

Innovation in the Language of Coca Cola Television Advertisements

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Abstract

Recent technological advancements have led to great innovations in language use in electronic mass media. Innovation is one way of transforming the resources of an enterprise through the creativity of people into new resources and wealth. Advertisements on television are a rich site for data on language, innovations and scientific development. Language in television advertisements uses verbal and visual modes of signification to craft the advertisement message. This poses challenges to viewers because in multimodal discourses, viewers are faced with the changing phenomenon in which language per se is being displaced by sound and image, taking over tasks associated with the role of language. This paper investigates the synergy across semiotic modalities in one Coca Cola advertisement that appeared on Kenyan television channels in the years 2011-2012. The objectives of this study are: to examine the modes of signification in the Coca Cola advertisement, to determine how the language of the Coca Cola advertisement appeals to viewers and to explain the innovations in language use in the Coca Cola advertisement. This paper uses Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine the modes of signification in the Coca Cola advertisement in relation to consumer reactions to the advertisement. Findings reveal that modes of signification include color, distance, face-work, gestures, graphics and music, all of which work in complementarity to craft the advertisement discourse. In this paper we posit that television advertisements create meaning through the careful manipulation of verbal and visual modes of signification so as to craft the desired interpretations that are advantageous to the advertisers.

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