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**Organizing meaning through multimodal metaphors:
A case study in financial advertising**

Advertising is a form of persuasive communication that underlies a whole range of practical constraints. Space for explaining the quality of a product or service is limited, advertisements in journals and in outdoor media compete for the attention of visually saturated customers, and, finally, the communicative strategies of attention getting and selling the product must not compromise each other.

What is true of advertisements in general is even truer of advertisements in the financial domain where financial service providers and insurance companies sell goods that no one can touch or see. Here, the main communicative challenge consists in visually or verbally representing the unique selling point of such a company's services, since these are intangible values and invisible processes. A possible solution to this challenge is the use of multimodal metaphors. These metaphors organize meaning through the blending of different signifying orders, in our case, the combination of textual and pictorial signs. In other words: these metaphors do not only blend two different conceptual domains (Fauconnier; Turner 2003) but also two different modalities.

In this paper, we propose a corpus-based study of multimodal metaphors in the advertising of German financial service providers and insurance companies. Our analysis of more than 200 advertisements shows that the use of these metaphors is in fact the prevailing communicative strategy in financial advertising. Abstract services take shape through metaphors combining the cognitive potential of linguistic and pictorial metaphors (Forceville 1996, 2006) in order to compensate for the nonexistence of a tangible product by evoking feelings of trust, confidence, and security.

References

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