

## **Exploring multimodal metaphor and metonymy in advertising: Reflections on a collaboration between academics and creative practitioners**

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Despite interest in metaphor in advertising, there have been few studies that involve collaboration between academics and practitioners. The “Exploring Metaphor and Metonymy in Advertising” (EMMA) project has involved collaborations with national and international advertising agencies to understand how metaphor is best used in advertising and to explore its impact on consumer responses.

In this presentation, we discuss the benefits that a partnership such as this, between academics and practitioners, can have for metaphor research, and report results of a study testing metaphor in a sexual health campaign co-created by Big Cat Marketing and Communications Agency and EMMA, for Umbrella Health (a publicly-funded organisation that promotes sexual health, and which forms part of the UK’s National Health Service). The study investigated the effectiveness (e.g. consumer understanding, appeal, and reported engagement) of the campaign when metaphor was used creatively in innuendos relating sexual activities to places in Birmingham, UK (e.g. Popping in his Mailbox? Exploring their Botanical Gardens? Dig Beth?). Through a regional online survey (N=358), we examined whether participant responses varied according to demographic information (e.g. age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity), and the amount of conceptual effort required to understand the advertisement (measured in three different ways). All of these factors were found to have an effect on consumer perceptions.

Insights from the EMMA project have implications for: (a) developing empirical metaphor research in naturally-occurring creative contexts; (b) developing working relationships with creative practitioners to test metaphor at various stages of the creative process – from conception through production to distribution; (c) benefitting the creative industry by reinforcing practitioner intuition and experience with research; and (d) supporting non-profit organisations to spread their message about important issues that benefit society.