

Cultural consumption and identity politics in advertising: Campaigning discourse of the Beijing Olympics

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This paper aims to explore the dialogic relations between form and function in multimodal discourse by looking into six print advertisements for the Olympics 2008 released by Mainland China. Data for analysis are chosen on the grounds that, first, the wordings in Mandarin Chinese are simple, slogan-type, e.g. *Aoyun re, re bian jingcheng!* “*Olympic Fever Heats All of Beijing!*” but creatively interweaving the Games’ logo with attractive pictures and colour symbolism concerning Beijing City through which the messages could be plenty. Secondly, they encourage the (active/imaginative/creative) audience to integrate the semiotic elements (linguistic slogans and visual images) to trigger cognitive contextual effects, namely pun, irony, metaphor and humour, and will perform various pragmatic/communicative functions thereafter. Thirdly, they are ideologically significant for conveying, promoting and enhancing traditional and wide-ranging Chinese culture, inviting and persuading the audience to recognise the prominent values in a fresh and friendly style with appeals to market orientation, modernisation and globalisation.

The audience’s perception, comprehension and interpretation in multimodal communication are approached within Relevance framework (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995, Noveck & Sperber 2006, Forceville 2005). She searches for optimal relevance in the interpretation process, during which a wide array of implicatures involving feelings, attitudes, emotions and impressions would be inferred and derived from non-/verbal communication together with the contexts, depending on different degrees of involvement and shared cognitive environment/background knowledge. The sociocultural aspect of visual communication and language use is further explored to see the inseparable relationship between sign systems/ language and social meaning. Lending itself as a symbolic arena for embracing competing ideologies, multimodal discourse displays the gist of, and adds interest to, social semiotic interpretability, reflecting the social interaction/cohesion and cognitive dynamics of communicator and audience, thus maintaining the dialectical relationship between social structures and social practice (Fairclough 1995).

Keywords: advertising discourse, Chinese civilisation, implicature, multimodality, pragmatic inference, social cognition, visual art/rhetoric

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Data [A]

