even though there is no naturalistic elements can be seen in the image. However, it shows a naturalistic way to make a perfect pint of Guinness, and the viewer can see the normal process with the naked eyes, which reveals the truth that a pint of good-quality Guinness need to wait. Furthermore, as a modality maker, the background of this

decontextualized image is absent to show the typical and symbolic example rather than documentary objects.

3.5 Textual Meaning

Textual meaning means the use of semiotic resources for organizational aims, which involves coherence and cohesion.

3.5.1 Textual Meaning in Language

In language, coherence refers to the logic of unit and organization of ideas in a text, and cohesion is concerned with linguistic means, which involves the lexical density, grammatical complexity, coordination and the use of nominal groups[5].

From the aspect of grammatical cohesion, the reference means words take on meaning in a text because of their relationship with other words. In “Good Things Come to Those Who Wait”, the nominative demonstrative “Those” encodes spatial and temporal relations for the writer. Besides, “who” clause explains the object “those”, which shows the hypotactic grammatical relations and the causal relations between the consumers and the action. The whole sentence illustrates a goal-achievement relation, “Good Things” is a goal, and “Wait” is a method for achievement.

3.5.2 Textual Meaning in Image

Textual meaning in visual communication is mainly focused on composition and page layout. And Kress and van Leuwen^[12] proposed three interrelated systems that are used to characterize the meaning of spatial composition, including “salience”, “information value” and “framing”.

From the aspect of salience, the nearest pint of Guinness draught tout is the most prominent element in the composition, which is the most important in the image. And the most saturated colour is black, which represents the colour of Guinness tout, and also there is brightness under the Guinness tout, which is used to highlight the product and attract the consumers’ eyes. As mentioned above, the most perfect Guinness is the nearest one, which is also the center of the whole layout and suggests that it has greater importance. From the aspect of information value, these three pints of Guinness forms the centre-margin framework, and the central composition is relatively uncommon in western visualization. The most perfect pint of Guinness is positioned in the centre, and the least perfect pint is further to the centre than the middle pint, which gives a rank of importance of the objects. Although these three pints of Guinness in the same container, they are differentiated in colour, which shows the contrast among them and emphasizes the importance of the centre.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis on the advertisement of Guinness’s draught tout, “Good Things Come to Those Who Wait”, it can be seen that lexical and visual texts of the advertisement are integrated to convey the essence of the beliefs and products of Guinness Brewery Company. According to the results of this analysis, it can be found that although there are various semiotic resources within one advertisement, they cooperate together rather than separately to construct and convey the meaning. For example, in this Guinness advertisement, three pints of Guinness create a process of making perfect Guinness, which acts in cooperation with the verb “Wait” and adjective “Good” to convey meaning. Besides, the images and texts in the advertisement are limited, however, which leave enough space for the viewer or the reader to understand and expound. As a proverb widely used in UK and Ireland, “Good Things Come to Those Who Wait” easily resonates with the daily life of consumers. Additionally, the images used in Guinness’s advertisement are quite simple; however,

they are high modality with a natural process of making Guinness, which makes the meanings that the producer try to convey are truthful and reliable and can leave a great impression on the viewers.

Nevertheless, the current study also has its limitations need to be further analyzed and discussed. First of all, the analysis is slightly subjective because of the author's personal opinion, and some semiotic resources are challenging to define and explain. Besides, only one example is hard to draw a significant conclusion. Therefore, the methods used for further research need to be improved or developed. Also, only static images and texts are involved in the present research, and other dynamic data also need to be explored, such as video, film and other dynamic advertisements. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study contributes to the field of the topic.

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