

Original Paper

Multimodal Metaphor in Chinese Cosmetic Branding: The Case of Florasis Lipstick Shades

Fanyu Meng^{1*}

¹ College of Humanities and Development Studies, China Agricultural University, Beijing, China

* Fanyu Meng, College of Humanities and Development Studies, China Agricultural University, Beijing, China

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Abstract

Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory, and Visual Grammar, this study examines how verbal and visual modes collaboratively construct multimodal metaphors in Florasis lipstick advertisements. The data consist of ten promotional videos collected from Florasis's official accounts. Through qualitative multimodal discourse analysis, this study identifies two major metaphor types: structural metaphors and ontological metaphors, which construct representations of femininity and Chinese aesthetics. The findings show that metaphorical meanings are reinforced through representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. More broadly, the study further reveals how Florasis transforms lipstick from a cosmetic product into a cultural symbol embedded with traditional Chinese aesthetics and emotional values, while also demonstrating the applicability of integrating Visual Grammar into multimodal metaphor analysis.

Keywords

Multimodal Metaphor, Visual Grammar, Florasis, lipstick advertising

1. Introduction

As digital media has advanced at a rapid pace, advertising discourse has become markedly multimodal, no longer depending on verbal language alone. Instead, it brings together images, colors, spatial composition and other semiotic resources to build meaning and shape the way consumers perceive things (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; O'Halloran, 2008). Among these semiotic strategies, metaphor does a great deal to strengthen emotional appeal and cultural imagination; for this reason, multimodal metaphor has turned into a central topic within discourse studies (Feng, Zhang, & O'Halloran, 2014).

Among various advertising genres, cosmetic advertising relies heavily on multimodal expression for beauty products are often associated with abstract concepts such as femininity (Forceville, 2024). A leading Chinese cosmetics brand, Florasis, blends poetic shade names with Chinese aesthetics in its advertisements and, by doing so, constructs a highly distinctive brand identity. The interaction of verbal and visual modes in its lipstick advertisements gives rise to rich metaphorical meanings and a strong sense of emotional resonance.

Therefore, drawing on the integrated framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor and Visual Grammar, this study investigates Florasis lipstick advertisements as a representative case. It examines how verbal–visual interaction works to construct multimodal metaphors. Through qualitative analysis, the research seeks to uncover the semiotic means by which cultural aesthetics and brand values are represented in contemporary Chinese cosmetic advertising.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Development of Multimodal Metaphor

Since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphor has been regarded not as a mere rhetorical device but as a fundamental cognitive mechanism, thereby becoming a cornerstone of cognitive linguistics, and it has since become a cornerstone of cognitive linguistics. In this framework, conceptual metaphor can be understood as a cognitive mechanism that can realize mapping between source and target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). As researchers gradually realize that these mappings are not limited to verbal language, the focus of research has gradually shifted to multimodal discourse, especially visual media.

Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) put forward the view in the study of multimodal metaphor that the distinction between monomodal metaphor and multimodal metaphor requires a clear understanding of the true meaning of the mode. They defined a mode as a sign system linked to specific perceptual processes and identified five primary sensory categories: pictorial, aural, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile. In view of the complexity of classification, they later improved this framework by expanding it into nine categories, including pictorial signs, written signs, spoken signs, gestures, sounds, music, smells, tastes, and touch. Therefore, monomodal metaphor relies on a single mode for both domains, while multimodal metaphor represents the source domain and the target domain respectively through different modes.

Early research mainly focused on visual and verbo-pictorial metaphors (Bounegru & Forceville, 2011; Höllerer, Jancsary, & Grafström, 2018; Xie, 2011). For instance, Bounegru and Forceville (2011) studied metaphors in editorial cartoons depicting the global financial crisis and observed that certain source domains are systematically repeated in multimodal discourse. This work reveals some methodological issues involved in the identification of multimodal metaphors, thus laying an important foundation for the subsequent research on multimodal advertising.

2.2 *Studies on Multimodal Metaphor in Advertising*

Later, the study of multimodal metaphor is gradually integrated into advertising discourse. Alousque (2014), studied verbal-image metaphors in French advertisements and showed that text and visual elements cooperate with each other to achieve the purpose of persuasion, suggesting that multimodal metaphors guide the way audiences interpret ads by blending linguistic and visual cues together (Alousque, 2014).

As multimodal discourse analysis has continued to develop, the persuasive and rhetorical roles that multimodal metaphors play in advertising communication have drawn more and more attention from scholars (Pérez-Hernández, 2019; Sun, Zhang, & Chen, 2021; Zhang & Xu, 2018). Multimodal metaphors not only make products seem more attractive, but also shape the way consumers think, the emotions they feel, and the symbolic meanings they come to associate with brands. Conceptual metaphors in television commercials can function as a kind of implicit argumentative strategy, steering how viewers make sense of the information presented. Moving beyond commercial product advertising, Sun et al. (2021) examined multimodal metaphors in Chinese military recruitment advertisements and demonstrated the way multimodal resources can be put to use in constructing representations of national strength and collective identity. Meanwhile, studies on print advertisements show that metaphorical meanings tend to be reinforced through interactions among primary metaphors, metonymy, and pragmatic operations, which in turn strengthens conceptual relevance and product attractiveness.

Among the various types of advertising, cosmetic advertising has become an important area for multimodal metaphor research, because beauty products are closely related to identity construction, gender presentation and cultural symbols. Chen and Sun (2018) investigated multimodal metaphors in L'Oréal television advertisements and found that different metaphorical scenarios were constructed for male and female skincare products. Their finding suggests multimodal metaphors do not simply mirror gender stereotypes, but also take an active part in the commodification of social identities (Chen & Sun, 2018). Therefore, multimodal metaphors in cosmetics advertisements are not only persuasive, but also serve as strategies to shape consumers' ideas and behaviors.

In addition to persuasion and identity construction, recent advertising studies have further emphasized the interaction between metaphor, metonymy and cultural representation in multimodal discourse (Azzahraa El Yamlahi & Cortés de los Ríos, 2022; Hidalgo-Downing & O'Dowd, 2023). In environmental awareness advertisements, metaphorical meanings are usually reinforced through metonymic inference processes, which enables visual and linguistic elements to trigger both emotional and evaluative responses. Similarly, Azzahraa El Yamlahi and Cortés de los Ríos (2022) used cognitive semantics to study the brand name of Moroccan cosmetics and found that metonymic operation is helpful to construct the brand identity of cosmetics to a large extent.

These studies show that multimodal advertising discourse is not just a simple combination of visual and linguistic elements, but a place to construct cultural imagination, ideology and identity. This view is particularly important for cosmetic advertising, in which traditional cultural images and female traits are usually transformed into aesthetic and commercial values.

2.3 Research Gap

Although previous studies have made important contributions to multimodal metaphor research, there are still some limitations. First, relatively few studies systematically integrate multimodal metaphor theory with visual grammar. First of all, relatively few studies can systematically combine multimodal metaphor theory with visual grammar. Secondly, the current advertising research mainly focuses on print advertising, public activities or political discourse, while cosmetic advertising, especially lipstick advertising, has received relatively little attention. Third, although some studies have explored culture-specific metaphors and symbolic expressions, the process of how cultural images are transformed into aesthetic and commercial meanings through verbal-visual interaction is not sufficiently concerned, especially in beauty brands.

In order to cope with these limitations, this study takes Florasis's lipstick advertisements as the research object, and combines Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory and Visual Grammar to explore how language and visual patterns work together to construct Chinese aesthetics, femininity and emotional meaning in Chinese cosmetics advertisements. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- a. What kinds of multimodal metaphors are used in Florasis lipstick advertisements?
- b. How do verbal and visual modes work together to construct multimodal metaphors, and in what ways do representational, interactive, and compositional meanings help to reinforce those metaphorical meanings?
- c. What cultural aesthetic orientations and branding values do these multimodal metaphors convey?

3. Methodology

This chapter introduces the process of data collection and the analytical framework used in the study. It explains the process of data collection and outlines Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory, and Visual Grammar to analyze the multimodal metaphor construction in Florasis's lipstick advertisements.

3.1 Data Collection

The data for this study include ten promotional videos of Florasis's lipstick products. The selected advertisements cover lipstick series such as *RED LANTERN* (洛神珠), *JIAOFANG DIAN* (椒房殿), *TONGXIN SUO* (同心锁), *GENTLE STRENGTH* (木兰纱), *RED BEAN* (红豆纱) from its official account on Bilibili and Douyin. These videos clearly employ culturally embedded naming systems,

visual symbols, and poetic advertising patterns, ranging in length from about 16 seconds to more than a minute.

The data includes verbal and visual materials. Verbal elements mainly include product names, slogans, subtitles, and promotional expressions, while visual elements include clothing design, gestures, makeup effects, symbolic objects, lighting, color schemes, and compositional arrangement. In the process of constructing multimodal metaphors, with special attention paid to how cultural images and emotional meanings are integrated into advertising discourse. Since Florasis's advertising works are highly dependent on the integration of poetic language and visual aesthetics, they provide a representative example for the study of how multimodal metaphors construct cultural meanings in contemporary Chinese cosmetics advertising.

3.2 Analytical Framework

In order to analyze how lipstick shade names convey layered meanings through different modes, this study draws on an integrated theoretical framework that includes Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory and Visual Grammar. These theories provide the analytical tools for revealing the role of metaphor in different modes and how cultural background shapes the encoding and decoding of brand meaning.

3.2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The present study is based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). They argued that under the influence of subject knowledge and reasoning, metaphor manifests as a transition from one conceptual domain to another. Therefore, the expression form of metaphorical expression is established. There are two domains of conceptual metaphor:

Source domain: From which we derive the conceptual domain of metaphorical expression (e.g., JOURNEY in LOVE IS A JOURNEY). Target domain: The conceptual domain we try to understand (e.g., LOVE in LOVE IS A JOURNEY).

For conceptual modeling, conceptual metaphors are categorized into three types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. In each case, the conventionalized conceptual metaphor is expressed in the form of capitalized "A is B" form.

(1) Structural metaphor

The structural metaphor involves the use of one conceptual domain to formulate another, such as the expressions LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Despite A and B belong to different experiences, they have some similarities in structure, such as challenges in the process of pursuing goals.

(2) Orientational metaphor

The orientational metaphor is a metaphor involving spatial relations, such as up/down, in/out, on/off, or front/back, exemplified by instances like HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN.

(3) Ontological metaphor

Ontological metaphor represents a manifestation of conceptual metaphor wherein objects and

substances are projected onto abstract entities, such as *THE MIND IS A MACHINE*.

3.2.2 Multimodal Metaphor Theory

Based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Forceville (2009) proposed Multimodal Metaphor Theory, which extends metaphor analysis from the linguistic level to multimodal discourse level. According to Forceville (2009), multimodal metaphor refers to a metaphor in which the source domain and target domain are represented through different semiotic modes, such as language, image, sound, music, color, gesture, and spatial arrangement.

Multimodal metaphor constructs meaning through the interaction of various symbolic resources. For example, in advertising discourse, verbal slogans, visual images, background music, color symbols and role presentation often cooperate with each other to guide the audience's interpretation and emotional response. The integration of different modes can strengthen metaphorical meaning, enhance aesthetic attraction, and improve the persuasiveness. Multimodal metaphors are particularly common in cosmetic advertisements, because beauty products are closely associated with abstract emotional and cultural concepts that cannot be fully expressed through literal language alone. Therefore, Multimodal Metaphor Theory has become the main analytical framework of this study, which is used to identify metaphorical mappings between different language and visual modes, and to explore how these modes cooperate with each other to construct aesthetic and emotional meanings.

3.2.3 Visual Grammar

To further analyze how multimodal meanings are organized and conveyed visually, this framework also includes Visual Grammar (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Based on systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), Visual Grammar believes that images, like language, have a systematic meaning construction structure and can realize three metafunctions, namely, representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning.

Representational meaning concerns how participants, objects, and actions are visually represented in an image. The representational meaning corresponds to the conceptual function in Halliday's functional grammar. It represents the conceptual or communicative relationship of characters, places and events in the image.

Interactive meaning refers to the relationship established between the image and viewers through visual resources such as gaze, social distance, angle, and modality. These elements influence viewers' emotional involvement and interpretive positioning.

Compositional meaning concerns how visual elements are arranged into an integrated whole through information value, salience, framing, color coordination, and spatial organization. This metafunction is particularly vital in advertising discourse because compositional structures guide viewers' attention and reinforce metaphorical emphasis.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter shows the multimodal metaphors identified in advertisements, and explores how verbal and visual modes work together to create metaphorical meanings. The analysis further examines how these meanings are reinforced through representational, interactive, and compositional meanings within Visual Grammar.

4.1 Identification of Conceptual Metaphor

The two kinds of metaphors identified are structural metaphors: LIPSTICK IS SILK, FEMALE BEAUTY IS LUOSHEN, and LIPSTICK IS TOKEN OF LOVE, and ontological metaphors: FEMALE BEAUTY IS A FLOWER and FEMALE GRACE IS A PHOENIX.

4.1.1 Identification of Structural Metaphor

The structural metaphor uses one conceptual domain to construct another. Figure 1 is based on the structural metaphor LIPSTICK IS SILK through the verbal expression “如纱拂唇” (Like silk gauze brushing the lips) and the image of a flowing gauze. The target domain is the lipstick, specifically its texture, while the source domain is silk.



Figure 1. Like Silk Gauze Brushing the Lips

At the conceptual level, a tactile map is established to transfer the smooth, lightweight, and flowing sensation of silk to the user experience of applying lipstick, and thus the texture of lipstick is regarded as a fabric-like softness. Secondly, an aesthetic map is constructed to present the visual effect of tulle covering the lips as a half-mute, misty gloss. The association between lipstick and silk is activated by the verbal mode “如纱拂唇” (Like silk gauze brushing the lips). As shown in the visual mode, the gauze is off-model and does not touch the front side of the model's face. Non-contactly, it creates an illusion of tactile sense, thus strengthening the metaphor between silk and lipstick texture.

Additionally, the advertisements further develop a structural metaphor LIPSTICK IS A LOVE TOKEN by depicting lipstick as a carrier for love. The mapping in this case is that traditional Chinese love tokens, such as red beans, flowers and the love lock, serve as the source domain, and Florasis lipstick is the target domain. These symbols in Chinese culture have the emotions of love, longing and devotion, so lipstick can be considered a tool for expressing romance with rich cultural heritage.



Figure 2. Love Lock Lipstick as a Traditional Love Token

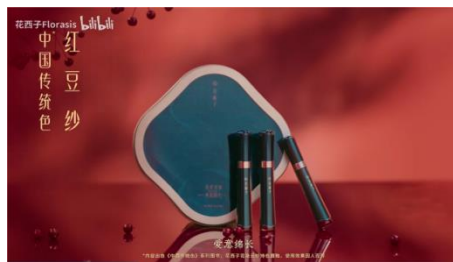


Figure 3. Red Bean Symbolism for Everlasting Love



Figure 4. Magnolia Imagery for Deep Affection



Figure 5. Love Lock Lipstick for Eternal Love

Red beans in Chinese literature are associated with mutual longing (Li, 2004), and flowers often represent gentle love (Zhao, 2006). The above meanings are presented in the advertisements through verbal cues such as “情深意浓” (Deep and lasting affection) and “爱意绵长” (Everlasting love), as well as visual objects such as red beans (Figure 3) and flowers (Figure 4). The love lock (Figure 2 &

Figure 5), rooted in Chinese folk ritual of couplets, symbolizes eternal union and irreversible connection. In the advertisement, this metaphor is realized through both verbal references “传统定情信物” (Traditional token of love), “以锁传情 永结同心” (Conveying love through a lock, Bound together forever) and the lipstick packaging designed to resemble a traditional love lock.



Figure 6. Luoshen Imagery for Classical Beauty

In addition to the metaphor based on the material level, the advertisement builds metaphor based on Chinese cultural background, and thus lipstick is regarded as the manifestation of the idealized beauty of women in traditional Chinese aesthetics. The structural metaphor FEMALE BEAUTY IS LUOSHEN is based on verbal expression “犹见洛神” (As if seeing the Goddess of the Luo River) and the depiction of a classical female figure (Figure 6). The target domain is the model’s feminine beauty and the aesthetic effect produced by the use of lipstick, while the source domain is the literary figure of Luoshen in *The Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River*, which symbolizes idealized and elegant, and ethereal grace feminine beauty. The verbal mode “犹见洛神” (As if seeing the Goddess of the Luo River) explicitly activates the intertextual reference to Luoshen, while the visual mode reinforces this mapping through the model’s classical hairstyle, traditional costume elements, exquisite facial makeup, and gentle body posture, all of which echo visual expression of classical female images in the history of Chinese art. These diverse resources together construct a metaphorical framework in which contemporary beauty applications are reinterpreted as classical beauty.

4.1.2 Identification of Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphor represents a manifestation of conceptual metaphor wherein objects and substances are projected onto abstract entities. In the data, two representative ontological metaphors are identified and interpreted: FEMALE BEAUTY IS A FLOWER and FEMALE GRACE IS A PHOENIX.



Figure 7. She is a Flower Blooming in Armor

The metaphor FEMALE BEAUTY IS A FLOWER in Figure 7 compares female beauty to a natural magnolia. In this mapping, magnolia functions as the source domain, while feminine beauty and its associated aesthetic characteristics constitute the target domain. The mapping is realized multimodally through the verbal cue “她是盔甲里盛开的花” (She is a flower blooming in armor) and visual elements, such as the flowing fabric elements, dark clothing and the model’s indifferent gaze, thus showing the contrast between fragility and firmness.



Figure 8. Carved Lipstick for Phoenix-inspired Regal Grace

In the case of the metaphor FEMALE GRACE IS PHOENIX in Figure 8, the phoenix is the source domain and female grace is the target domain by applying lipstick. Phoenix, a culture symbolization of *Shangshu*, a Chinese classics literature, is normally linked with auspiciousness, noble and royal womanhood. These intertextual references “有凤来仪” (As if a phoenix has arrived in elegance) and “凤仪纱” (Phoenix Veil), activate this metaphor, directly alluding to the cultural meaning of phoenix as a symbol of nobility and auspicious appearance. The model’s deep red lip color and the fine carving design on her lipstick visually evoke the phoenix, indicating her high status and elegance. The elements join the concept of the phoenix with beautiful, dignified and elegant female images.

4.2 Multimodal Metaphor Construction by Visual Grammar

This section analyzes how the multimodal metaphors emerged from the interaction between verbal and visual modes in Florasis lipstick advertisements are further enriched by the three metafunctions in Visual Grammar.

4.2.1 Representational Meaning

Representational meaning is realized through dynamic vector relations. Narrative representation focuses on dynamic scenes, with vector characteristics. Conceptual representation is directed towards processes related to classification, analysis, and symbolization, which are all static.



Figure 9. Lipstick and Walnut as Matched Craftworks

In Figure 9, carved walnut is used to interact with the lipstick product in order to realize narrative representation. A contrast vector is constructed through the left-right compositional placement, with the model holding a Florasis embossed lipstick on one side, and a carved walnut on the other. By holding and showing, a visual equivalent relationship is set between the two objects. This equivalence is further reinforced in the conceptual representation by means of symbolic classification. The carved walnut serves as a reminder on traditional craftsmanship and the lipstick is reinterpreted as an embossed cultural artifact. What's more, the verbal cue “也是浮雕艺术品” (It is also a work of relief art) can underline the above relationship by categorizing the two objects, and hence gives a linguistic realization for conceptual mapping. Lipstick is thus recreated as a cultural item that has connection with old fashion and Chinese aesthetics.

4.2.1 Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning is one that has to do with the relationship among image producers, represented participants, and viewers. Contact, social distance, attitude and modality are the four ways in which interactive meaning is manifested in Florasis advertisements.



Figure 10. The Goddess of Luoshen Moves with Ethereal Grace

The interactive meaning, in Figure 10 of the RED LANTERN advertisement, strengthens the metaphor FEMALE BEAUTY IS LUOSHEN. The image formulates a provide contact relationship; as there is no direct eye contact between the model and the viewers. The posture of her looking down and her refined gestures resemble that of the Chinese classical dance and character painting, which place the viewer as an observer, enjoying an aesthetic scene. This indirect contact enhances the poetic and remote nature of the Luoshen.

It also uses a close shot which makes the distance between the viewer and the participant viewed in the image closer. This focuses the audience on the model's facial expressions, gestures and particularly the lipstick effect, rendering the metaphorical mapping between the beauty fabricated by means of lipstick and Luoshen's grace more direct and easier to be perceived. The image takes an attitude of an eye-level and slightly sideward perspective, setting up an equality between the viewer and the participant and invites aesthetic appreciation. Lastly, through soft and soothing light, warm orange-red color and hazy visual filters, the advertisement evokes a dreamy mood that resonates with the Chinese classical literature. With the verbal expressions “翩若惊鸿” (Moving with light, ethereal grace) and “洛神是翩若惊鸿” (The Goddess of Luoshen moves with ethereal grace), the visual and verbal modes collaboratively establish the metaphorical mapping from the elegant and noble image of Luoshen to the effect of the make-up by using lipstick. Thus, lipstick in turn becomes a vehicle to the classical Chinese image of femininity and poetic beauty.



Figure 11. In a Traditional Chinese Lifestyle Scene, Lipstick is Depicted

Figure 11 provides contact in the second frame, with the participant represented looking down at what she is reading. The indirect contact produces a stillness to witness the participant and traditional culture objects, like book, brush and tea set, in interaction.

The image used is primarily a medium close composition between social and public distance compared to the first frame. The general spatial organization is to embed the image in the traditional scene of a literary life style, and metaphorically relate the love of using lipstick with the Chinese culture of daily life. In terms of attitude, the slightly high-angle perspective focus at the surrounding environment. This is a viewpoint that is focused on the ambiance of traditional lifestyle. The frame has a medium-to-high modality value, with relatively natural light, the material detail displayed and warm colors with low saturation levels, creating a balance of realism and poetic elegance. The image, in conjunction with the verbal cue “让传说回到了生活” (Bringing legend back to life), turns lipstick into a symbolic medium that connects the contemporary consumption of beauty with the traditional Chinese cultural imagination. Several interactive features in the two frames help to reinforce the metaphoric connection between Florasis lipstick, classical femininity and traditional Chinese aesthetics.

4.2.3 Compositional Meaning

The compositional meaning is the organization and the connection of visual elements in an image by using information value, salience, and framing to create coherent meaning.



Figure 12. Instant Fit at the Lips

From the point of view of information value, the left-right composition of Figure 12 has the verbal expression “唇间一拍即合” (Instant fit at the lips) on the left as known information, while the lip close-up and lipstick brush on the right work together to visually support and supplement the verbal information. The use of the central placement of the lips makes the lipstick effect itself the central point of the advertisements and makes the red lips, the matte finish, and the sleek finish of the make-up stand in contrast to one another, showing the effect that the lipstick achieves.

Salience is primarily manifested in size, color contrast and spatial prominence. The lips are in the center, and it is displayed at the highest level of scale, which means that people's gaze is immediately captured. The all-red background accentuated the attention on the makeup effect with the bright red lip color. This golden vertical text is in a small font and positioned on the margins, so it is a secondary

element to the image; it never vies for attention with the image. The image also incorporates weak framing, with the lips, lipstick brush, background and verbal text unified through the image without strong boundaries separating them. This weak framing enhances the coherency of verbal and visual modes so that they are used as a multimodal message.



Figure 13. Soft Matte, no Trace

The structure of the information in the Figure 13 is also left-right, where the verbal expression “柔雾不易留痕” (Soft matte, no trace) is presented on the left and the product's qualities are illustrated by the feather sweeping across the lips on the right. The lip close-up again dominates the center of the composition, with this time the focus on the texture and long-lasting effect of the lipstick as the key information. The salience here is in the prevalence of lips and feather. The central position of the lips and the fact that they are so rich in red make the lips the most conspicuous salient element, while the feather becomes a secondary salient element due to its contrasting white color and dynamic movement across the lips. This visual communication metaphorically connects the lipstick with softness, lightness and delicacy. Weak framing is also used with the feather, lips, background and textual elements all staying visually connected within the same red toned atmosphere.



Figure 14. Red Bean Lipstick Presentation

Another frame (Figure 14) reiterates the metaphor LIPSTICK IS A LOVE TOKEN by composing the frame. The lipstick is placed in the middle of the image, with a completely red background, which makes it the focus of the information. The verbal expressions “浅尝 红豆纱” (Taste Red Bean) are provided as guiding information on the left. The lipstick and red beans are very consistent with the

background, reflecting the consistency of color, and this consistency gives rise to a unity of atmosphere, thus achieving salience. Additionally, the weak framing between product, symbolic objects and the text, further collapses the verbal and the visual into a unified metaphorical whole, in which the lipstick is again re-constructed as a material vehicle for love and longing.

4.3 Cultural Aesthetic Orientation in Florasis Advertisements

The multimodal metaphors in Florasis advertisements show the specific aesthetic orientation based on Chinese classical culture. Through symbols such as Luoshen, red bean, magnolia, phoenix, and love lock, lipstick is constantly associated with literary imagination, emotional symbols and traditional etiquette culture. They also construct an idealized female image characterized by elegance, softness and inner strength. These cultural symbols are not only decorative elements, but also give aesthetic and emotional significance to products through the function of conceptual source domain. Therefore, lipstick is reshaped as a cultural product carrying poetic emotion, femininity and symbolic value.

At the level of femininity construction, the advertisements promote an idealized image of women characterized by elegance, restraint, softness and inner strength. Metaphors such as FEMALE BEAUTY IS LUOSHEN and FEMALE BEAUTY IS A FLOWER connect the beauty of women with classical literature and natural images, emphasizing tenderness, elegance and firmness. Metaphors involving magnolia and phoenix introduce symbolic meanings such as independence, dignity, nobility and spiritual strength, thus extending female beauty from material object to cultural identity.

From a branding perspective, multimodal metaphor is a cultural branding strategy used by Florasis. The brand integrates traditional cultural symbols into product naming, packaging design, advertising language, color schemes, and visual composition, and transforms cosmetics products into carriers of cultural and aesthetic imagination. Advertising does not only emphasize the functionality of the product, but also presents the cultural atmosphere, emotional resonance and symbolic consumption. Therefore, beauty consumption is redefined as a form of cultural participation and identity expression. In this way, consumers participate in an imagined Chinese aesthetic lifestyle.

5. Conclusion

Through qualitative multimodal discourse analysis, this study explores how verbal and visual modes interact to construct multimodal metaphors in Florasis lipstick advertisements. With the help of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory, and Visual Grammar, structural metaphors and ontological metaphors are identified. The findings show that Florasis advertisements map lipstick onto culturally symbols such as silk, Luoshen, flower, phoenix, red bean, and love lock, thus transforming lipstick from a cosmetic into a carrier of cultural, emotional, and aesthetic significance. The analysis further shows that representational, interactive, and compositional meanings together reinforce these metaphorical mappings and contribute to the construction of a coherent Chinese aesthetic discourse.

By combining analytical framework, this study explains how metaphorical meaning is strengthened by representational, interactive and compositional meaning in cosmetic advertising discourse, thus contributing to the study of multimodal metaphor. It also extends the existing research on multimodal metaphors in Chinese beauty advertisements. However, this study is limited by the relatively small amount of data and only for a single Chinese cosmetics brand. Future research can include more data or cross-cultural comparisons to further explore the role of multimodal metaphors in global beauty advertising discourse.

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