

# Primary metaphors in advertising: An analysis of tangible vs. intangible products printed advertisements<sup>1</sup>

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**PRIMARY METAPHORS IN ADVERTISING: AN ANALYSIS OF TANGIBLE VS. INTANGIBLE PRODUCTS PRINTED ADVERTISEMENTS**

**METÁFORAS PRIMARIAS EN PUBLICIDAD: UN ANÁLISIS DE ANUNCIOS IMPRESOS DE PRODUCTOS TANGIBLES E INTANGIBLES**

**MÉTAPHORES PRIMAIRES DANS LA PUBLICITÉ: UNE ANALYSE DES PUBLICITÉS IMPRIMÉES DE PRODUITS TANGIBLES ET INTANGIBLES**

**ABSTRACT:** Primary metaphors are focal points for the present-day global advertising industry (Ortiz, 2010, 2011; Pérez-Hernández, 2013b, 2014, 2019; Pérez-Sobrino, 2017). Nevertheless, there is little research on how they operate in relation to the nature of different products/services. This paper aims to provide (1) insights into the pervasiveness and functioning of multimodal primary metaphors in printed advertisements; and (2) a thorough analysis on their productivity in relation to the nature (material vs. immaterial) of the target product. The analysis of a corpus of 300 printed ads reveals that primary metaphors largely outnumber resemblance metaphors in the advertisements under scrutiny. It provides a detailed inventory of the source and target domains involved, and a description of the interaction patterns between primary metaphors and the product/service. The analysis of the data unveils a higher frequency of occurrence of primary metaphor mappings in relation to tangible products and elucidates reasons for this attested trend.

**KEYWORDS:** advertising; primary metaphors; tangible products; intangible products; image schemas.

**RESUMEN:** Las metáforas primarias son puntos focales de la industria publicitaria global actual (Ortiz, 2010, 2011; Pérez-Hernández, 2013b, 2014, 2019; Pérez-Sobrino, 2017). Sin embargo, existen escasos estudios sobre cómo operan en relación con la naturaleza de los diferentes productos/servicios. Este artículo tiene como objetivo proporcionar (1) información sobre la ubicuidad y el funcionamiento de las metáforas primarias multimodales en los anuncios impresos; y (2) un análisis exhaustivo de su productividad en relación con la naturaleza (material vs. inmaterial) del producto/servicio. El análisis de corpus (300 anuncios) revela que las metáforas primarias superan ampliamente en número a las de semejanza en los anuncios analizados. También proporciona un inventario de los dominios fuente y meta implicados, y describe los patrones de interacción entre las metáforas primarias y el producto/servicio. El análisis revela una mayor frecuencia de aparición de metáforas primarias en relación con productos tangibles y proporciona una explicación para esta tendencia.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** publicidad; metáforas primarias; productos tangibles; productos intangibles; esquemas de imagen.

**RÉSUMÉ:** Les métaphores primaires sont les points focaux de l'industrie publicitaire mondiale actuelle (Ortiz, 2010, 2011; Pérez-Hernández, 2013b, 2014, 2019; Pérez-Sobrino, 2017). Cependant, il existe peu d'études sur leur fonctionnement par rapport à la nature des différents produits/services. Cet article vise à fournir (1) des informations sur l'omniprésence et le fonctionnement des métaphores primaires multimodales dans les publicités imprimées; et (2) une analyse approfondie de son productivité par rapport à la nature (tangible vs immatériel) du produit/service. L'analyse du corpus (300 publicités) révèle que les métaphores primaires sont bien plus nombreuses que celles de similitude dans les publicités analysées. Il fournit également un inventaire des domaines source et cible impliqués, et décrit les modèles d'interaction entre les métaphores primaires et le produit/service. L'analyse révèle une fréquence d'occurrence plus élevée des métaphores primaires en relation avec des produits tangibles et fournit une explication de cette tendance.

**MOTS CLÉS:** publicité; métaphores primaires; produits tangibles; produits intangibles; schémas d'images.

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**SUMMARY:** 1. Introduction. 2. Image schemas and primary metaphors. 3. State of the art. 4. Corpus and metaphor identification. 5. Results and discussion. 6. Conclusion. 7. References.

**SUMARIO:** 1. Introducción. 2. Esquemas de imagen y metáforas primarias. 3. Estado de la cuestión. 4. Corpus e identificación metafórica. 5. Resultados y discusión. 6. Conclusión. 7. Referencias.

**SOMMAIRE:** 1. Introduction. 2. Schémas d'images et métaphores primaires. 3. État de l'art. 4. Identification du corpus et de la métaphore. 5. Résultats et discussion. 6. Conclusion. 7. Références.

## 1. Introduction

The role and effects of cognitive metaphors in advertising and marketing has long attracted the attention from advertising specialists (Mick and Politi, 1989; McQuarrie and Mick, 1999; Kitchen, 2008; Abuczki, 2009; Morris and Waldman, 2011). Linguists too have investigated the use of metaphor in marketing practices taking into account a wide variety of modes (audial, visual, textual) and formats (newspapers, magazines, directories, apps, social media, etc.), and offering the latest theoretical advances on the description and assessment of their efficiency in the discourse of advertising (Ortiz, 2010, 2011; Pérez Sobrino, 2017; Pérez-Hernández, 2011, 2013ab, 2014, 2019).

The present investigation looks into the cognitive effects of primary metaphors, and their implications for the marketing and advertising industry. It compares the frequency of occurrence of resemblance and the primary metaphors in relation to both tangible and intangible products in a corpus of printed advertisements. This is done with a view to clarifying which type of metaphor is more prevalent in this genre and also to identifying the reasons underlying this preference.

From this general objective stem the following specific research questions and hypotheses that will guide the design of the analysis:

Research Question 1: Which type of metaphor (i.e., resemblance or primary) is more pervasive in printed advertisements?

Hypothesis 1: Primary metaphors are expected to be more pervasive based on previous studies and on the embodied nature of this cognitive mapping.

Research Question 2: Which are the source and target notions which make up those primary metaphors found in the corpus? How are primary metaphors conceptually connected with the target product?

Hypothesis 2: Since primary metaphors are well-established correlations between two domains of experience, we hypothesize that the advertised product will not function as the target domain of these metaphors, as opposed to what is the case with resemblance metaphors found in printed advertisements (cf. Pérez Sobrino, 2017). The connection with the target product will be established through pragmatic explications and contextual parametrization.

Research Question 3: Are primary metaphors more frequent in printed advertisements of tangible or intangible target products/services?

Hypothesis 3: We expect a similar use of primary metaphors in both groups of products based on the fact that other types of metaphors (i.e., resemblance metaphors) are evenly distributed regardless of the nature of the target product.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a description of the main theoretical tools needed for the analysis of the corpus data, including a description of the notions of image schemas and primary metaphor, as well as the criteria that distinguish the latter from resemblance metaphors. Section 3 includes a brief overview of the yet scarce literature on primary metaphors within the field of advertising. Section 4 describes the corpus and the methodology used for the study. Section 5 reports on the results of the analysis and provides answers to the three research questions guiding this investigation. The final section summarizes the results and establishes new lines for further research.

## 2. Image Schemas and Primary Metaphors

Cognitive Linguistics originated in 1987 as the result of two ground-breaking publications- Lakoff's (1987) *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* and Langacker's (1987) *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical Prerequisites*. In sharp contrast to the, at the time, mainstream theoretical perspective (i.e., objectivism), Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff, 1987; Johnson, 1980; Talmy, 2000; see Evans and Green, 2006 for an overview on this paradigm) argues that meaning is no longer universal, but that it arises from the interaction established between humans and the world. Figurative language and meaning become central to human conceptualization. Metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole and irony, among other so-called figures of speech, are considered by cognitivists as central conceptual operations that enable meaning creation. In fact, Cognitive Linguistics has provided ample evidence that figurative language is present, to a large extent, in our daily expressions and discourses, with the aim of enabling us to understand abstract notions by means of more concrete concepts. In this respect, Lakoff (1987: 64) hypothesized that knowledge is arranged in the form of *Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs)*, which he defined as "[...] conventional conceptual representations of the way we perceive and organize reality." Lakoff distinguished four types of cognitive models: propositional, image-schematic, metaphorical, and metonymic. This paper focuses on two of them, namely image-schemas and metaphorical cognitive models, for the analysis of printed advertisement. Let us describe each of them in turn.

2.1. IMAGE SCHEMAS

Cognitive Linguistics has provided mounting evidence on the embodied nature of cognition (Johnson, 1987; Talmy, 2000), claiming that our conceptual organization arises from our bodily experience and our interaction with the surrounding environment. A key notion in this approach to human cognition is that of *image schema*: a static conceptual model which makes use of the information we acquire from our physical experience in order to create a pre-conceptual, schematic notion that captures topological and experiential recurrent aspects of reality. Johnson (1987) distinguished over 60 image schemas, including those of *containment*, *verticality*, *path*, and *force*. By way of illustration, the path schema consists of a point of departure, a directional path and an arrival point. This basic, schematic structure is recurrent in many of our daily life interactions with our environment and is later on used to metaphorically conceptualize abstract notions (e.g., LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor).

2.2. CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR: PRIMARY VS. RESEMBLANCE METAPHOR

From the 1980s onwards a group of scholars put forward a rich body of evidence supporting the fact that metaphors are not mere figures of speech, but rather crucial elements in human conceptualization (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff 1987).

Conceptual metaphor consists in structuring one conceptual domain (usually abstract) in terms of another (concrete). By way of illustration consider the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Pre-conceptual embodied experiences trigger cognitive connections between the domain of LOVE RELATIONSHIPS and the domain of JOURNEYS, as shown in the projections that can be established between these two domains (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 44-45; see table 1).

Source: JOURNEY	Mappings	Target: LOVE
TRAVELLERS	→	LOVERS
VEHICLE	→	LOVE RELATIONSHIP
JOURNEY	→	EVENTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP
DISTANCE COVERED	→	PROGRESS MADE
OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED	→	DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED
DECISIONS ABOUT DIRECTION	→	CHOICES ABOUT WHAT TO DO
DESTINATION OF THE JOURNEY	→	GOALS OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Table 1: Metaphorical mappings for LOVE IS A JOURNEY (Evans and Green, 2006: 294)

The conceptual projections between the two domains license many of the everyday life expressions humans use to talk about love relationships in their daily lives, as in the following examples (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 44-45):

- (1) “Look how far we’ve come”
- (2) “We’re at a crossroads in our relationship”
- (3) “We can’t turn back now”
- (4) “This relationship is a dead-end street”

As noted in Grady (1997), the relation between different domains in a conceptual metaphor can be established either (1) by means of similarity (*resemblance metaphors*); or (2) by means of experiential correlation (*primary metaphors*). Let us explain these notions in detail, since our analysis in section 5 will make extensive use of them.

*Resemblance metaphors* are those based on perceptual or functional similarities. That is to say, those in which the source and target domain possess common traits –either physical, functional or conceptual– as in the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. Evidence for such mappings includes expressions such as:

- (5) “Achilles is a lion”

In example (5) Achilles and lion are independent entities that come together conceptually because of a common characteristic: their fierceness. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Galera Masegosa (2014: 41) argue that they share a series of traits (aggressiveness, ferocity, instinct, etc.), which are clustered together under the umbrella notion of courage.

On the contrary, *correlation-based or primary metaphors* display source domains that are bodily grounded in topological, sensory-motor or bodily experiences (e.g., verticality, containment, temperature, size, etc.). An example would be the primary mapping HAPPY IS UP as realized in sentences like the one in example (6):

- (6) “I was feeling low but he knew how to cheer me up”

In example (6) the source domain of an upper location is mapped onto the target notion of happiness.

Primary or correlational metaphors originate in the pairing of different concepts that tend to occur together recurrently since early childhood (Ortiz, 2010: 164). Because these metaphors arise from our interaction with the world that we inhabit, they tend to be acquired automatically and unconsciously. Additionally, because they are based on bodily interaction and experientiality, they are largely shared among speakers of different cultures, which turns them into

a valuable asset for international branding and marketing purposes. Table 2 illustrates the bodily, experiential basis of primary metaphors:

Source		Target	Grounding
HEAVINESS	→	DIFFICULTY	{Difficulty of lifting heavy objects}
HUNGER	→	DESIRE	{Correlation between physical sensation and focus on finding food}
ITCH	→	COMPULSION TO ACT	{Correlation between physical sensation and compulsion to scratch}
BRIGHTNESS	→	HAPPINESS	{Correlation between bright light and safety, warmth, etc.}
SEEING	→	KNOWING/ UNDERSTANDING	{Experiences where information is gathered through the visual channel}
WARMTH	→	AFFECTION	{Correlation between affection and body warmth (produced by proximity)}
PHYSICAL CONNECTION	→	CAUSAL RELATEDNESS	{The joint motion of objects which are physically connected}
PROXIMITY	→	SIMILARITY	{Natural co-location of similar objects; similar conditions in spatially contiguous locations; etc.}

Table 2: Examples of primary metaphors and identification of source and target domains (Grady, 1997: 27)

3. State of the art

Advertising companies are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of primary metaphors for marketing purposes and the development of noteworthy adverts. However, specific studies of primary metaphors in relation to this area are scarce and mostly directed to the analysis of verbal corpora.

Primary metaphors have been studied by notable academics within the discipline (Johnson, 1997; Narayanan, 1997; Grady, 1997; Evans and Green, 2006). Nonetheless, as Ortiz (2010:162) states, “the existence of primary metaphors in visual rhetoric has not been examined, nor have they been used as basic units in the analysis of complex visual metaphors”. As a matter of fact, studies on primary metaphors concerning printed advertising have not been developed until recently.

The first relevant findings in this area were put forward by Ortiz (2010, 2011). In her work, she concentrates on those visual primary metaphors found on printed adverts and known as “symmetrical object alignment” (cf. Grady’s (1997) SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT primary metaphor). In her study, she offers a detailed explanation about how advertising companies tend to align two or more different objects –which seem to hold no relationship- in order to trigger a metaphorical connection. Thus, the interpretation of one domain in terms of the other will be possible thanks to our previous experiences, rather than to the existence of a real similarity between the lined-up objects:

The way in which objects are presented conveys the idea of similarity and their belonging to the same category, and also when the alignment, proximity, shape, inclusion, and space are visual manifestations of primary metaphors that we use in our everyday thought process (Ortiz, 2010: 179).

Ortiz's findings contradicted other theories of primary metaphors within the field of advertising. Morris and Waldman's (2011) study, for example, concluded that: (1) metaphors based on spatial orientation were mostly found in the textual mode; and (2) instances of those metaphors based on region and position were not found. Ortiz's proposals were later supported by studies such as those of Yu (2011) and Pérez Sobrino (2017), based on evidence concerning the role of primary metaphors in metaphorical complexes in TV and printed advertisements, respectively. Similarly, Ming-Yu's (2017) research highlighted the relevance of primary metaphors as part of complex multimodal metaphors due to their universality. He underlined the fact that visual primary metaphors are a useful tool in advertising since they are understood similarly by everyone despite their culture, language, or traditions.

Pérez-Hernández's (2011, 2013b, 2014, 2019) studies on primary metaphors in fast food and automobile printed advertisements also confirm Ortiz's findings and offer additional information about the functions performed by primary metaphors in this professional context.

All in all, specific literature on primary metaphors within the genre of advertising is scarce and further investigation is needed. To this aim, the present research specifically compares the pervasiveness and functions of primary metaphors in tangible and intangible products/services.

## 4. Corpus and Metaphor Identification

### 4.1. CORPUS SELECTION

In accordance with the research objectives stated in section 1 and the needs for research explained in section 3, the present study offers a corpus-based analysis including both a quantitative and a qualitative exploration of those primary metaphors which are found in tangible and intangible printed advertising. To guarantee the diversity of our corpus of study, we have compiled 300 printed advertisements, 150 of which belong to tangible products and 150 to intangible products/services. It is important to underline that we have tried to choose representative samples so that primary metaphor identification was as easy and clear as possible.

Taking these criteria into consideration, our corpus encompasses the following list of brands subdivided into their correspondent categories:

Category	Brands
Banking entities	<i>Canara, CIT, Citi, Lloyds, HSB, Beneficial, ANB, ATM, Indian Bank</i>
Insurance companies	<i>ABC, Leaplif, Anytown, Indiana Form Bureau, RACQ, Navigator &amp; General</i>
Clean energy companies	<i>Equinor, Tesla, Azure Power, Enviva</i>
Media & Entertainment platforms	<i>Disney +, HBO, Netflix, Amazon Prime</i>
Communication companies	<i>Movistar, O2, Talk Talk, Oigo, Orange</i>

Table 3: Intangible products/services: categories and brands

Category	Brands
Cologne	<i>Lancôme, Dior, YSL, Loewe, Leaders, Channel</i>
Jewellery	<i>Swarovski, Pandora, Links London</i>
Fast food	<i>Burger King, McDonalds, Dunkin Donuts, KFC, Subway, PizzaHut, Starbucks, Domino's Pizza</i>
Drinks	<i>Guinness, Carlsberg, Heineken, CocaCola, Lipton, RedBull, Pepsi</i>

Table 4: Tangible products: categories and brands

All the examples included in the corpus of analysis have been obtained from simple searches carried out on the *Google Images* website. To guarantee the objectiveness of the corpus, the first 150 advertisements for each category (i.e., tangible vs. intangible products/services) have been selected. Not all the instances have been included in the corpus. Advertisements have been selected following criteria of representativeness, variety, and clarity of interpretation. The final selection based on these criteria has yielded a final corpus of 300 printed ads.

4.2. METAPHOR IDENTIFICATION

As pointed out by Pérez-Hernández (2019: 9), primary metaphors “[...] cannot yet be retrieved by means of automatized corpus searches, therefore, their identification still needs to be manually carried out by the analyst [...]”. Albeit this method involves certain risks – i.e., human errors or subjectivity-, it is the only method at hand for visual primary metaphors identification.

In order to minimize as much as possible any analyst bias, the following steps have been followed to identify the metaphors in the corpus of printed advertisements.

We have started by making a list of possible tangible products and intangible services in order to begin the searching process. Next, we have identified the product/services being advertised. We have then proceeded to analyze the product down to the last detail, including background and foreground elements, with the aim of detecting possible source domains of primary metaphors which are visually connected to the product/service. The last step of the process involves comparing the results with Grady's (1997) list of primary metaphors for potential matches. If some details were included in the advertisements regarding brightness, for example, we turned to Grady's (1997) list to look for those primary metaphors that had this notion as the source domain (e.g., GOOD IS BRIGHT).

## 5. Results and Discussion

This section offers the results of our analysis of the printed advertisements in the corpus by following the organization of our specific research questions as listed in section 1.

### 5.1. RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHICH TYPE OF METAPHOR (I.E., RESEMBLANCE OR PRIMARY) IS MORE PERVASIVE IN PRINTED ADVERTISEMENTS?

As stated in the introduction, research question 1 seeks to assess the pervasiveness of primary metaphors, in comparison to resemblance metaphors, in printed advertisements. Based on previous studies (Pérez-Hernández, 2019), we expected primary metaphors to be more frequent than resemblance metaphors and the analysis of the corpus supports this hypothesis.

Each of the 300 advertisements that comprise our corpus includes one or more instances of metaphorical expressions, encompassing a total amount of 768 metaphors, of which 654 examples are primary metaphors and just 114 are resemblance metaphors. As table 5 illustrates, the total number of primary metaphors is noticeably higher than that of the resemblance metaphors, amounting to 85.2% of the total number of occurrences in the corpus.

Type of Metaphor	Number	Percentage
Primary Metaphor	654	85.2%
Resemblance Metaphor	114	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	768	100%

Table 5: Primary vs. resemblance metaphors

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that the number of primary metaphors (654) is also markedly higher than that of the number of advertisements included in the corpus (300). This reveals that there is a high number of advertisements that contain more than one embodied metaphor, which interact with each other reinforcing the communicative effect of the advertisements as will be shown in the description of particular examples in section 5.3.

The pervasiveness of primary metaphors in printed advertisements arises as a phenomenon which is worthy of further analysis even though they have received very little attention in the literature to date (Pérez-Hernández, 2019: 11) (See section 3).

5.2. RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHICH ARE THE SOURCE AND TARGET NOTIONS WHICH MAKE UP THOSE PRIMARY METAPHORS FOUND IN THE CORPUS? HOW ARE THE PRIMARY METAPHORS CONCEPTUALLY CONNECTED WITH THE TARGET PRODUCT?

The analysis of the data yields an inventory of the source and target notions which are communicated by primary metaphors in the advertisements under scrutiny. A total of nine embodied mappings have been identified. Among them table 6 shows that four primary metaphors stand out from the rest (i.e., IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL, IMPORTANT IS SIZE/VOLUME, GOOD IS BRIGHT, and SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT).

Primary Metaphor	Number	Percentage
IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL	185	28.3%
IMPORTANT IS SIZE / VOLUME	130	19.9%
GOOD IS BRIGHT	98	15%
SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT	93	14.2%
IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT	51	7.8%
HAPPY IS UP	42	6.4%
IMPORTANT IS BEING FOCUS	27	4.1%
QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION	21	3.2%
THE NATURE OF AN ENTITY IS ITS SHAPE	7	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6: Distribution of primary metaphor types in the corpus of analysis

As explained in section 2.3, the source domains found in embodied metaphors are grounded in sensory-motor experiences. For this reason, the source domains of the metaphors included in table 6 are mostly notions involving spatial orientations (UP, CENTRAL, ALIGNMENT, and VERTICAL ELEVATION), size/volume (BIG), and visual properties (BRIGHT, FOCUS). As regards target domains, we encounter four different concep-

tual categories in our data: abstract/generic (SIMILARITY, NATURE), evaluative (IMPORTANCE, GOOD), emotional (HAPPINESS), and quantitative notions (QUANTITY). These primary metaphors are a useful tool for marketing purposes since they depict a conceptual correlation already established in human cognition between some physical aspects of the products and certain notions of assessment (i.e., importance/relevance, goodness, etc.).

Grady (1997: 150) explained that “all the source concepts in primary metaphors [...] refer to properties of, relations between or actions involving objects, rather than objects themselves.” Our data supports this observation, since the product/service functions neither as the source, nor as the target of the primary metaphors. Nevertheless, a relationship between those embodied mappings and the advertised products is mandatory if primary metaphors are to be effective in highlighting relevant features of the latter. This link connecting primary metaphors with the product does in fact exist, although it is not as straightforward as in resemblance metaphors in which the product functions as the target domain itself, as can be observed in the advertising motto for the HSBC bank (“HSBC bank is a pearl”).

Consider the advertisement in figure 1.



Figure 1: Example of the primary metaphor GOOD IS BRIGHT in printed advertising

The product (i.e., a perfume) is under a spotlight that highlights its relevance in comparison to the rest of the brands which appear in the shadow. This light contrast performs a double function: (1) it draws the consumer’s attention towards the target product, and (2) it triggers a question that requires an answer (i.e., why is this object

brighter than the rest?). The answer to this question is automatically launched by an underlying embodied metaphor that maps “brightness” onto “quality” (i.e., the primary metaphor GOOD IS BRIGHT). At a later stage of the interpretation, the generation of a contextual explicature allows customers to understand GOOD in terms of the quality of the product and to perceive the bright bottle of perfume as one of exceptional quality<sup>2</sup>. The resulting explicature is parametrized in two different ways: (1) it should be compatible with the conceptual nature of the advertised product (i.e., those traits that make the product good for the consumer); and (2) it should be compatible with the context (i.e., the reasons why the perfume may be good for the consumer in different contexts). In other words, “such parameterisation requires a metonymic projection of the EFFECT FOR THE CAUSE type” (Pérez-Hernández, 2019: 14), which allows to find a trait that fits the context presented in the advertisement.

In the case of the product depicted in figure 1, there is a visual element which favors this interpretation process: the column. This element places the perfume in an upper location, in contrast to the rest, which triggers a connection between quality and superiority. On this basis, the quality of the product (i.e., what makes it good) may be understood as the source of its superiority over the other perfume brands. Consequently, the consumer will map from the effect (superiority) to the cause (quality), developing a metonymic domain reduction<sup>3</sup>. Figure 2 schematizes the conceptual process that explains the link between the product and the primary metaphor.

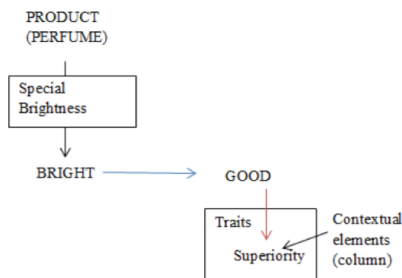


Figure 2: Schematization of the process by which a link is established between primary metaphor and the product. It includes the explicature which generates the primary metaphor GOOD IS BRIGHT (blue arrow), and the metonymic operation necessary for the parameterisation (red arrow)

<sup>2</sup> The concept of *explicature* was firstly introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1995). Later on authors such as Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez-Hernández (2003) have reformulated the concept as an inferential activity, which makes use of pragmatics so as to transform an assumption schema into a full proposition. In other words, in explicatures meaning inferences are obtained by a small development of the literal form of the utterance.

<sup>3</sup> By domain reduction (or target-in-source metonymies) we refer to those metonymies that involve “[...] cutting down the amount of conceptual material used to construct the meaning interpretation” (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011: 106). In other words, the target domain is a part of the source domain and thus a process of specification is developed.

A link, therefore, does exist between primary metaphors and the advertised products, although it is more complex -in contrast to the one involved in resemblance metaphors- and it involves additional pragmatic and cognitive operations (i.e., explicatures and metonymies). Furthermore, the comparison of the advertisement in figure 1 with the one in figure 3 yields an interesting finding.



Figure 3: Representation of a new primary metaphor found in our corpus:  
IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT

The advertisement in figure 3 illustrates a primary metaphor (i.e., IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT), which is not included in Grady's (1997) initial list of primary metaphors and which represents a slight variation of the GOOD IS BRIGHT embodied mapping. In this advertisement we observe how the brightness surrounds a mother and her child, thus highlighting their significance, since the primary metaphor IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT is based on a recurring experiential correlation between the things that are bright and their salience (e.g., the sun, diamonds, etc.). Also, the things that are bright are more easily perceived by our visual sense and, therefore, more relevant to us. In contrast to figure 1, in which the brightness surrounding the product led to an assessment of its quality, in figure 2, the same brightness is mapped onto a different target domain (i.e., importance/relevance). The conceptual link between the metaphor and the product is similar to that of the previous advertisement. Nonetheless, in the case under scrutiny, the advertisement contains a verbal element ("matters") that explicitly activates the target domain (i.e., IMPORTANT) of the primary metaphor involved through an EFFECT for CAUSE metonymy (i.e., the family is *important* because it is what *matters* most to us), thus clarifying its sense.

The initial inventory of primary metaphors offered by Grady (1997) is not exhaustive and further investigation would be needed to identify other primary mappings that underlie our conceptualization of abstract domains.

5.3. RESEARCH QUESTION 3: ARE PRIMARY METAPHORS MORE FREQUENT IN PRINTED ADVERTISEMENTS OF TANGIBLE OR INTANGIBLE TARGET PRODUCTS/SERVICES?

Research question 3 enquires about the frequency of occurrence of primary metaphors in advertisements of tangible vs. intangible products.

As shown in section 5.1, primary metaphors are more frequent than resemblance metaphors in our corpus of printed advertisements. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to find out if this asymmetrical distribution of metaphor types is maintained when the material nature of the advertised product is taken into consideration (i.e., tangible vs. intangible products).

As can be observed in table 7, the distribution of resemblance metaphors is even in the two categories of advertisements under scrutiny. By contrast, out of the 654 instances of embodied metaphors that comprise our corpus, 489 were found in tangible product advertisements and only 165 primary metaphors were located in intangible printed advertisements.

Type of advertisement	Primary Metaphors	Percentage	Resemblance Metaphors	Percentage
Tangible Products	489	74.8%	50	43.9%
Intangible Products	165	25.2%	64	56.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7: Quantitative analysis of primary metaphors in tangible vs. intangible product advertisements

Primary metaphors come up as clearly more pervasive in tangible products advertisements. In light of the data, it is tempting to consider the reasons that trigger this asymmetry in the quantitative distribution of primary metaphors in relation to tangible vs. intangible product advertisements. The remainder of this section offers an explanation for this uneven distribution.

Section 5.2 revealed nine embodied metaphors at work in our corpus of product/service advertisements. If we look at their distribution in relation to the nature of the product/service being advertised, two observations arise: (1) some embodied metaphors are only present in tangible-product advertisements; and (2) even if the same primary metaphor appears in both corpora (i.e., tangible vs. intangible product advertisements), there are marked quantitative differences between the two groups.

Primary Metaphors in advertisements of tangible products	Number instances	Primary Metaphors in advertisements of intangible products	Number instances
THE NATURE OF AN ENTITY IS ITS SHAPE	4	THE NATURE OF AN ENTITY IS ITS SHAPE	3
QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION	9	QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION	2
IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL	151	IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL	34
IMPORTANT IS BEING FOCUSED	21	IMPORTANT IS BEING FOCUSED	6
SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT	93	SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT	0
IMPORTANT IS SIZE/VOLUME	116	IMPORTANT IS SIZE/VOLUME	14
GOOD IS BRIGHT	49	GOOD IS BRIGHT	49
HAPPY IS UP	6	HAPPY IS UP	36
IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT	30	IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>489</b>		<b>165</b>

Table 8: Distribution of embodied metaphors regarding the distinction between tangible and intangible product advertisements

As illustrated in table 8, there is one primary metaphor (i.e., SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT), which is only productive in advertisements of tangible products. As Ortiz (2010: 166) explains, this primary metaphor arises when we observe similar objects sharing the same spatial orientation. In other words, as figure 4 shows, this primary metaphor is based on the manipulation of the product in such a way that it becomes aligned with other differing, but somehow conceptually compatible, entities.



Figure 4: SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT metaphorical representation.

The advertisement in figure 4 depicts a beautiful woman in a noteworthy golden dress, which is aligned with a bottle of perfume occupying the same position and displaying a female shape and color similar to those of the woman. Since the product and the woman are visually aligned, the consumer is urged to search for similarities between them (Ortiz, 2010: 163). Thus, the embodied metaphor *SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT* triggers a conceptual association between the beauty and attraction of the woman and that of the perfume.

As intangible products (i.e., insurance, social media, etc.) are characterized by their abstract nature, it would be more complex to represent the product in alignment with another entity. The immaterial nature of intangible products/services would require the use of additional cognitive operations for the physical representation of the product. Thus, intangible services make use of metonymies in their advertisements to (1) visually represent the abstract entity (*COMPANY LOGO FOR COMPANY* or *CREDIT CARD FOR BANK*) or (2) reinforce the message via contextual parameterization (See section 5.2). This involves a higher cognitive complexity, which explains the lack of productivity of this type of metaphor in relation to the advertisements depicting intangible products. By contrast, the *SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT* primary metaphor perfectly fits the advertising of tangible products due to their concreteness. As tangible products are physical entities, their potentiality for spatial manipulation and visual representation is greater, i.e., they allow the publicist to play with their positions, proximity, shape, etc. to emphasize the similar traits between the product and the source domain of the metaphor.

Several primary metaphors, such as *IMPORTANT IS SIZE/VOLUME* or *IMPORTANT IS BEING FOCUSED*, although found in the two categories of advertisements under consideration (i.e., tangible and intangible products), come up as significantly more productive in relation to that of tangible products/services.



Figure 5: *IMPORTANT IS SIZE OR VOLUME* metaphorical representation in the advertisement of tangible products

Figure 5 illustrates an instance of the *IMPORTANT IS SIZE* primary metaphor. As can be observed, the product (i.e., the hamburger) is presented by means of a close-up which triggers an unusual perception: the product appears to be big, in contrast to both the entire frame and other objects such as the bucket. However, this hyperbolic visual representation of the product can only be achieved if the product being advertised is something concrete. Material entities (i.e., cars, hamburgers, perfumes, etc.) are well endowed with physical properties such as size, volume, length, width, etc. that are easily perceived by the consumer. The physical nature of tangible products can be used to create specific angles, perspectives, and shots used for underlining certain traits of the product. Primary metaphors whose source domains involve physical characteristics of entities (e.g., size, sharpness, etc.) are more easily compatible with tangible products. Their use with intangible entities would again involve more complex patterns of conceptual interaction in which the intangible product is metonymically represented. The cognitive cost involved in these latter cases seems to block the extensive use of primary metaphors for the advertisement of intangible products/services.

A similar phenomenon is observed in relation to those primary metaphors that make use of spatial notions as their source domains. As shown in table 8, embodied mappings such as *QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION* OR *IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL* are rarely found in the advertisements of intangible products.



Figure 6: *IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL* and *QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION* metaphorical representation in tangible products

Figure 6 represents two embodied metaphors that are related to the location of the advertised product within a concrete position in space. The spatial location of these tangible products is used as a source domain to communicate the target notions of quantity and importance, respectively. Due to the nature of the objects (i.e., their concreteness) and their physical characteristics (i.e., volume, dimensions, etc.), it is possible to play with their spatial situation by placing one on top of the other (i.e., donuts ad), or positioning the object in the center of

the advertisement, etc. (i.e., beer ad). Their different positions trigger positive evaluative meanings of the products (i.e., IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL, QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION).

The fact that primary metaphors like the ones depicted in figure 6 are not so common in the advertisements of intangible products is again probably due to the fact that the latter, being immaterial, are more difficult to represent visually, and therefore, cannot be used as the vehicles of the source domains of spatial primary metaphors.

Within this general trend of primary metaphors being more compatible with tangible products advertisements, we find a noteworthy exception in relation to the primary metaphor HAPPY IS UP, which appears in our corpus as quite productive in relation to the advertisements of intangible products.



Figure 7: HAPPY IS UP metaphorical representation in advertisements of intangible products

The metaphor HAPPY IS UP is recurrent in advertisements of insurance services. In these cases, the source domain of the metaphor is not represented by the product, whose intangible nature makes its visual representation problematic, but rather by presenting a visual representation of a prototypical upper location (i.e., the sky). Thus, the depiction of the sky activates the source domain of the metaphor (i.e., UP) in the absence of a visual representation of the intangible product. The use of the sky to activate the source domain of the metaphor triggers the activation of other metaphors, due to the characteristics that are normally assigned to this location (light, brightness, etc.). As a result, the primary metaphor GOOD IS BRIGHT is simultaneously activated, giving way to a cluster of primary metaphors (see Pérez-Hernández,

2019 on this notion), in which two different source domains (i.e., UP and BRIGHT) are mapped simultaneously onto different target domains (i.e., HAPPINESS, GOODNESS), thus maximizing the communicative power of the advertisement. This example reveals that the use of primary metaphors in the advertising of intangible products is not unfeasible, but it requires of additional cognitive and representational resources. Marketing professionals should assess the extra processing cost in relation to the communicative effects obtained from it for each advertising campaign.

All in all, metaphorical clusters are mostly presented in the advertisements of tangible products, with a minimum of two and a maximum of three combined metaphors.



Figure 8: Metaphorical cluster representation: GOOD IS BRIGHT, IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL, IMPORTANT IS SIZE OR VOLUME

As figure 8 illustrates, advertisements of tangible products commonly use the product (i.e., perfume) as the vehicle for more than one metaphor that intertwine for a stronger semantic effect (i.e., GOOD IS BRIGHT, IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL, and IMPORTANT IS SIZE OR VOLUME). Metaphorical clusters of this kind hinge on the physical characteristics of the product. Its material nature allows the publicist to play with the product in terms of space, size and quality and activate several primary metaphors simultaneously to enhance the evocative power of the advertisement.

On the contrary, advertisements of intangible products display a limited number of metaphorical clusters. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the difficulty involved in the visual representation of an intangible product/service prevents the use of metaphor clusters whose source domains are linked to physical characteristics (i.e., size, sharpness, etc.) or physical locations (i.e., central, up, etc.). Second, since the focus is on the evaluative assessment of the service, the only primary metaphors that are useful to this aim are the GOOD IS BRIGHT and HAPPY IS UP mappings. In addition, these two metaphors do not require

of the visual representation of the product, but just of an additional spotlight integrated within the advertisement frame (i.e., the sky in the advertisement in figure 7).

Figure 9 displays the advertisement of a banking service aimed at clients facing financial debts. This intangible service is represented metonymically by showing the type of things for which people usually take a credit and get into debt (i.e., cars, holidays, weddings, education, etc.). This metonymic clustering together with the resemblance metaphor *REVOLVING DEBT IS A MERRY-GO-ROUND*, makes it harder to introduce additional primary metaphors without probably increasing the cognitive load of the advertisement beyond reasonable limits.



Figure 9: Metaphor-metonymy interacting in the advertisement of financial products

## 6. Conclusion

The present paper has analyzed the functioning of primary metaphors in a finite collection of advertisements of tangible and intangible products. The study offers some findings about the workings of primary metaphors in advertising that are summarized below.

The quantitative analysis of the data has revealed that embodied metaphors display a higher frequency of occurrence, both in advertisements of tangible and intangible products, than that of resemblance metaphors. The analysis of the corpus also supports previous findings in relation to the productivity of primary metaphor clusters and other patterns of conceptual interaction (i.e., metaphor-metonymy) in printed multimodal advertising (Pérez-Hernandez, 2019).

In addition, our qualitative analysis of the data has given rise to an inventory of those source and target domains conforming the primary metaphors isolated in the advertisements in our corpus. Our analysis

has retrieved nine types of embodied metaphors at work in 300 printed advertisements, including a recurrent metaphorical mapping (i.e., IMPORTANT IS BRIGHT), which was not included in Grady's (1997) initial list of primary metaphors.

The qualitative analysis of this data has resulted in the detailed description of the formal configurations and the functions which primary metaphors display in the advertisements. Primary metaphors establish a formal connection with the product being advertised by means of their source domains, i.e., the product becomes a vehicle for the representation of the source domain. However, in order to achieve their final interpretation, inferences and extra conceptual interactions have been shown to be needed, including explicatures and conceptual metonymies (i.e., EFFECT FOR CAUSE). This complex process complies several functions: (1) it conveys positive evaluations about the product, (2) it underlies specific aspects of the product, and (3) it enables the integration of extra cognitive or contextual operations (e.g., metonymies, resemblance metaphors, other primary metaphors, multimodality) to produce stronger communicative effects. Furthermore, due to their bodily, experiential basis, primary metaphors are largely understood by different speakers, from different backgrounds and contexts. This largely universal nature is also of great importance for advertising purposes.

Finally, the study of primary metaphors in tangible and intangible products advertisements has also raised some quantitative and qualitative issues regarding their frequency of occurrence in relation to the material nature of the target product.

Our quantitative analysis reveals that primary metaphors are more frequent in tangible products advertisements. Although our corpus is composed by 150 advertisements of each kind, embodied metaphors have been found to be more pervasive in their interaction with concrete products. As shown in section 5.3, the matter is not without relevance since it has implications in the advertising practices of these two different types of products.

For this reason, on the basis of the aforementioned results, a qualitative analysis has been developed with the aim of identifying those traits, characteristics, or features that make primary metaphors more productive and abundant in tangible product advertisements. The results obtained show that:

1. Some metaphorical expressions such as SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT are not found in advertisements of intangible products. The immaterial nature of the product prevents its visual representation, either its form or its location, unless it is physically rendered by means of a conceptual metonymy. As a general trend,

therefore, intangible products are not fit to function as the vehicles of the source domains of primary metaphors.

2. Those primary metaphors that have to do with spatial orientation or location (e.g., IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL) are scarce in relation to intangible products. Again, the nature of intangible products complicates the use of this kind of primary metaphors in their connection. As a matter of fact, what intangible product advertisements promote are services, hence the source domains of primary metaphor based on spatial notions have been shown to be little productive in relation to imperceptible entities (i.e., entities we are not able to perceive visually).
3. Metaphorical clusters are also more frequent in the advertisements of tangible products. The representation of primary metaphors in relation to intangible products involves the activation of extra cognitive operations (i.e., conceptual metonymy). The increased cognitive load generated by the use of underlying metonymies renders the use of additional primary metaphors clusters an unlikely choice in the case of intangible products.

From all the above, it can be stated that the use of primary metaphors in the field of printed advertising is more productive as regards tangible products, but it can be extended to intangible products/services by including conceptual metonymies that allow a visual representation of the otherwise immaterial product/services. The advertising industry could apply these finding in the design of printed advertisements that could benefit from the universal reach of primary metaphors. In addition, this study has also shown that Grady's original list of primary metaphors is still incomplete and that there is still room for further studies devoted to the exploration of primary metaphors and their role in the field of advertising.

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