

Multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements: Cross-cultural considerations

*Yana Kabalina, National Cheng Kung University
Shelley Ching-yu Depner, National Cheng Kung University*

Abstract: This study investigates the role of multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements (PSAs), focusing on their application across diverse cultural contexts to understand their impact on global communication. It explores how metaphors are structurally encoded through cognitive, visual, and textual formats, providing insights into their persuasive and communicative functions. Utilizing Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Forceville's (2008) multimodal metaphor framework, and Trompenaars' (1994; 2004) cultural dimensions, the research examines PSAs addressing global warming from both individualistic and collectivist cultural contexts. The analysis is based on a dataset of 100 global warming PSAs sourced from AdForum's international advertising database. This selection ensures that the advertisements represent a range of effective communication practices across different cultural dimensions. The study is driven by two research questions: a) How is pictorial metaphor structurally encoded across cognitive, visual, and textual modes in PSAs produced in different cultural contexts? b) What intended messages do the PSAs imply, and how do pictorial metaphors and cultural elements contribute to their communicative function? The findings reveal: 1) PSAs from individualistic cultures tend to use straightforward, visually explicit metaphors, while PSAs from communitarian cultures favor more complex, implicit metaphors, reflecting cultural preferences for directness versus contextualization. 2) The intended messages of PSAs vary by cultural context, with individualistic cultures emphasizing personal responsibility through metaphors, while collectivist cultures highlight collective action and shared responsibility. These findings demonstrate how metaphors are tailored to resonate with cultural values, contributing to the fields of advertising, cross-cultural communication, and environmental advocacy.

Keywords: Multimodal metaphors, public service advertisements, cross-cultural analysis, cultural dimensions, global communication

1. Introduction

Metaphor is among the most widely used rhetorical devices across languages, cultures, and discursive domains (Lili 2014). For Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 4 [emphasis added]), metaphor also pervades virtually every aspect of daily life: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act", they argue, "*is fundamentally metaphorical in nature*". Forceville (2008a, 2008b) further noted that in the context of marketing semiotics, metaphor functions as an essential tool in the advertiser's toolbox, enabling large and complex conceptual structures to be condensed into salient and compelling messages that emphasize value statements (Beasley & Danesi 2002) and draw attention to product benefits (Koller 2009).

Given its ability to distill complex ideas into accessible and persuasive messages, metaphor is a central element in advertising strategies, especially in shaping consumer perceptions and driving behavior. With some notable exceptions, the majority of the literature on metaphor in advertising tends to be industry-oriented, which is to say, frequently focusing on the economic implications of the persuasive power of metaphor to encourage consumers to purchase products (Morgan & Reichert 1999; Pollaroli & Rocci 2015; Hornik et al. 2017; Septianto et al. 2022). Nevertheless, the application of metaphor in the specific context of public service advertisements (PSAs) has received comparatively little attention over the past two decades. This oversight is surprising due to the unique objectives and constraints characterizing this advertising subdomain. After all, like their product- and brand-oriented counterparts, PSAs must be carefully designed to attract and retain attention in order to effectively communicate a message to a specific audience in a manner that is succinct, salient, and

compelling. However, because PSAs primarily focus on shared social concerns, such as global warming, rather than narrowly targeting consumer purchasing intentions or brand perception, their success depends on overcoming unique challenges, including balancing issue complexity with narrative salience, expressivity, and clear calls to action. At the same time, due to the increasingly global nature not only of economic exchanges and discourses, but also of pressing crises like climate change, and environmental degradation among others, PSAs must increasingly be oriented toward delivering messages with a high degree of salience between and across social and cultural boundaries. The universality of certain kinds of metaphors and metaphoric thinking highlighted by cognitive-linguistic analysis, in turn, suggests that PSAs may exhibit interesting and potentially distinct approaches to using metaphors in order to maximize their expressivity and salience. Building on this observation, this study aims to examine the use of metaphor, and particularly pictorial metaphor, between and across cultural contexts by way of a theoretically grounded analysis of pictorial advertisements.

This paper is structured as follows: after the Introduction, the Literature Review surveys existing studies on metaphor in advertising, focusing on both product-oriented and PSA campaigns. The following Theoretical Grounding section outlines the key frameworks applied in this analysis, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory, pictorial metaphors, and Trompenaars' cultural dimensions. In the Data Analysis, selected global warming PSAs are examined through cognitive, visual, textual, and cultural lenses. The Discussion explores key insights from the analysis, while the Conclusion summarizes the findings and suggests areas for future research.

2. Literature review

Based on the existent body of empirical studies (Shan et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2019; Khakhalova & Tretiakova 2021), it appears that much of the literature treating the use of metaphor in advertising is industry-oriented (Kim et al. 2017; Boujena et al. 2021) and thus emphasizes the perception and interpretation of advertising metaphors by different audiences, and how this, in turn, changes their behavior as consumers (Burgers et al. 2015; Mohanty & Ratnewshwar 2015). Malefyt (2003), for instance, discusses the value of the metaphorical and figurative language that underpins the construction of an advertisement as a discourse between agency, client, and audience, while Ang & Lim (2006: 39) investigate whether and to what extent product-oriented advertisements have a “synergistic or compensatory effect on brand personality perceptions” as a function of the product’s classification as either utilitarian or symbolic.

In a related vein, cross-cultural explorations of advertising content have long identified the use of metaphor as a topic of interest but frequently treat that topic as being of indirect or tangential relevance to more action-oriented research. Javalgi et al. (1995) in their analysis of print advertisements in the US and Japan, for instance, treat the use of metaphor as one of many components of advertisement material and thus primarily seek to identify their presence in the ads they analyze (e.g., by deriving frequency distributions), rather than conducting a more in-depth exploration of the logic of the metaphors themselves.

It has been claimed that visual metaphors are used more often in advertising targeted at (and to some extent emerging from) high-context cultures, while verbal metaphors tend to dominate in low-context cultures, as high-context cultures favor visual metaphors that require shared cultural understanding, while low-context cultures tend to use verbal metaphors that rely on straightforward, explicit messaging (De Mooij 2000; Peterson 2018; Xu et al. 2021).

Consequently, the structure and use of metaphor in advertising are often seen as culturally contingent, depending on the broader context of advertising strategies employed. These strategies are designed to resonate within cultural perspectives that may vary, such as long-term versus short-term variation (Cox 2006), or alternatively, with respect to their relative emphasis on collectivism versus

individualism (Hofstede & McCrae 2004; De Mooij & Hofstede 2010; Pham 2022). Collectivism and individualism are cultural dimensions that significantly influence communication styles and advertising strategies. In collectivist cultures, commonly found in many Asian, African, and Hispanic societies, individuals prioritize group harmony, familial ties, and community over personal goals. Communication in these cultures tends to be indirect and context-rich, often relying on implicit messages and shared understandings. Advertisements in collectivist cultures frequently emphasize group benefits, relationships, and collective well-being (Oyserman et al. 2002; Kim 2024). Conversely, in individualistic cultures, prevalent in Western countries like the United States and much of Europe, personal freedom, autonomy, and self-expression are highly valued. Communication is typically direct and explicit, with advertising strategies focusing on personal achievement, uniqueness, and individual benefits (Pham 2022). In a similar manner, De Mooij (2000) claims that Japanese advertising is known for its indirectness, a style often facilitated by verbal metaphors with double entendre. Furthermore, the use of “metaphor and drama” (De Mooij 2000: 83–84, 85) to foster indirect statements and the construction of narratives with multiple meanings has also been identified in certain Hispanic and African cultures, and specifically those which are relatively “collectivistic and short-term oriented”.

Similarly, Lantolf & Bobrova (2012) explore the cultural aspect of advertisements and the use of multimodal metaphor in American and Ukrainian beer commercials, revealing substantive variations between the two cultures with respect to the “mappings and entailments” of the metaphors in a number of salient dimensions. According to Lantolf & Bobrova (2012), the difference reflects not only divergent advertising strategies but also distinct cultural perceptions of happiness, beer drinking, friendship, and patriotism, as TV commercials are shaped by culturally constructed, psychologically relevant metaphors. Extending this cross-cultural examination of metaphor in advertising, Lai (2016) employs Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to examine cosmetics advertising slogans in English and Chinese, uncovering how metaphors reflect underlying cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes. In a related study, Yu and Lee (2024) examine K-Beauty advertising and demonstrate how conceptual metaphors are strategically employed to reflect culturally embedded notions of beauty. Their findings highlight that the persuasive power of metaphoric advertising is closely linked to cultural cognition and the cognitive mechanisms shaped by the target audience's cultural background.

3. Theoretical grounding

For the analysis of metaphors in advertisements, several methodological frameworks exist. Of these, Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is among the most influential and widely recognized ones, a point emphasized by, e.g., Boers (2003) and Kövecses (2008). Conceptual metaphors enable language users to construe complex or abstract phenomena in terms of physical, more basic experiences in the process of cognitive mappings from a source to a target domain. For instance, the abstract concept of “time” is frequently conceptualized through the source domain of “money,” as in phrases like “saving time” or “spending time,” thus the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 8). Similarly, emotions are often understood via physical states. “Anger,” for example, is commonly mapped to a “heated fluid in a container,” leading to expressions such as “boiling with rage” or “letting off steam,” forming the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT (Kövecses 2008). These examples illustrate the wide applicability of CMT in explaining how abstract ideas are rooted in everyday physical experiences. Likewise, according to Lucek (2017), the abstract target concept “love” can be expressively represented through its assimilation into more “concrete” source concepts like containers, such as in phrases like “falling into love” or “getting out of love”. This metaphorical mapping of abstract concepts onto concrete source domains is an intuitive claim, but nonetheless one which has been used in diverse disciplines ranging from philosophy and

computer science to cultural anthropology and advertising (Lucek 2017: 116–117).

CMT has been further expanded to explore its potential multimodal applications (Forceville 1994, 2008b; Rohrer 2001; Serig 2008). Specifically in the context of advertising, Forceville (1994, 2008b) has stressed the importance of looking at metaphors not only in language but also in terms of their manifestations in different modalities, such as pictures, sounds, music, gestures or even smell. In service of this goal, Forceville (2008b) subsequently proposed a classification of pictorial metaphors which includes: (1) contextual metaphors, containing a contextual element that cues the source domain and links it to another object which is metaphoric in the image — for instance, an advertisement showing a cracked, barren desert juxtaposed with a parched human hand to metaphorically equate water scarcity with human suffering; (2) hybrid metaphors, presenting two objects (the target and source domains), that normally would be considered as different entities, merged into one object — such as an image of a lightbulb combined with a tree to convey the idea of eco-friendly innovation; and (3) integrated metaphor, featuring an object that is shown as a whole in such a way that it, without any contextual cues, resembles another object due to the positioning or shape — for example, a mountain shaped like a melting ice cream cone to signify the impact of climate change on glaciers.

Forceville (2008b) concludes that important aspects of the metaphors' meaning-making process are not universal cognitive phenomena, but culturally contingent. Specifically, culture provides a lens which can shape not only the nature of the connection between the source and target domains in an advertisement, but also how sources may be used to foreground certain aspects of a target while backgrounding others (Forceville 2008b: 28). This perspective is supported by research in various cultural contexts, such as Jeong's (2008) examination of visual metaphors in advertising, which highlights how cultural interpretations influence metaphorical effectiveness. Similarly, Yu (2009) illustrates how Chinese cultural values shape metaphorical expressions.

With this in mind, the present study is grounded not only in CMT but also in Trompenaars' classification of cultural dimensions (1994, 2004), which facilitates cross-cultural analysis. He identifies four dimensions of national culture that are relevant to the present investigation: (1) individualism / communitarianism, describing whether a society emphasizes personal autonomy or collective responsibility; (2) specific / diffuse, distinguishing cultures that prefer clear, structured, and goal-oriented communication from those that take a more holistic, contextual, and interconnected approach; (3) neutral / affective, indicating the degree to which emotions are openly expressed in communication; and (4) internal / external, assessing whether people perceive themselves as controlling their environment or adapting to external circumstances. These dimensions provide a structured approach to understanding cultural tendencies and their influence on metaphor interpretation (Trompenaars & Prud'Homme 2004; Koc 2020; Hurtado et al. 2024).

However, it is important to acknowledge that Trompenaars' framework has faced criticism for potential overgeneralization, as it condenses complex cultural traits into simplified binary categories. For example, cultures often exhibit a mix of individualistic and communitarian behaviors depending on the context, such as personal relationships versus organizational dynamics (Minkov 2013). While these critiques highlight a need for caution when the model is applied, its practical utility and wide adoption in cross-cultural studies make it a valuable tool for identifying general patterns of cultural influence (Rodić 2020; Wei 2024). In the present study, Trompenaars' dimensions serve as a guiding framework to explore how cultural values shape the use and interpretation of multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements, while the need for a nuanced application of the model is recognized.

4. Methodological considerations

The present section states the main research questions, accounts for the selection of research materials and outlines analytical procedures.

Specifically, the study addresses two research questions:

1. How is pictorial metaphor expressed through conceptual mappings and structured across the visual and textual modality in PSAs produced in different cultural contexts?
2. What is the intended message of the different PSAs and how does pictorial metaphor as well as cultural aspects contribute to its primary function?

To answer these questions, the data combining examples of the PSAs addressing the issue of global warming was collected within the timeframe of 2013–2023 from the international advertising data base, *AdForum* (Maydream, Inc. 2020). Since 1999, *AdForum* has offered a digital platform for advertising agencies and production companies to display their creativity. It caters to 25,000 members and serves as a key voice in the advertising industry, featuring a creative library of more than 200,000 campaigns. While the present study analyzes 100 PSAs to explore the use of metaphor across cognitive, visual, textual, and cultural dimensions, only a selection is presented for detailed discussion. The PSAs were selected from the *AdForum* database based on the following criteria: (1) thematic relevance: the campaigns explicitly addressed the issue of global warming, including climate change, rising temperatures, or environmental degradation; (2) format: only static or print-based PSAs were included to ensure consistency in visual analysis; and (3) accessibility: only PSAs with publicly available high-resolution visuals (e.g., minimum 300 dpi, suitable for detailed analysis) and descriptive metadata (e.g., country of origin, year, and agency) were considered. From this larger sample, six PSAs were chosen for in-depth discussion based on their capability to exemplify various conceptual mappings and key cultural dimensions identified in the dataset. This approach ensures that the discussion remains focused and representative of the overall findings.

Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) CMT, Forceville's (2008) classification of pictorial metaphors, and Trompenaars' (1994, 2004) cultural dimensions framework are used to analyze the collected data. The study preliminarily examines how conceptual metaphor is structurally encoded in printed PSAs through visual and textual modalities, while also identifying the underlying cognitive mappings (i.e., source–target domain structures) and the communicative functions these metaphors serve in the posters. Primary functions refer to the central purpose of an advertisement, such as raising awareness of a social issue or encouraging a specific action, while secondary functions pertain to additional effects or subtler messages, such as reinforcing cultural values or creating emotional resonance. In regard to the cultural aspect, the key dimensions and unique cultural characteristics reflected in an advertisement are further discussed. Table 1 summarizes the analytical process.

Table 1. Analysis of pictorial metaphors in social issues advertisements

Cognitive structure	How is the conceptual metaphor embodied? What are the source and target domains?
Pictorial mode	Is it a contextual / hybrid / integrated metaphor?
Textual mode	What is the slogan of the PSA? Are there any other textual elements on the poster?
Function	What is the intended message of the advertisement? What are its primary and secondary functions?
Culture	What is the primary cultural dimension? What cultural elements contribute to the message of the advertisement?

5. Data analysis

This section analyzes the structural and conceptual compositions of a select number of examples. The examples discussed in the subsequent sections were selected from the larger dataset based on their recognition in advertising awards, including those that won prizes or received honorable mentions. This recognition was used as an indicator of communicative effectiveness, suggesting that the metaphorical message was successfully conveyed and understood by a broad audience. This criterion helps ensure that the selected PSAs provide clear and analyzable instances of metaphor use, suitable for detailed interpretation.

5.1. “The Earth is No Toy” campaign

According to Forceville (2008), metaphors in advertising often reveal underlying cultural values by making abstract concepts more tangible. This can be seen in the use of metaphors that challenge political leaders’ inaction on environmental issues, reflecting societal expectations for accountability and change. The example chosen for detailed analysis is “The Earth is No Toy” (Fridays for Future 2023, accessed July 2024) (see Table 2), a PSA campaign developed in anticipation of Earth Day 2023. This award-winning campaign, which features G20 leaders addressing the climate crisis, received first place in the Public Interest–Environment category at the 2023 Epica Awards.

Table 2. Analytical summary of “The Earth is No Toy”

A. Country	The United States
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor:</u> POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE CHILDREN’S GAMES <u>Source domain:</u> A young political leader holding the Earth as if it were a ball <u>Target domain:</u> A political leader making decisions regarding the climate crisis

D. Pictorial mode	Integrated metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>The slogan</u> : Earth is no toy (capitalized letters) <u>Other texts</u> : Earth day, Fridays for future
F. Function	<u>Intended message</u> : Political leaders' meetings about the global warming crisis lack urgency, suggesting they must take the issue more seriously. <u>Primary function</u> : To critique the ineffective and immature decisions made by political leaders on the climate crisis and to draw the general public's attention to this pressing issue. <u>Secondary function</u> : To call for action to stop global warming
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension</u> : Internal

The advertisement in Table 2 creatively portrays the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as a child. While she is depicted performing adult responsibilities, such as posing in front of the European Union's flag, dressed in a suit, and holding a notebook, the ad subtly introduces a contrasting element. In the lower left corner of the poster, there is a ball, which, upon closer inspection, resembles the Earth. This visual juxtaposition sets the stage for a metaphorical message.

The advertisement is dominated by the slogan “Earth is no toy”, which in combination with the image clearly articulates the metaphor POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE CHILDREN’S GAMES (see line C in Table 2). Additional texts on the poster, such as “Earth Day” and “Fridays for Future”, while not directly contributing to the metaphorical concept, align the campaign with global movements advocating for environmental action. At the same time, the visual elements play a crucial role in constructing this integrated metaphor. It merges the source and target domains into a single, cohesive visual element, making the metaphor both immediate and impactful. In this case, the Earth is depicted as a toy, altering the overall interpretation of the poster.

Consequently, the PSA focuses on highlighting the importance of treating climate change as a serious issue, and instead of directly urging the general public's involvement, it motivates government bodies and decision-makers to prioritize and address the climate crisis with the gravity it deserves (see line F in Table 2).

In addition, the advertisement also serves a broader purpose. It aims to bring attention to the challenges of making effective decisions regarding global warming and indirectly invites the public to the conversation. By involving viewers in the interpretation of the metaphorical imagery, the ad encourages a collective call for meaningful action to address the environmental issue on both national and global scales.

The cultural dimension of internal control greatly influences the execution and message of the PSA. In cultures with a strong sense of internal control, there is a widespread belief that individuals and leaders have the power and responsibility to influence and change their circumstances (Cox 2006; Rodić 2020). This cultural mindset is reflected in the PSA's focus on encouraging political leaders to take decisive action on climate change. It aligns with the cultural emphasis on individual responsibility, urging decision-makers to use their power effectively and treat critical global issues with the seriousness they deserve. This reflects the broader American cultural value of taking control over one's environment and making impactful decisions, which is central to the advertisement intended message.

5.2. “The Climate League–Earth Day” campaign

This section examines the use of metaphor and cultural references in “The Climate League–Earth Day” (Climate Reality Group 2015, accessed July 2024) campaign to convey the reality of climate

change and challenge misconceptions. The PSA featured in Table 3 was also nominated for the 2015 Epica Awards in the Public Interest–Environment category, where it secured second place.

Table 3. Analytical summary of “The Climate League–Earth Day”

A. Country	The United States
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor</u> : CLIMATE DENIAL IS MYTHICAL THINKING <u>Source domain</u> : Mythical thinking (e.g., belief in Bigfoot, supernatural creatures, folklore) <u>Target domain</u> : Climate change denial (irrational disbelief in scientifically proven climate change)
D. Pictorial mode	Contextual metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>The slogan</u> : 21% of people in the Pacific Northwest think (small letters) Bigfoot exists (capitalized letters). 27% of people think (small letters) climate change does not (capitalized letters). <u>Other texts</u> : #ClimateChangeIsReal, Climate Reality Group
F. Function	<u>Intended message</u> : Denying the reality of climate change is as irrational and unfounded as believing in mythical creatures like Bigfoot. <u>Primary function</u> : To raise awareness of the imminence of the climate crisis if it is neglected. <u>Secondary function</u> : To stimulate common sense in the general public.
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension</u> : Neutral <u>Contributing cultural elements</u> : The Bigfoot legend

The layout of this PSA presents a beast-like figure with its entire body and face covered in fur that also appears human, based on its pose and facial expression. This humanoid creature is placed in a deserted landscape, which, combined with the slogan on the poster (see line E in Table 3), suggests that the figure is Bigfoot, a mythical creature believed to inhabit remote forests and wilderness areas. The slogan further implies that a significant portion of people believe in the existence of Bigfoot (21%) while a slightly larger percentage (27%) deny the reality of climate change, with other textual elements, such as “#ClimateChangeIsReal” and “Climate Reality Group”, reinforcing this environmental theme by emphasizing the factual and scientific basis of global warming. These elements serve as anchors that connect the ad to broader environmental advocacy movements and support the intended message by equating disbelief in climate change with superstition and myth-based thinking.

When applying the meaning uncovered in the textual mode to the image, it becomes clear that climate change is depicted as so real that it even affects mythical creatures like Bigfoot, who faces deforestation and the loss of his natural habitat. The combination of the pictorial reference to the Bigfoot folklore legend and the textual presentation of concrete facts and statistics results in the formation of the conceptual metaphor CLIMATE DENIAL IS MYTHICAL THINKING (see line C in Table 3). This metaphor challenges viewers to reconsider the logic of denying climate change by equating it with belief in a fictional creature, thereby reinforcing the need for evidence-based thinking.

The interplay between text and image in the PSA poster is crucial for effectively communicating the intended message about the urgent environmental issue, with the text in a leading role. Without it, the ad could be misinterpreted, e.g., to the effect that Bigfoot is simply visiting Death Valley, a desert in the United States. The image reinforces the message and also contributes to the formation of the contextual type of metaphor, as it relies on the context in which Bigfoot is placed. While the mythical creature Bigfoot remains in his usual form, the meaning of his presence in nature changes due to his placement in an unnatural habitat. Consequently, this PSA intends to raise awareness about the imminent climate crisis if it continues to be neglected or denied (see line F in Table 3). However, considering that a multimodal metaphor is structurally encoded in the poster, it could be suggested that the secondary function of the ad is to stimulate common sense in the general public.

The PSA's use of a neutral cultural dimension is also reflected in its restrained and factual approach to communication. According to Trompenaars' (1994) framework, in neutral cultures, emotions are typically controlled, which means that the communication style tends to be more restrained and less overtly emotional (Deng & Gibson 2009; Rodić 2020). Although the PSA's underlying message critiques the irrationality of climate change denial (a stance that carries evaluative weight) the delivery remains measured and indirect. It uses a calm juxtaposition of statistics and myth rather than sensational language or dramatic visual effects. While the image of a parched landscape may evoke negative connotations, the overall tone of the PSA relies more on logical contrast and irony than emotional dramatization. Thus, it aligns with a neutral communication style that emphasizes cognitive engagement over affective display.

The cultural element of Bigfoot in particular is also crucial to the PSA's message as it introduces a layer of cultural specificity that might influence how the advertisement poster is understood by different audiences. The metaphorical use of Bigfoot in the PSA works effectively in the context, where the creature is a familiar cultural reference to draw a parallel between believing in a mythical creature and denying the scientifically supported reality of global warming.

5.3. "#2CTROP" campaign

The "#2CTROP" (WWF 2015, accessed July 2024) campaign is a visually compelling PSA that uses strong imagery and cultural references to raise awareness about the dangers of global warming. The "#2CTROP", which stands for "Two Degrees is Already Too Much" (see Table 4) was executed for WWF, one of the world's largest and most influential conservation organizations, which works globally to protect the environment and promote sustainable living. The campaign was further nominated in the category of Public Interest–Environment at the 2015 Epica Awards, where it won second place.

The important aspect of "#2CTROP" is that it was created in the light of the United Nations' climate conference in Paris (COP 21), which aimed to achieve a universal climate agreement between the world's governments. It was widely expected that the agreement would aim to limit the average global temperature increase to no more than two degrees by the end of the century. However, according to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018), scientific reports suggest that even

a two-degree rise in global temperature would lead to disastrous consequences, including the extinction of numerous animal species and more frequent natural disasters.

Table 4. Analytical summary of “#2CTROP”

A. Country	France
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor</u> : RISING TEMPERATURES ARE A KILLER <u>Source domain</u> : Lethal force (e.g., drowning, suffocation, death) <u>Target domain</u> : Rising global temperatures due to climate change
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>The slogan</u> : Two degrees is already too much (capitalized letters) <u>Other texts</u> : Let's act together against climate change
F. Function	<u>Intended message</u> : Even though a two-degree rise in temperature may seem insignificant, it could already be deadly for animal species. <u>Primary function</u> : To raise awareness about global warming by graphically representing a polar bear struggling to survive. <u>Secondary function</u> : A call to action to stop global warming.
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension</u> : Affective & Communitarian <u>Contributing cultural elements</u> : Celsius temperature system

Table 4 illustrates how the “#2CTROP” campaign effectively uses visual elements to convey a powerful metaphor about the dangers of rising temperatures. The advertisement presents a disturbing image of a polar bear struggling to breathe, as if it is drowning. The emotional impact is heightened through the hybridization of the polar bear’s head with a rising temperature scale against a bright red background. The red color can trigger a sense of danger and urgency. This fusion, where characteristics of both elements contribute significantly to the meaning-making process, reflects a hybrid multimodal metaphor that can be conceptualized as RISING TEMPERATURES ARE A KILLER (see line C in Table 4).

The advertisement’s intended message heavily depends on its use of pictorial metaphors to evoke an emotional response. Although the text shown in line E in Table 4 further explains the rising temperature in the context of global warming, the main emotional impact remains rooted in the image. While some viewers may not immediately connect the rising temperatures alone to the climate crisis, if presented without additional context, the inclusion of the polar bear as a visual element strongly reinforces this connection. The bear, a widely recognized symbol of the consequences of global warming, helps viewers interpret the rising temperature scale as a metaphor for the climate crisis.

This is further supported by the widespread narrative of rising temperatures, melting icebergs, and the plight of polar bears. Therefore, the intended message of this PSA is twofold: to raise awareness about the deadly consequences of global warming by evoking an emotional response to its provocative metaphorical depiction and to urge meaningful action at community, national, and global levels.

As indicated in line G in Table 4, one of the leading cultural dimensions reflected in the PSA is the affective dimension. According to Mayer (2015) and Timbalari (2019), communication in central and southern Europe often emphasizes emotional expression and strong emotional appeals, which are widely used in public messaging and social campaigns. The “#2CTROP” campaign taps into this cultural trait by using a striking image, which immediately evokes a sense of urgency and empathy. The bright red background further intensifies the emotional impact, making the message more compelling to the viewer. The fusion of the rising temperature scale with the drowning polar bear dramatizes the consequences of global warming, aligning with the cultural preference for vivid emotional expression to convey important social messages.

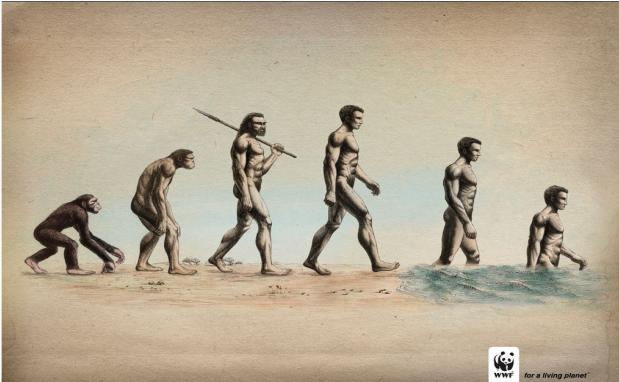
The communitarian dimension as shown in line E in Table 4 (“Let’s act together against climate change”) emphasizes collective responsibility and action to combat global warming, resonating with communitarian values stressing the well-being of the community over individual interests (Trompenaars & Prud’Homme 2004).

The use of the Celsius temperature system as a cultural element in the PSA also contributes to the message’s effectiveness within contexts where Celsius is the standard, such as much of Europe. The specific reference to a two-degree rise in temperature is immediately understandable to the audience familiar with Celsius. However, the audiences from the countries like the United States, Bahamas or Belize, where Fahrenheit is the standard, may not intuitively grasp the severity of a two-degree Celsius increase, which could lead to a less effective emotional and cognitive response to the PSA’s message.

5.4. “Evolution” campaign

This section examines the “Evolution” (WWF 2009, accessed July 2024) PSA campaign (see Table 5), which utilizes metaphor and visual storytelling to address the consequences of global warming through the concept of human evolution. The campaign was produced for the same client, WWF. It received an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2009. These tributes recognize and celebrate creative work in the advertising industry that promotes social and environmental responsibility. The tributes are part of the broader ACT Responsible movement, which stands for Advertising Community Together Responsible. This movement aims to inspire, promote, and celebrate advertising that makes a positive impact on society.

Table 5. Analytical summary of “Evolution”

A. Country	Romania
B. Layout	

C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor</u> : GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DECLINE <u>Source domain</u> : Evolutionary reversal <u>Target domain</u> : The existential consequences of global warming (rising oceans, potential extinction)
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>Other texts</u> : WWF for a living planet
F. Function	<u>Intended message</u> : Human evolution has reached a stage where, by harming nature, humans are also initiating the process of self-extinction. <u>Primary function</u> : To raise awareness of the serious consequences of global warming, which may lead to the extinction of the human race. <u>Secondary function</u> : To highlight that it is humans who are bringing this destruction upon themselves.
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension</u> : Diffuse <u>Contributing cultural elements</u> : The theory of evolution by natural selection

Table 5 illustrates how the PSA addresses the climate crisis through a metaphorical depiction of human evolution. The visual design heavily relies on the iconic “March of Progress” image. The left side of the PSA poster reproduces this famous sequence, depicting the evolution of humans from a primitive, ape-like ancestor to modern humans walking upright. However, the poster adds two more figures, showing humans entering the ocean, which emphasizes regression and decline. The upward progression depicted in the earlier stages of the evolutionary sequence is reversed as the figures move downwards into an environment where humans cannot survive, symbolizing the extinction of the human race.

Although the PSA does not explicitly mention global warming, the visual element of ocean water aligns with the common narrative that climate change will lead to rising ocean levels and the gradual submersion of continents. Accordingly, the cognitive structure of the pictorial metaphor embedded in this visual layout can be verbalized as the conceptual metaphor GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DECLINE.

In terms of pictorial mode, the combination of elements suggests a hybrid type of metaphor. The layout blends the graphic representation of natural selection with the added figures and the ocean, creating a new metaphorical representation that predicts human regression / the decline of mankind. Given the absence of a slogan on this poster (see line E in Table 5), it is clear that the multimodal metaphor is constructed solely through the pictorial mode.

The intended message of the “Evolution” campaign is to visually convey that humanity’s development has reached a point where, by harming nature, humans are also initiating the process of self-extinction. Consequently, the primary function of the PSA is to raise awareness of the severe consequences of global warming, while the secondary, subtler function is to highlight that humans are responsible for bringing this destruction upon themselves.

The cultural dimension reflected in the PSA is diffuse, characterized by a holistic communication style where messages, themes, and contexts are intricately interwoven (Trompenaars & Prud’Homme 2004). This diffuse orientation is evident in how the PSA visually blends the concept of human existence (through the universally recognizable narrative of human evolution) with the environmental responsibility related to global warming. Rather than explicitly isolating the issue of climate change, the poster integrates it seamlessly into the broader narrative of human evolutionary progression, making the two inseparable. By merging these ideas, the PSA effectively conveys that ignoring climate change jeopardizes the very existence and continuity of humanity, thus communicating its message through the culturally diffuse strategy of integrating diverse but related thematic elements into one unified visual and conceptual representation.

Likewise, the cultural element of the theory of natural selection plays a significant role in conveying the PSA's message. The advertisement draws a parallel between natural evolutionary success and the potential decline caused by environmental destruction. In contexts where the theory of evolution is widely accepted, the PSA's metaphor is likely to be impactful, as viewers can immediately grasp the contrast between natural progression and forced regression due to global warming.

5.5. "Global Warming–WWF" campaign

The "Global Warming–WWF" (WWF 2008, accessed July 2024) campaign, as outlined in Table 6, uses metaphorical imagery to highlight the effects of global warming on animals and emphasize the need for action. It is another environmental campaign, which, like "Evolution", received an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2008.

Table 6. Analytical summary of "Global Warming–WWF"

A. Country	Finland
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor:</u> AFFECTED ANIMALS ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE <u>Source domain:</u> Urban homeless people <u>Target domain:</u> Animals affected by global warming who have lost their natural habitat
D. Pictorial mode	Contextual metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>The slogan:</u> You can help stop global warming (capitalized letters) <u>Other texts:</u> Animals around the world are losing their habitats due to climate change. By recycling glass, plastic, cardboard and paper you can help prevent this. Take action right now. www.wwf.fi (small letters)
F. Function	<u>Intended message:</u> Due to the negative impact of global warming, animals are losing their natural habitats. <u>Primary function:</u> To raise awareness of the problem of animals losing their homes. <u>Secondary function:</u> A call for individual action to reduce the negative impact of global warming.
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension:</u> Specific & Individualistic <u>Contributing cultural elements:</u> Practices of urban homeless people

Table 6 illustrates how the “Global Warming–WWF” campaign effectively uses pictorial metaphors to create a compelling narrative about the impact of climate change. The advertisement is visually constructed as a comparison between animals, specifically penguins, that are losing their natural habitats due to the negative effects of global warming, such as the melting of glaciers, and homeless people, who are similarly affected by weather changes, as they burn garbage in a barrel to keep warm. The juxtaposition of visual elements like penguins and the urban environment associated with houseless individuals initiates the conceptual metaphor **AFFECTED ANIMALS ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE**.

The “Global Warming–WWF” campaign visually employs a contextual metaphor as penguins are depicted in their natural form, without any human attributes such as clothing. Their standing posture is also natural to their usual environment. However, the context in which they are placed, in particular, dirty city backstreets with garbage cans, an area typically avoided by people, and the burning barrel in front of the penguins, leads the viewer to associate them with homeless people.

Although the visual elements in this PSA are largely self-explanatory, they are reinforced by the slogan (see line E in Table 6). Consequently, the image represents the primary focus of the PSA, which aims to raise awareness that many animal species are losing their natural habitats and becoming homeless due to the negative impact of global warming. Moreover, the metaphorical parallel to homelessness in cities serves to highlight that if citizens show empathy towards unsheltered people, they should also extend their concern to homeless animals. At the same time, the secondary function of this PSA, anchored solely in the textual element, is a call for specific individual actions, such as recycling, and more broadly, efforts to mitigate the effects of global warming.

The specific and individualistic cultural dimensions reflected in the “Global Warming–WWF” poster are deeply rooted in the textual mode of this PSA campaign. In specific European cultures, communication tends to be direct, clear, and focused on concrete actions (Deng & Gibson 2009; Polat 2019). The PSA exemplifies this by providing straightforward action in its slogan: “You can help stop global warming”. The message is unambiguous and tailored to individual responsibility, encouraging personal involvement in fighting climate change through specific actions such as recycling. This approach aligns with the individualistic nature of Finnish culture, where personal responsibility and autonomy are usually highly valued (Trompenaars 2004).

The aspect of urban homeless practices also contributes to conveying the PSA’s message, while it is uniquely tied to specific cultural contexts. The image of penguins, typically associated with cold climates, juxtaposed with an urban environment where homeless people use burning metal canisters to keep warm, creates a powerful metaphor that may resonate strongly in contexts familiar with such practices. In Finland, Norway or Sweden, where cold weather is a significant challenge that has historically shaped infrastructure and daily life, the imagery of using fire for warmth is instantly relatable. However, in cultures with different climates or where the practices of homeless city residents differ (for example, in warmer regions, where keeping warm is less of an issue), the metaphor might not be as profound. People from these cultures may not fully grasp the specific hardships conveyed by the PSA, potentially reducing the overall effectiveness of the message.

5.6. “Time Travel” campaign

This section examines the “Time Travel” (Time Travel Agency 2007, accessed July 2024) campaign, which conveys the apocalyptic consequences of climate change. Unlike the other campaigns, this PSA (see Table 7) was commissioned by the Time Travel Agency, a company offering tourist services rather than a nonprofit organization. The advertising campaign was also awarded an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2007.

Table 7. Analytical summary of “Time Travel”

A. Country	Czech Republic
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	<u>Conceptual metaphor</u> : A FUTURE WORLD IS AN APOCALYPTIC WORLD <u>Source domain</u> : An apocalyptic world that has undergone catastrophic destruction <u>Target domain</u> : A future world impacted by global warming
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	<u>The slogan</u> : Last minute London before climate change (capitalized letters)
F. Function	<u>Intended message</u> : If immediate measures are not implemented to address climate change, cities will become uninhabitable in the future. <u>Primary function</u> : To raise awareness of the potential catastrophic transformation of cities due to climate change. <u>Secondary function</u> : To encourage immediate tourism (“last minute travel”) before such catastrophic scenarios potentially occur.
G. Culture	<u>The leading cultural dimension</u> : External <u>Contributing cultural elements</u> : London Bridge

Table 7 illustrates how the “Time Travel” PSA employs a hybrid metaphor to convey the catastrophic effects. The poster is visually constructed by fusing the top part of the famous London sightseeing site, London Bridge, with the raised waters of the ocean submerging the entire city of London. The inclusion of global warming in the slogan leads to the cognitive perception of the poster’s message as representing the multimodal conceptual metaphor A FUTURE WORLD IS AN APOCALYPTIC WORLD. The visual composition of the PSA indicates that the metaphor belongs to the hybrid type. This is validated by the fusion of two distinct elements, London Bridge and the submerged city.

The slogan “Last minute London before climate change” in the advertisement is intricately connected to its visual elements, creating a layered message. At first glance, the slogan may not be easy to grasp, as the visuals already depict an irreversible catastrophic transformation of the UK

capital, while the textual element states “Last minute London before climate change”. Given that this advertisement was part of a Travel Agency’s campaign, the slogan should be interpreted through the lens of tourism. Specifically, it subtly invites potential tourists to visit famous destinations before it is too late. The phrase “last minute London” echoes the familiar phrase in tourism, “last minute call”, urging travelers not to miss an opportunity. However, even without a clear understanding of the client behind this campaign, its main focus remains on depicting the apocalyptic consequences of global warming, rooted in both image and text, with the image being the primary source of cognitive impact.

Thus, it can be argued that the primary intent of the PSA is to depict and raise awareness of the devastating outcomes that our world may face as a result of global warming. Subsequently, based on the textual mode, the secondary focus of the “Time Travel” campaign is to heighten potential clients’ interest in the services provided by the Time Travel Agency.

The external cultural dimension reflected in the poster shapes both visual design and the message of this PSA. In cultures with strong external control, such as in parts of Eastern Europe, there is a prevalent belief that external forces, such as fate, nature, or societal structures, have a significant influence over individual and collective outcomes (Cox 2006; Vindry & Gervais 2019).

This PSA echoes that cultural perspective by presenting an apocalyptic future world, suggesting that if action is not taken soon, the severe repercussions of global warming will be unavoidable. The imagery of the submerged historic bridge serves as a powerful symbol of how these external, uncontrollable forces, represented by climate change, could devastate even the most iconic and enduring human achievements.

The use of London Bridge as a cultural symbol is also important to the reception of the PSA’s campaign, especially in regions where this landmark is widely recognized and holds significance. By showing London Bridge partially submerged by rising waters, the “Time Travel” poster evokes a strong emotional response, highlighting the severity of the prospective environmental state.

6. Discussion

The above analyses demonstrate how pictorial and textual modalities work together to create powerful PSAs that raise awareness about global warming. This section will discuss how multimodal communication enhances the impact of environmental messages. The use of multimodal communication, where visual elements often create an emotional charge and textual elements provide context, makes PSAs more effective (Kövecses 2008; Semino 2008; Evans 2014). Cognitive metaphors provide a base for translating complex environmental issues into more understandable and relatable ideas (Forceville 2008), helping audiences connect emotionally and intellectually with the PSA’s intended environmental message. For instance, in the “Evolution” campaign, the pictorial metaphor of human degeneration works closely with the cognitive concept of GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DEVOLUTION to deepen the impact of the PSA.

Another finding from the analysis is that pictorial metaphors in PSAs significantly enhance their primary purpose of raising awareness. Visual metaphors play a crucial role in creating emotionally charged narratives (Yu 2009; Forceville 1994), like the polar bear struggling to breathe in the “#2CTROP” campaign or Bigfoot in the “Climate League” PSA. The visual representations tap into cultural symbols or human experiences, making the messages more impactful. The “Global Warming–WWF” PSA, for instance, uses the familiar image of penguins and urban homeless people to evoke a powerful connection between environmental destruction and human suffering, drawing attention to the urgency of climate change in a relatable and thought-provoking way. By using visuals to create an emotional appeal, these PSAs ensure their messages resonate on a deeper level.

Cultural factors also play a key role in how audiences interpret and respond to these multimodal metaphors. Using Trompenaars’ cultural dimensions framework, the analysis shows that PSAs like “Global Warming–WWF” appeal to individualistic cultures by emphasizing personal responsibility

in fighting climate change. In contrast, the “#2CTROP” campaign from France, with its emotionally charged portrayal of the polar bear, appeals to communitarian cultures by stressing collective action and responsibility. By aligning metaphors with the values of their target audiences, these campaigns increase their overall effectiveness.

While cultural frameworks like Trompenaars’ dimensions provide valuable insights into broad cultural tendencies (Koc 2020), they have also been subject to debate regarding their applicability to increasingly dynamic and interconnected societies. Rather than viewing cultural categories as fixed, recent scholarship emphasizes their evolving nature, influenced by globalization and cross-cultural interactions (Kittler et al. 2011). However, despite these discussions, such models remain useful for identifying patterns of communication and cultural orientation, particularly when applied with an understanding of their adaptability. In the current study, Trompenaars’ framework is utilized as a lens to explore cultural influences on metaphor interpretation, acknowledging that cultural dimensions interact with broader social, historical, and contextual factors.

By integrating multimodal elements and considering cultural specificity, the PSAs analyzed here exemplify how communication strategies can balance universal environmental themes with localized messaging. This approach not only strengthens the emotional and intellectual engagement of audiences but also underscores the value of cultural sensitivity in global campaigns addressing climate change.

7. Conclusion

This study presented a cross-cultural and compositional analysis of multimodal metaphors used in PSAs related to global warming. By analyzing PSAs through the frameworks of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), pictorial metaphor classification (Forceville 2008), and Trompenaars’ (1994, 2004) cultural dimensions, we examined how text and images interact to convey critical environmental messages. The multimodal approach revealed the significant role of metaphors in making crucial and complex issues like climate change accessible.

The analysis demonstrated that while the pictorial metaphors in PSAs are essential in creating emotional appeal, cultural context also heavily influences the crafting of these messages. The use of cultural dimensions provided insight into the variations in communication strategies, showing how different cultural values shape the way global warming messages are conveyed.

While the findings offer insights into how multimodal metaphors function in climate-related PSAs, future research could expand on these frameworks to analyze a wider variety of social issues across diverse cultural contexts. By delving deeper into the interconnections between cognitive, visual, and cultural dimensions, further studies could enhance our understanding of how PSAs can be designed to engage global audiences more effectively in addressing urgent environmental and social challenges.

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