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Like Looking into a Mirror:  
The Analysis of Doxicon in Visual Metaphor Advertisements

Submitted by

Brianne Preza Haynes

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This study is on the subject of rhetoric in the form of visually persuasive images. The form of visual analysis will come from magazine advertisements that display print metaphoric messages. A set of three appropriate American print magazines that present such visual metaphoric messages which are to serve as artifacts have been selected. These magazines are: *Cooking Light*, *Marie Claire* and *Real Simple* magazine. Citations for the thirty-two individual artifacts may be found in the Appendix.

### Justification for Study

One study finds that magazines are, “a unique opportunity to study how the beauty ideal is constructed across cultures” (Frith, et al. 56). The use of magazines as an artifact source under further analysis will reveal the types of images prominently displayed when advertisers aim to create desire in a target market.

This study will examine three magazines. The selection of a few magazines from which to pull artifacts will narrow the scope of target audiences. Specificity in target markets will affect the types of advertisements seen, reflecting the type of magazine form which they come. Magazine ads help to communicate the social values in relation to the product(s) they promote (Kaplan, 37). This study will help determine what kinds of social values belong to the target markets of the three magazines to be analyzed.

The area of concentration in this study within visual metaphoric ads is to analyze *doxa* concepts in visual metaphoric advertisements from magazines. *Doxa* exists in any culture and is most prevalent in forms of communication. *Doxa* is composed of cultural, social, symbolic, intangible concepts (Wang, 59). It is dependent on the culture to which it refers. When presented visually, a *doxa* then becomes a doxicon—specifically what this

analysis concerns. *Doxa* is a term used to reference culturally accepted knowledge and information (Cloud, 234). Further analysis of *doxa* concepts in different advertisements as doxicons allows rhetorical critics to take a closer look at social assumptions, whether they are in fact true or not.

*Doxa* in different contexts is important to understand because it can help us understand why communicative messages are received certain ways. In a 2009 study by authors Annamma Joy, et al, a moment of perception can create new meaning out of existing ways of thinking; this is called conceptual blending. Visual metaphors, *doxa*, and how we interpret such images are conceptual blending. This makes both visual metaphors and *doxa* important in further analysis.

Visual metaphors, as the key criteria for this study's artifacts, are worth further investigation. Metaphors are cognitively stimulating but can sometimes be confusing without a visual to accompany the verbal component. A study by Enschoet et al claims that advertisements without rhetorical figure are less favored by consumers. The visual element provides clarity and confirmation of consumer interpretation of the advertisement. Consumers devote more cognitive effort to comprehend visual metaphors as opposed to literal advertisements (DeRosia, 298). In the pursuit to further understand the complexities of metaphorical ads, one might gain greater appreciation for the process of interpretation.

### Justification for Artifacts

#### **Audience Response:**

Magazines, aside from being an effective medium for ads, are also in abundance. They are sold at newsstands, supermarkets, bookstores, as well as other distributors. Based

on 535 magazines that shared their sales data, there were an overall estimated 43,000,000 single-copies sold in the second half of 2007 (MacMillan). This goes on to suggest that over 43,000,000 people were exposed to magazines and the ads within them. Those exposed to magazines as well as the content within them who go unaccounted for are the people who browse through magazines before the actual purchase.

Note that in addition to the immediate audience of a purchased single-copy, magazines may be kept and looked at repeatedly by the same person or an entirely different person at that. Such examples of this include sharing magazines in a family, in libraries, gyms, doctors' offices, and more.

### **Popular Critical Attention:**

In 2008, sales of U.S. magazines fell eleven percent (MacMillan). This data is relative to today's market in that these numbers reflect a decline in sales from previous years.

Granted the economy has continued to affect the magazine industry beyond these numbers mentioned, however this does not weaken their impact on ad value to the point of losing power over other means of advertising. Television, newspapers, and radio among others have all been affected in the case of advertising value. Comparatively, magazines still hold a strong time-ad impact over other media (Mandese).

In the evaluation of metaphors in advertisements, magazines are an important medium to explore. Compared to other forms of advertising such as television, newspapers, internet, and radio, magazines actually offer two times more ad value per minute (Mandese). With magazines having the most ad impact on consumers, they provide the most ideal environment in which to observe and evaluate advertisements.

**Type of Message:**

The type of messages to be evaluated in magazine ads is metaphors. Magazine advertisements from 1954 through 1999 have grown increasingly complex and elaborate, using puns, irony, and metaphors more frequently (Phillips and McQuarrie 1). With magazines making much of their profit from advertisers, they are ideal for finding such metaphorically based ads. Metaphors to be evaluated will be visual and may be accompanied by text to support the image.

Metaphors are frequently used to communicate the desired message. These kinds of implicit messages may have a considerable impact on audiences through elaboration, retention, and appreciation, which tend to increase when a metaphor uses a certain level of complexity (Van Mulken et al. 155). Advertisers must be careful not to use too much complexity in the design of their ads. For the most part metaphor ads from magazines will have similar levels of implicitness; metaphors will not be too simple yet not too difficult to understand.

**Cultural Uptake:**

Magazines are a form of modern art and so are the advertisements featured in them. American culture is imbedded into popular magazine advertisements (Okigbo 312). Images and texts used to make magazines communicate what kinds of things interest, or are of importance to, a particular culture or people within a society; ideals of the body, the face, what is beautiful, what is powerful, etc. Hence when one considers magazines and the ads

featured in them to be art, it may be concluded that magazines are the graphic translation of a culture (McLuhan 57).

If there is a big enough interest in a particular subject, it is highly likely that there is a magazine specifically about that subject, in print or online. At any bookstore or newsstand one can get a hold of food, wedding, country, fashion, business, sports, airplane magazines, and more. With the printing trend losing headway, Magazines companies are increasingly putting forth their effort into creating a profitable online magazine business (Galarneau 89).

Any business looking to advertise can use magazines to reach their target audiences. Established magazines, with such specific content, already have a strong idea of what kind of peoples are drawn to their product. They serve an important tool for reaching specific target markets. For example a home appliances company looking to advertise would look to magazines like *Home & Garden* in which to feature their ads. The magazine has already established an appeal to those who would be interested in home and garden products and ideas.

### Research Problem

The purpose of this rhetorical research paper is to analyze the use of doxa concepts in images from visual metaphoric advertisements in three sets of magazines. Those magazines are: *Cooking Light*, the September 2009 issue, *Marie Claire*, the July 2009 and November 2009 issue, and *Real Simple*, the November 2008 and November 2009 issue.

### Primary Articles, Rhetorical Criticism Method

In his 1990 article, Stuart J. Kaplan analyzes ads and the role of the metaphors they depict in communicating social values that are associated with communication technology. This article utilizes the same types of artifacts- advertisements from magazines.

First Kaplan determined magazines from which he would select computer and advanced telephone technology ads. Those magazines were: *Newsweek*, *Life*, and *Scientific American*. Next, he created requirements that ads would have to meet, such as type of product the ad promotes, in order to be selected for analysis. Ads that met the criteria were put into one subcategory in each of the four major categories: visual metaphor, metaphor type, metaphor structure and role of the text.

In his 1992 article, Kaplan proposed a method in which visual metaphor advertisements could be classified in types of depiction and tension. His article relates to the purpose of this paper by analyzing the same form of artifacts: visual metaphors in the media.

Kaplan explains his steps of criticism in the article's analysis set-up section. First he identified the qualifications of metaphors for his study; they had to be automobile and alcoholic beverage advertisements and their visual depiction needed to be a visual metaphor. Second, he categorized ads into different forms of metaphor (juxtaposition, identity, or second order reference) and different types of tension (linguistic, pragmatic, or hermeneutical). Then he classified the ads into either orientational or ontological content. Kaplan goes on to record data and calculate the percentages of metaphor forms, type of tensions and metaphor content of both automobile and alcoholic beverage ads.



### Actual Steps of Analysis

In the actual analysis of my research paper, a combination of methods from Kaplan's articles, "A Conceptual Analysis of Form and Content in Visual Metaphors" and "Visual Metaphors in the Representation of Communication Technology," will be used. First, visual metaphoric images will be selected from three magazines: *Cooking Light*, *Marie Claire* and *Real Simple*. Once the artifacts are selected, they will be catalogued into the Visual Metaphor Analysis Chart which categorizes each ad within the subject of visual components, verbal or written components, and directional components. The characters of my selected artifacts will be recorded and put into a table. Results will then be analyzed for any outstanding similarities, differences, and/or themes. They will then be interpreted through the concept of *doxa*, an image which visually expresses a culture's values. Results will reveal any patterns and/or distinctions in *doxa*.

### Analysis of Artifacts

A visual metaphor chart was designed for this study to include all the components with which the advertisements will be analyzed. The chart is two pages in length compiling basic information, visual components, verbal or written components, and directional components. Each chart is numbered at the beginning stating which number the artifact is. The number depends on the artifact's place in the artifact bibliography.

The first part of the visual metaphor chart analysis is the bibliographical citation from which the artifact came. After that, a distinction needs to be made as to whether the visual metaphor is orientational or ontological. Orientational metaphor type refers to when connections are made between happy, good and up, while other connections are made between sad, bad and

down (Van Gent-Petter, 57). Ontological metaphor type refers to the use of a novel metaphor. All thirty-two artifacts were noted as being of the ontological metaphor type. Every advertisement makes use of the ability to create narratives, challenging audiences to make implicit connections between the metaphrand and the metaphier (Kaplan, 1992). The choice of ontological requires more participation on the part of the audience in that they can be as simple or as complex as the advertiser wishes to express the metaphor.

In this next section of the analysis chart, a distinction is made between the metaphrand and the metaphier with a gray shaded bar. These terms come from Julian Jaynes, author of *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, in which he claims that metaphors involve two component: the metaphrand and the metaphier. In a metaphor, Jayne explains how a metaphor is created by giving a metaphrand the features of a metaphier. So a metaphrand is something what is being described while a metaphier holds qualities of that thing being described.

On the left for each artifact, the metaphrand is identified in bold lettering; the product that the advertisement is attempting to sell. On the right, the metaphier is identified in bold lettering as well; the non-literal aspect of the metaphor which is sometimes called the vehicle or source.

There are two brands that apply more than one different metaphorical advertisement for one product. Those brands are: the Amazing Avocado and Tampax. The Amazing Avocado brand uses Articles #1 and #2 to advertise for their avocado product. Two different metaphiers they use are wind turbans and a light bulb. The Tampax brand uses Articles #25 and #26 to advertise for their tampon product. Two different metaphors they use are Mother Nature and a present.

Due to the small range of magazines included in this analysis, variations of metaphrands mainly consist of home, beauty, and food products; accurately matching the pool of magazines selected for analysis, *Real Simple*, *Marie Claire*, and *Cooking Light Magazine*.

To record the connections implied by the metaphrand and metaphier in each advertisement, a section for “entailed/desired paraphrand” is included in this section of the chart. While the desired paraphrand is noted, the “entailment/perceived-remembered paraphier(s)” are left out of analysis. This is due to the high degree of complexity in the range of possibilities for each individual to interpret the visual metaphor. Differences in culture, context, and personal history may all affect the paraphier leaving too much to account for.

Now that the basic information of each artifact is explained, a closer look at Artifact #1 follows in order to demonstrate the process and reasoning applied in analysis. Similarities and differences in the construction of each visual metaphor will then be noted.

Artifact #1 is an advertisement for the Amazing Avocado. The metaphrand is an avocado and the metaphier is a light bulb. The paraphrands communicated are: good, bright, smart, and clever. Light bulbs are not smart or clever in nature but due a strong metonymic association between “good thinking” and light bulbs, they are included in the paraphrand. In this image the avocado is cut in half and formed to fit into the silhouette of the light bulb, thus suggesting that avocados help you think better. This is an example of transformation in which two objects are fused together in an image (Kaplan, 42). With the half of an avocado fused into the shape of a light bulb and the light bulb component at the bottom, there is a direct connection between the metaphrand and metaphier, thus a first order reference.

The metaphrand component of this visual metaphor is displayed in iconic form, realistically portrayed as an avocado in full color. The metaphrand is also expressed verbally in the headline, “the amazing avocado,” and in the body copy which informs the audience of its health benefits. The metaphrand is expressed in a half and slices of an avocado. These parts of avocado create a synecdoche in that each part connects back to a whole avocado.

The metaphor component of Artifact #1 is displayed in iconic form, as will all the other thirty-one artifacts. This is because an iconic representation of a metaphier is what makes the image a visual metaphor. Without an iconic representation, one would not be able to draw conceivable ideas that lead to paraphrands.

The metaphier is metonymic in that other cultures may not make an instant connection with the desired paraphrand because they are not familiar with the symbol of a light bulb flashing above someone’s head. This is an idea specific to certain peoples and it has grown over time to create an everlasting association between a light bulb, a bright idea, and a smart person.

There are apparent patterns and similarities in these visual metaphors when expressed with the analysis chart. Repetitions in visual metaphor styles suggest a preference for advertisers in the construction of the ad design.

First, there are thirty-one artifacts which are presented with a first order reference; only one advertisement has a second order reference in which a non-tangible thing is described. A first order reference is when the metaphrand and a metaphier are taken and fused together in an image, exemplified in thirty-one of the artifacts. Artifact #16 is that visual metaphor expressed in a second order reference. This advertisement is for NSF International, a company that certifies products for commercial use. In this particular ad the quality of safety is highlighted as their non-

tangible contribution to society. The NSF is not at all represented in this image. It features a mini water patrol boat circling the water inside of a water filter container. Due to the non-representation of NSF International, the written components play a key role in the clarity and delivery of the intended message. Without it, audience would not be able to understand the desired paraphrand.

The popular use of first order reference in thirty-one of the artifacts suggests usefulness in directly involving the advertised product in the visual metaphor. It provides an explicit connection provided for the audience so as to not confuse, but to give enough visual information that the audience is engaged in thought-provoking interpretations of a product.

Secondly, nearly all thirty-two artifacts display a pragmatic tension in which objects are distorted or greatly exaggerated (Kaplan). Artifact #17 is the one of the two advertisements that creates a formal tension rather than pragmatic tension. In this image, nothing is distorted or exaggerated. In this advertisement, the steering wheel is labeled the pilot and the rear-view mirror is labeled the co-pilot. The metaphor here lies in the addition of words, linguistically challenging our perceived ideas of how a steering wheel and a rear-view mirror on the interior of a car can be identified.

Artifact #11, an advertisement for a nail polish brand named Essie also makes use of formal tension. There is nothing unusual about the image. However there is a play on words with the names of a variety of nail polishes, “lollipop,” “rock candy,” “mint candy apple.” These names provide the relationship between the metaphrand and the metaphier, thus making sense of the candy apple juxtaposed in the image behind a nail polish.

In Artifact #13, there is nothing particularly exaggerated or distorted in the image. The source of the metaphor lies in the written component which makes a statement, “Finally, chicken

nuggets and chicken Kiev can peacefully coexist.” The image then supports this metaphor with an overhead view of two people eating two different dinner dishes aside one another.

Another observation made about the artifacts is that there is no noticeable preference for the necessity of words in an advertisement. Exactly half of the advertisements use words as a necessary component of the metaphor. Sixteen artifacts needed the textual components for understanding and sixteen artifacts do not.

The analysis of doxicons in these artifacts brings about recognizable ideas expressing what consumers value and want to see in a product. These advertisements were produced in terms of American culture, loaded with symbolic meanings beyond the product’s value (Ma, 10).

There are several instances in the advertisements analyzed where symbolic meanings of safety occur. Artifact #7, with a prescription label as a metaphier symbolizes a certain sense of safety. It is a conventional way of thinking in American culture to trust that doctors are intelligent professionals with the power to prescribe drugs for medicinal purposes. The prescription label is a symbol of this relationship between doctor and patient. There is a level of comfort in which patients trust themselves in the hands of doctors and a certain level of safety is expected. The prescription label as a symbolic presentation of safety communicates to the audience that this product is safe and can be trusted when used accordingly.

Artifact #14 also presents a *doxa* of safety with a doxicon turtle shell. The visual metaphor presents the turtle shell as something strong and protective, while comparing it to the exterior of a car. A top feature in this car advertisement is safety. This visual creates meaning for the consumer by comparing two previously irrelevant objects to each other (Ma, 11).

Other instances support the continued use of safety as a *doxa* of something we value in American culture. Artifact #6 uses a water patrol boat to communicate safety. Artifact #17 uses labels of pilot and co-pilot to product a sense of safety with a car's interior components and the purpose they serve. The presentation of these consumer goods has significance beyond their practical qualities and commercial values (Ma, 10).

Symbolic meanings of time are also another frequent doxicon occurrence, communicating a *doxa*, the American value of time. Artifact #15 uses the hourglass doxicon to represent long lasting lipgloss. This value is implied by infusing the lipgloss product into an hourglass with "6HR" text on it. Consumers value longevity in products. The same values regarding time are expressed in Artifact #24. Two Scope mouth wash bottles are transformed to make an hourglass silhouette. The image portrays this Scope hourglass as full of liquid, which keeps time from running out. Again, the importance of longevity is displayed in a product advertisement.

Another reference to time is made in Artifact #18 in which a potato peeler is put on time out because now there's a microwaveable way to make Ore Ida mashed potatoes. The underlying statement with this verbal metaphor is that time is a valuable thing. So much in fact that time out is a source of punishment. If something is not done a desired way, punishment occurs and time is taken away from whatever of whoever fails to produce a desired outcome. The value of time is expressed in several ways.

### Discoveries

Through the visual metaphor chart analysis, it is first noted that 96.88% of advertisements make a first order reference to a commercial product. Secondly, 93.75% of

advertisements display a pragmatic tension, distorting or exaggerating aspects of a product.

Thirdly, exactly 50% of advertisements included verbal or written components as necessary to understand the visual metaphor.

Doxicons are the link between an image and *doxa* (Cloud, 235). In the analysis of the artifact images and doxicons, ideas of American value surface, otherwise known as *doxa*. Of thirty-two artifacts analyzed, about 9.38% of advertisements display a doxicon concerning a *doxa*, the American value of time. Of the same group of artifacts, 12.5% of advertisements display a doxicon concerning a *doxa*, the American value of safety.

The suggested value of safety as a *doxa* in American culture leads to questions in which further study is required. The visual presentation of safety is the most prevalent *doxa* in the thirty-two artifacts analyzed. One might want to look into the possible reasons for this. Considering that these advertisements were all produced after the Terrorist Attacks on 9/11, is there a heightened representation of safety as a top quality in American culture? One may want to take a look at how advertising images have changes as a result of such historical events in American history.

Another doxicon which frequently occurred refers to the *doxa* of time. Time is a valuable thing in American culture and we often see it as an underlying theme in visual metaphor advertisements. Could this perhaps be due to the ever-increasing pressure to work more hours, multitask, live with demanding schedules and give up leisure time? Further exploration as to the possible reasons for popular American doxicons would be an interesting topic of study.



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Appendix: Artifacts

1. Amazing Avocado. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009:181.
2. Amazing Avocado. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 307.
3. American Express. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 35.
4. Blue Bunny. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009: 201.
5. Canon. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 39.
6. Classico. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 313.
7. Curél. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 106.
8. Dove. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine July 2009: 22-23.
9. Dunkin' Donuts. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 284.
10. Duracell. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 229.
11. Essie. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine Nov. 2009: 78.
12. Jergens. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 119.
13. Kenmore. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 32.
14. Kia Motors. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 91.
15. L'Oreal. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine Nov. 2009: 59.
16. NSF International. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009: 69.
17. OnStar. Advertisement. RealSimple Magazine Nov. 2008: 49.
18. Ore Ida. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 277.
19. Origins. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 11.
20. Oscar Meyer. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009: 183.
21. Pama Liqueur. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine Nov. 2009: 39.
22. Reese's. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 197.

23. Schick. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine July 2009: 35.
24. Scope. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine Nov. 2009: 170.
25. Tampax. Advertisement. Marie Claire Magazine July 2009: 141.
26. Tampax. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 247.
27. Vaseline. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2009: 88.
28. Vicks. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 146.
29. Visa. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009: 49.
30. Volkswagen. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 12-13.
31. We. Advertisement. Real Simple Magazine Nov. 2008: 248.
32. Ziploc. Advertisement. Cooking Light Magazine Sept. 2009: 93.