

METAPHORICAL MEANING ATTACHED TO LIQUOR ADVERTISEMENTS¹

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Abstract: Advertising may be viewed as the construction of the semiotic worlds for persuading purchasers to consume what is advertised. Printed advertisement often involves manipulation of linguistic forms to achieve the persuasion. In addition, metaphor is an effective way to achieve the persuasion role since it is closely related to the way of people's thinking and concept of something in their mind, which is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The data are collected from two liquor advertisements and respondents' questionnaires. The two advertisements discussed in this article were collected from Maxim magazine, September 2002 edition and the respondents' questionnaires were distributed to 20 respondents to find out their interpretations on metaphorical advertisements due to written language message of advertisements. In addition, the two examples of printed advertisements, instances of metaphorical advertisements, are reviewed, identified, and explained by using the theories of Saussure's Dydical Sign Model to find the process of metaphors attached to the advertisements. The results of the study show that people's interpretations on metaphors are basically related to their experience offered by metaphors. It means that people will interpret the meaning of the advertisements based on such circumstances in which they have ever been involved in.

Key words: liquor advertisement, metaphors, Saussure's Dydical Sign Model

INTRODUCTION

An understanding process is not produced in one-way recognition process but it is rather as a coherence process where associations and interconnections among many ideas are involved to settle meaning in mind.

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In addition, O'Grady (1997:278) states that "a good example of these interconnections involves metaphor, the understanding of one concept in term of another." In other words, metaphors can be said as a part of our associations and interconnections in interpreting meanings.

Metaphors are used in advertisements as a bridge connecting many creative ideas with message transference. So, economically, their function as a medium of exchanging goods can be fulfilled (Noth, 1990:476).

Metaphor, nowadays, is so widespread that it is no longer only used in literary works, such as in poetry, but also in many different aspects like in religious terms, comics, our everyday speech, and advertisements. Actually, those aspects can be grouped into three basic groups in which metaphors are attached to: i) written language, such as in poetry and religious terms, ii) verbal language, such as in spoken language, iii) the combination of written language and visual language, such as in advertisements in which they cover aspects of linguistic messages and visual messages. However, this article will only cover metaphorical aspect in written language since the writer's analysis is on printed advertisements.

DEFINITIONS OF METAPHORS

The term 'metaphor' is derived from the Greek words 'meta' which means transcending and the word 'phora' meaning transference. (Tseng, 2000) In addition, metaphor refers to the act of changing something from one meaning to another by transferring new meanings from one object or idea to another.

Webster's Third New World Dictionary (cited in Noth, 1990: 128) gives a typical definition of metaphor, which is similar to the definition given by Leng (2000:9), that is metaphor is attached to a word and phrase. Metaphor is "a figure of speech in which a word or a phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. "

Leng explains, in terms of poetry, metaphors usually help writers to do one or more of the following things:

- i) Help reader to visualize more clearly what the poet is talking about. This could be an object or a scene, which the reader may have never seen at all (e.g., a nuclear war, the poet's family); an everyday object or occurrence (e.g., breakfast in Mc. Donald's shopping), which the writer has observed in a fresh, new, and special way, and wishes to share; or something which the poets has imagined.

- ii) Sometimes, allow poet to describe the indescribable.
- iii) Can sometimes be used as a kind of 'shorthand', to show readers many aspects of one thing economically.
- iv) Can sometimes be used to deepen reader's insight and understanding, by showing that what the writer is describing is connected to complex feelings and emotions, and/or important ideas, issues and themes (2000:9)

On the other hand, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that metaphors are no longer dominated by poets as a literary device of conveying their ideas through poetry but they have also been parts of people's daily life. They point out that metaphors are not merely rhetorical embellishments but are parts of our everyday speech of language affecting the ways in which we receive, think, and act. It means that metaphors are not important only in a poetical point of view but have also become an inherent part of our daily language. Not only do we use metaphors when we speak, but we also think in metaphors and use them as a tool of perception. For example, in Indonesia, students who wear far or short sighted eye glasses are often perceived as diligent, intelligent, smart, nerd, and even as unsociable students. Moreover, the kinds of students are perceived as unattractive students. As long as the perceptions of other students toward students wearing the eyeglasses are as those above, students with eyeglasses will not have many friends. In fact, there is no relation between the eyeglasses, the capacity of brain on intellectuality, and appearance of students. In addition, the eyeglasses are just tools to help the students to look at everything properly. Therefore, then, it can be said that metaphors are parts of our conceptual system.

Moreover, Noth (1990:131) explains that when metaphors become part of everyday language, it is called "lexicalized metaphors," for example, *hot air*. The phrase *hot air* is a metaphor of *lies or untrue statements*. For example, there is a woman who said to her friend, "Don't think about what he's said yesterday. It's only a hot air," it means that the woman told her friend to not believe everything the man has said as it was a lie or untrue statement.

Chandler (1998) says that metaphors, in term of semiotic, are related to the interaction of signifiers and signifieds. He holds, "A trope such as metaphor can be regarded as new sign formed from the signifier of one sign and the signified of another. The signifier thus stands for a different signified;

the new signified replaces the usual one. “Chandler (1998) proposes a diagram on how metaphors are produced through the relation of signifiers and signifieds as follows.



Diagram 1 : The interaction of signifiers and signifieds creating metaphors

Simply, metaphors can be defined as a process involving one signified acting as a signifier, which refers to a different signified. For example, a concept of ‘beer’ acting as a signifier of passionate and stunned thing is represented to another signified of ‘a desirable woman’.

Todorov (cited in Noth, 1990:129) adds that the metaphorical process only which consist of signifieds are replaced with other signifieds, while the signifiers remain constant in signifying the signifieds but not replaced by other signifiers. For instance, in the argument far. The signified of *argument* is replaced with another signified *war* because the signifier *argument* signifies of *attack, win and destroy*.

HUMAN CONCEPTUAL SYSTEM

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3), people’s conceptual system plays a central role in defining their everyday realities. In addition, they try to explain that the concept has already been structured, extended, and interrelated with man’s everyday activities. Conversely, it is difficult to know what kind of thought has existed in our conceptual system, as it is not something we are normally aware of. For example, ‘seeing’ has become synonymous with ‘understanding’. We prefer to use it in such situations as: we ‘look’ at a problem; we ‘see’ the point; we ‘focus’ on an issue; and we ‘see thing in perspective’, rather than we ‘know’ the point. Most probably, this phenomenon happens because we get used to think ordinarily in a certain concept so that we do not simply realize that we think, act, and talk in a certain concept. O’Grady (1997:276) states that, “the conceptual system reveals about how meaning is expressed through a language”. Since we use language in communication, we will naturally know what others are thinking

about. Then, it can be said that language is one way to find out the kind of concept we have in our mind before we start to communicate with people.

Based on Lakoff and Johnson, our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature:

We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is persuasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in term of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (1980:4).

From the explanation above, metaphors are widely used in our daily life because of metaphorical basic of our conceptual system.

SAUSSURE’S DYDICAL SIGN MODEL

Cook (cited in Bezuindenhout, 2000) states that Saussure describes a language as a system of signs, which have meaning by virtue of their relationship to each other. Saussure (cited in Noth, 1990: 59), divides the linguistic signs into *a concept* and *a sound-image* which later one introduced as a “signified (for concept) and a signifier (for sound-image). See Diagram 2 below:

SIGN	SIGNIFIER (SOUND-IMAGE)
	SIGNIFIED (CONCEPT)

Diagram 2: Saussure’s dyadic sign model

The relation between both signified and signifier in the concept of *tree* and the Latin word *arbor* as a sequence of sounds referring to the concept is a good exemplification of the arbitrariness of sign. The concept is illustrated by the concept of *tree* and the sound-image by the Latin word *arbor*.


CONCEPT	
SAUND-IMAGE	ARBOR

Diagram 3: Saussure’s model of the linguistics sign (left) with Saussere’s exemplification (right)

Saussure (cited in Noth, 1990:60) describes that a sound-image is actually a matter of psychological aspect of how we create meaning from understanding a word and an image, "the latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes in our senses". He was mainly interested in language, the way signs are related to other signs where relation between signs (signifier and signified) is arbitrariness.

Bezuindenhout (2000) gives an interesting example of the arbitrariness relation of signs between *the red traffic light* and the word *stop*. We do not have any idea on the origin description of the *stop* when it is referred to *the red traffic light*; however, we just agree on the meaning of the word. Due to Saussure's exemplification, he explains that "in current usage the term (sign) generally designated only a sound-image, a word, for example, arbor. One tends to forget that arbor is called a sign only because it carries the concept 'tree'" (cited in Noth, 1990: 62).

It means that the relation between a sound-image created from an understanding of a concept is only in an abstract way, but not in a concrete one. For example, the way the word *iron horse* represents a concept of *train* does not really mean that a train consists of horses made from iron. In fact, this example creates a sense of metaphor where one thing is determined in term of another. As what Lakoff and Johnson hold (1980:5), "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another".

RESEARCH DESIGN: TYPE, DATA COLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

A descriptive qualitative research is applied to generate new ideas and concepts that can be used to better understanding of metaphor and its effective persuasion on the readers' mind in advertisements, especially in printed advertisements.

There are two kinds of data used in this study. The first data are liquor advertisements taken from one magazine: *Maxim*, edition of September 2002. The liquor advertisements are analyzed to find out the metaphorical meaning attached to them.

The second data used in the study are questionnaires. The questionnaires' used are based on verbal commentaries used in three-liquor advertisements. Then, the questionnaires are distributed to respondents to find out their interpretations on metaphors attached to verbal commentaries.

The data are interpreted by using Saussure’s Dydical Sign Model. By using this model data interpretation, the advertisements are examined to find the signifiers and signifieds. Then, the relation of both signifiers and signifieds is analyzed whether the arbitrariness of their relation leads to unrelated ness relation, which is similar to the basic concept of metaphor focusing on an apparent unrelated ness.

VERBAL COMMENTARIES ON THREE-LIQUOR ADVERTISEMENTS TOWARD RESPONDENTS’ INTERPRETATIONS ON PRODUCTS ADVERTISED

A. The analysis on verbal commentary used in *Budweiser Beer* advertisement

From the table 1 below, it can be interpreted that the concept (signified) of Advertisement 1, *Budweiser Beer* Advertisement, based on its verbal commentary, “Confidence is the sexiest thing you can wear, “ signifies a number of things.

Respondents’ Interpretations on Products Advertised toward the Use of Verbal Commentary	Frequency of Respondents	Percentages of Respondent’s Interpretations (%)
Clothes	10	50
Perfume	7	35
Underwear	2	10
Cosmetic	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 1: Respondents Interpretations’ Percentages in Relation to the Products Advertised toward the Use of Verbal Commentary on *Budweiser Beer* Advertisement

(Source: item no. 1 in the B1 questionnaires)

Ten respondents (50%) interpreted that Advertisement 1 advertises a product of clothes because the respondents basically interpret that the words

wear and *sexiest* relate to *clothes* in which by wearing the products (clothes), someone will look sexy. In addition, there is another respondent that relates the words *confidence* and *wear* on verbal commentary on Advertisement 1 to *clothes* where the respondent assumes *confidence* as the brand name of the *clothes* due to the word *wear*.

Seven respondents (35%) assumed that the product advertised on Advertisement 1 is *perfume*. The respondents interpreted Advertisement 1 as an advertisement of *perfume* because they drew their attention to the three key words in the advertisement: *confidence*, *sexiest*, and *wear*. In addition, they interpreted that by wearing the product (perfume), someone will be confident to look sexy. Moreover, the other respondents assumed that the word *confidence* has nothing to do with the word *wear* so the respondent related *confidence* to the brand name of a *perfume* and also assumed that by wearing the product, someone will be sexy (some perfumes are considered to have sensuous fragrances).

In addition, there were two respondents (10%) who interpreted the product advertised on Advertisement 1 as *underwear*. Their interpretation on the product advertised is caused by the use of the words *confidence*, *sexy*, and *wears* on Advertisement 1. They assumed that someone will look sexy if she/he wears *underwear*.

Finally, one respondent (5%) interpreted Advertisement 1 as a *cosmetic* advertisement because the respondent focused on the word *confidence* and *wear*. In addition, the respondent assumed that someone will look confident (or beautiful) if she wears cosmetic. In other words, cosmetic is a product that will make someone confident to go to a workplace (since the respondent assumed the target of Advertisement 1 as a career woman).

B. The analysis on verbal commentary used in *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* Advertisement

Table 2 below shows the respondents' various interpretations on verbal commentary used in Advertisement 1. In addition, a signified of the verbal commentary on Advertisement 2, *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* advertisement, "Staying home tonight? The Captain was here," also represented a number of different things

Respondents' Interpretations on Products Advertised toward the Use of Verbal Commentary	Frequency of Respondents	Percentages of Respondent's Interpretations (%)
Drink	4	20
Electronic Security System	4	20
TV-Program, Home Theatre, and Film	3	15
Condom	2	10
Spring bed	2	10
Snack	1	5
Household equipment	1	5
<i>Do not give any interpretations.</i>	3	12
Total	20	100

Table 2: Respondents Interpretations' Percentages in Relation to the Products Advertised toward the Use of Verbal Commentary on *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* Advertisement

(Source: item no. 1 in the B2 questionnaires)

From the table above, it can be seen that there are four respondents (20 %) interpreting Advertisement 2 as a kind of drink (*liquor, alcohol, and beverage*) advertisement because the respondents basically focused on the first part of the verbal commentary, "*Staying home tonight*". They related the phrase to the product of drink because they assume that drink is their friend to spend a good *night* whenever they *stay* at home. In addition, one of the respondents explained that drink is related to the center of socialization (gathering). Therefore, the respondent interpreted that by using the product, someone will still be able to socialize and spend a good night even when she/he stays at home.

The other four respondents interpreted the product advertised on Advertisement 2 as an *electronic security system* (alarm) for some reasons. Two respondents related the word *home* to a *rich person's big house* where a big house often needs an extra security. In addition, the word *Captain* is interpreted as the *brand name* of the *electronic security system* product. Furthermore, the two other respondents interpreted Advertisement 2 differently. One of the respondents related the word *tonight* to a *danger* and the word *Captain* to *security person (policeman)*. The respondent simply assumed that someone needs a security system for protecting her/

himself from the danger. For that reason, the respondent interpreted the product being advertised on Advertisement 2 as a *safety alarm*. In addition, the other respondent assumed that the phrase "*Staying home tonight*" refers to *sleeping* time in which sleeping needs safety and the *Captain* can provide and guarantee her/his safety. Therefore, the word *Captain* is considered as the *alarm*.

Furthermore, three respondents (15 %) assumed the products advertised on Advertisement 2 as a *TV program*, a *home theatre*, and a *film*. Two of the respondents assumed that a *TV program* and a *film* are products being advertised because they describe the word *Captain* as a title of a TV program or a film, which can entertain someone at home. Moreover, one respondent interpreted Advertisement 2 as a *home theatre* advertisement since the respondent referred the word *Captain* to a *brand name* of a *home theatre* which can entertain someone when stays at home.

Two respondents (10 %) described Advertisement 2 as an advertisement of a *condom* because the respondents generally relate the phrase on Advertisement 2, "*Staying home tonight*" to the right *time* for people making love. For this reason, the respondents interpreted the word *Captain* as a *brand name* of a *condom*.

Other two respondents (10 %) described Advertisement 2 as a *spring bed* advertisement since they basically related the word *tonight* to *sleep*. In addition, if someone prefers to stay home at night, it means that she/he wants to get relax and sleep. As a result, the respondents referred the word *Captain* to a *brand name* of the *spring bed*.

Furthermore, there was one respondent (5 %) who interpreted that Advertisement 2 advertised a product of *snack*. The respondent' reason for giving the interpretation is that the respondent related the phrase "*Staying home*" to a *worrying* and *bothering time*. In addition, the respondent referred the word *Captain* to *snack* since the respondent defined a captain as a person who always gives order to others and a snack seems to 'give order' to someone to try it.

In addition, the other respondent described the product advertised on Advertisement 2 as *household equipment* since the respondent related the phrase "*Staying home*" to *household* activities. Therefore, someone can be still doing something while she/he stays at home. Finally, there are three respondents (15 %), on the table 4.1, who do not give any interpretations on Advertisement 2.

RESPONDENT'S INTERPRETATIONS ON PRODUCTS ADVERTISED DUE TO AGE, SEX, NATIONALITY, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND INTERESTS/ HOBBIES

There are two points drawn from the analysis of the three-liquor advertisements' verbal commentaries due to respondents' differences and similarities of age, sex, nationality, educational background, and interests/hobbies.

The first point is that most of the respondents who had exactly the same age, sex, nationality, educational background, and interests/hobbies obviously had the same interpretations on the product advertised of the three-liquor advertisements, for example, respondents 3 and 4. Both respondents were adolescents, males, Indonesians, interested in reading, and 5th semester' students. In interpreting Advertisements 1 and 3, both respondents suggested the same interpretations on the products advertised, *clothes* and *beauty cares* (lipstick and skin care). Only on Advertisement 2, did respondent 4 not give any interpretation on the product advertised while respondent 3 interpreted the advertisement as *condom*.

The other example given to emphasize the first point above is that several respondents who had the same sex and nationality had the same interpretations on the advertisements, for example, respondents 7 and 13. Both respondents were males and Indonesians. Furthermore, both respondents equally interpreted Advertisement 1 as an advertising of *clothing*, Advertisement 2 as an *electronic security system (alarm)*, and Advertisement 3 as a product of *cosmetics*.

Furthermore, there were several respondents who had clearly different age, sex, nationality, educational background, and interest/hobbies surprisingly had the same interpretations on the three-liquor advertisements, for example, respondents 9 and 17. Both respondents interpreted the product advertised on Advertisement 1 as *perfume*; the product advertised on Advertisement 2 as *liquor or alcohol*; and they interpreted Advertisement 3 as *beauty cares (whitening and make-up products)*.

The second point and the last point is that several respondents who had exactly different age, sex, nationality, educational background, and interests/hobbies had obviously different interpretations on the products advertised in the advertisements, for example, respondents 2 and 16. Respondent 2 was an adolescent (20 years old), a fifth semester Indonesian female student, who was interested in reading while respondent 16, a twenty

two-year-old British male adult, was interested in music and had a master's degree. Respondent 2 interpreted the three advertisements above as advertisements of *underwear*, *alarm*, and *cosmetic*. On the contrary, respondent 16 assumed that the advertisements 1 and 3 were about *clothes* and *shampoo*. However, respondent 16 did not give any interpretation on Advertisement 2.

Moreover, there were also two respondents, for example respondents 16 and 17, who had the same sex (male), and nationality (British) interpreted the advertisements differently. Respondent 16 assumed that the Advertisements 1 and 3 were about *clothes* and *shampoo* while respondent 17 interpreted them as *perfume* and *beauty care (make-up)* advertisements. Respondent 16 did not have any interpretation on Advertisement 2 whereas respondent 17 described it as the advertisement of *drinks (alcohol)*.

From the two points above, the writers concluded that basically people's interpretations on metaphorical verbal commentaries are not influenced by their differences and similarities of age, sex, nationality, educational background, and interests/hobbies but by their experience and familiarity.

The results of respondents' interpretations on verbal commentaries proved Saussure's theory (cited in Noth, 1990:59) on the arbitrariness of sign. The arbitrary relation of a signified and a signifier can be seen from the respondents' interpretations on the three-liquor advertisements. The use of verbal commentaries on the three advertisements signify many different things. Respondents interpret the verbal commentary on *Budweiser Beer* advertisement, "Confidence is the sexiest thing you can wear," differently. Moreover, they interpret that the products advertised as *clothes*, *underwear*, *perfume*, and *cosmetic*.

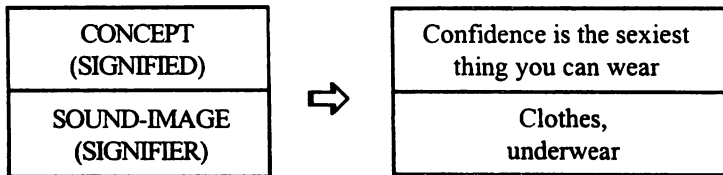


Diagram 4: The arbitrariness relation between a signified and a signifier toward the respondents' interpretations on the products advertised of *Budweiser Beer* advertisement's verbal commentary

As a result, these arbitrary interpretations lead to metaphorical meanings attached to the *Budweiser Beer*'s verbal commentary.

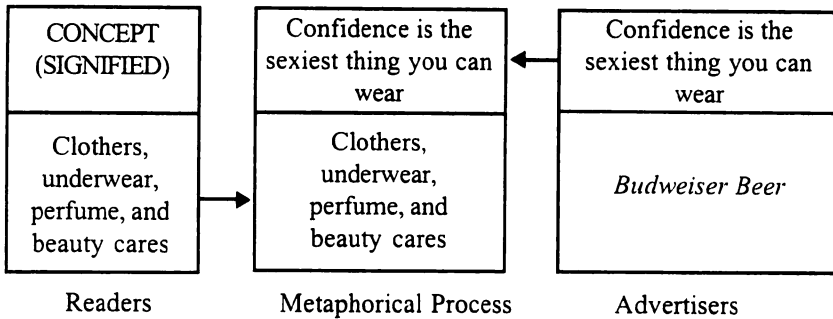


Diagram 5: Metaphorical process attached to *Budweiser Beer* advertisement's verbal commentary

In addition, the verbal commentary on *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* also signifies different things. The signified of the advertisement written, "Staying home tonight? The Captain was here " creates many different signifiers including of *drink, electronic security system, TV-program, home theatre, film, condom, spring bed, snack, spring bed, and household equipment*.

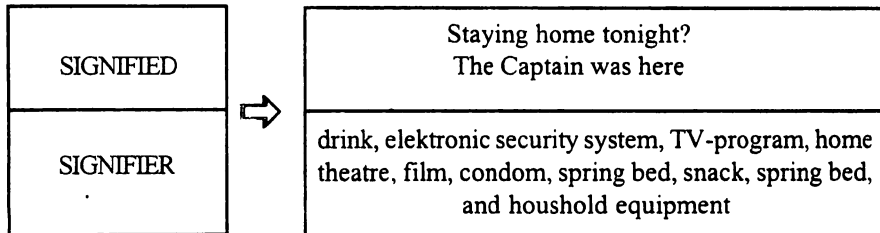


Diagram 6: The arbitrariness relation between a signified and a signifier toward the respondents' interpretations on the products advertised of *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* advertisement's verbal commentary

The arbitrariness interpretations on the concept of the advertisement's verbal commentary establish metaphorical meanings attached to the advertisement. The concept of *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* advertisement is supposed to be *liquor*; However, it turns into *drink, electronic security system, TV-program, home theatre, film, condom,*

spring bed, snack, spring bed, and household equipment. Although four respondents interpreted the advertisement correctly, it is still metaphorical for them because they have their own reason when they are interpreting the advertisement. They have different references.

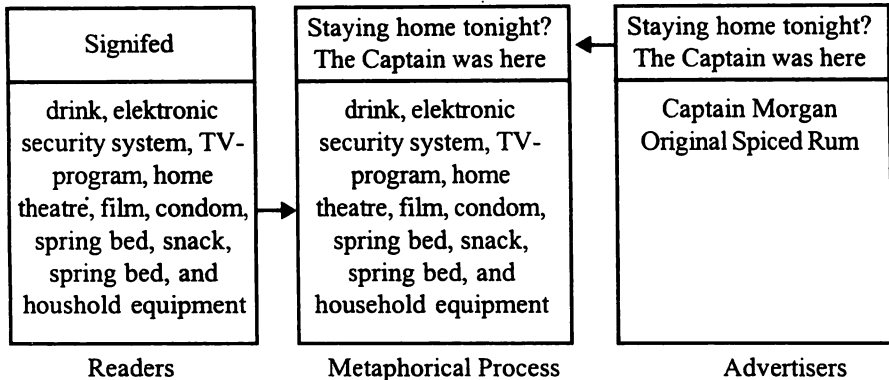


Diagram 7: Metaphorical process attached to *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum* advertisement's verbal commentary

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions are drawn from the analysis of three-liquor advertisements. The first conclusion is that metaphors attached to both verbal commentaries and pictures/images on the liquor advertisements are interpreted differently. In addition, the interpretations on the metaphorical meanings are not based on people's background but rather on people's experience, which is in line with Lakoff and Johnson's statement (1980:4) that human conceptual system, that is fundamentally metaphorical in nature, is coherent to human's experience. They also state that the essence of metaphors is experiencing and understanding one thing in term of another. It means that people's interpretations on metaphors are based on a certain situation that they have ever been experienced before. Therefore, those who have the same interpretations on metaphors, at least, have ever experienced a similar experience.

The second conclusion is that pictures used on the advertisements do not always convey the messages transferred by the advertisements. They can be interpreted differently and they can also be interpreted correctly on the basis of the readers' experience. However, pictures are still needed to

help the readers understand the messages transferred by the advertisements regardless of differences or correct interpretations.

The final conclusion is that metaphorical advertisements are effective to attract people's attentions to know more about the products advertised, which is one of the functions of advertisements (Bezuindenhout, 2000). On the other hand, metaphorical advertisements are not effective in communicating messages of the advertisements since people's interpretations on the advertisements are based on their own experience. In addition, one 's experience on something is not always similar to others'. The ineffectiveness of the use of metaphors on transferring messages of the advertisements is shown by the Paradigmatic analysis where most respondents interpreted that the use of metaphors on the advertisements makes the advertisements unclearer. In addition, most respondents misinterpreted on the kind of products advertised.

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