

A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Construction of Brand Image in Luxury Menswear Advertising: A Case Study of Advertisements of Zegna

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Abstract

In today's highly competitive fashion industry, luxury menswear brands are constantly seeking innovative ways to establish and maintain a unique brand image to attract customers. Multimodal advertising is the main medium for brand image construction. Based on this, this paper presents a multimodal discourse analysis of the construction of brand image in luxury menswear advertising, using a case study of advertisements from the renowned fashion brand, Zegna. By examining 20 posts in its Facebook, the study analyzes the interplay of verbal modality, image modality, and color modality to understand how these elements coalesce to construct a compelling brand image. In the textual analysis, high-frequency concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives are scrutinized to identify linguistic patterns and their contribution to the brand's messaging. The image analysis explores the portrayal of clothing models and the backgrounds used in the advertisements, highlighting the visual strategies employed to communicate luxury. In the color analysis, the study reveals that the advertisements predominantly utilize low-saturation colors, contributing to the overall visual aesthetic and brand identity. Collectively, these findings provide valuable insights into the multimodal strategies used by luxury menswear brands to convey their image and appeal to their target audience.

Keywords

Multimodal Discourse Analysis, New Media, Advertisements, Brand Image

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In recent years, the luxury menswear industry has developed rapidly. This de-

velopment cannot be separated from the promotion of advertising. In order to stand out in the market, luxury menswear brands need to build their own brand image through advertising to attract more target consumers. With the development of the Internet and digital media, multimodal luxury advertising can be spread more widely and continuously through the Internet. Modern advertising models are diverse, including text, images, and these elements can interact with each other to build a brand image.

Zegna is an Italian luxury fashion brand known for its high-quality menswear and accessories. As a world-renowned luxury brand, Zegna has specialty stores and boutiques all over the world. In 2009, Zegna created its own account on Facebook and began posting advertising. So far, Zegna's Facebook account has more than 520,000 followers.

Based on this, this study selects 20 recent Facebook posts of luxury menswear brand Zegna to analyze how the merchants use multi-modal approaches to build brand image and what kind of brand image they construct to promote potential consumer consumption. This paper analyzes the verbal modality, image modality, and color modality of these posts and shows how they work together to construct the brand image.

1.2. Research Significance

This research has both theoretical and practical meanings. In terms of theoretical importance, although the use of multimodal discourse analysis methods to analyze advertising is not a new research direction, these studies focus on female brands. There are still gaps in the analysis of male brands. Therefore, this paper can help to fill the gap and expand readers' understanding of multimodal advertising discourse. In terms of practical importance, this kind of research on luxury menswear is helpful to improve the advertising design and communication effects of luxury menswear brands. This helps the businesses choose the appropriate visual models and textual expressions to attract the target consumers more accurately. In addition, this study also contributes to the in-depth discussion of consumer psychology.

2. Literature Review

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is an emerging paradigm in discourse studies that extends the study of language to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music, and sound (O'Halloran, 2011). In the study of MDA, the visual grammar (VG) theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) is mostly used. VG theory is constructed on the basis of Halliday's systematic functional grammar (SFG). In VG studies, multimodal discourse is a system including text, image, color, etc. Each modality has its own meaning, while a new meaning could be produced by these diverse modalities together.

In recent years, with the development of the luxury industry, the multimodal

discourse analysis of luxury advertising has become increasingly popular. However, most of these analyses are related to female brands or feminism. For example, Lazar (2006) analyzed the female image in luxury cosmetics advertising, and Mensa and Deng (2021) analyzed the marginalization of women in luxury advertising. These analyses are helpful for readers to further understand luxury advertising and for merchants to improve their advertising. However, few scholars pay attention to male brand advertising, so this article can fill this gap and give readers a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of male and female luxury brand advertising.

In addition, most studies have focused on verbal modality and image modality, but few studies have involved the analysis of color modality. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) mentioned that color modality can also be an individual system to convey meaning. So, in addition to the analysis of verbal and image modalities, this paper will also focus on the analysis of color modality.

3. Methodology

Zegna is a luxury menswear brand founded in 1910 and has a history spanning more than 100 years. It is considered representative of luxury menswear brands. Therefore, this paper selects 20 of Zegna's most recent posts on Facebook and analyzes the text, image, and color of these posts. SFG and VG are used as tools for the analysis.

The selection of the 20 Facebook posts of Zegna was based on a purposeful sampling strategy. This strategy was adopted to ensure that the selected posts would provide rich, detailed and diverse data that would adequately represent the multimodal discourse strategies used by Zegna in constructing its brand image. The posts were selected from a specific timeframe covering the most recent complete year of Zegna's Facebook activity. This timeframe was chosen to ensure that the findings of the study would reflect the brand's current and most up-to-date advertising strategies. This is particularly important given the rapidly evolving nature of social media advertising. The study excluded posts that did not contain any visual or verbal content, as these posts would not contribute to the multimodal discourse analysis. Also, posts that were reposts, shared content from other sources or had no direct relevance to Zegna's brand image construction were excluded. This is because the study aims to understand how Zegna uses multimodal discourse to construct its brand image, and these posts would not provide useful data for this purpose.

In the text analysis, this study will use Halliday & Matthiessen's (2013) SFG. SFG includes the analysis of the ideational function, interpersonal function, and textural function of text. This paper focuses on the interpersonal function of posts. By analyzing the use of vocabulary, this paper analyzes how Zegna conveys brand image and concept to potential consumers. In detail, this paper analyzes the use of concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives in the posts. In advertisements, concrete nouns are generally used to convey product and brand information, abstract nouns are used to convey a brand concept, and adjectives

are used to describe the product and brand image (Baldry & Thibault, 2006). Therefore, through the analysis of these three types of vocabulary, we can understand how Zegna builds brand image through text. The study marks all the concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives that appeared five or more times in posts. After the quantitative analysis, this study will also conduct a qualitative analysis of typical words.

In terms of the analysis of image and color, this paper uses the VG of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001). The paper focuses on representational meaning and interactive meaning, analyzes the characters and the environment in the pictures of posts, and analyzes the relationship between them. For color analysis, the paper explores the hue and saturation perspectives.

4. Findings

4.1. Text Analysis

By analyzing 20 of Zegna's most recent posts on Facebook, this study finds the concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives that are frequently used in posts.

Table 1. High-frequency vocabulary in the Facebook posts.

Concrete Nouns	nature (12), scenery (8), landscape (5)
Abstract Nouns	values (17), principles (13), tranquility (10), craftsmanship (8), signature (8)
Adjectives	luxury (20), outdoor (20), finest (13), global (9), impeccable (8), relaxing (5), natural (5), stylish (5)

From **Table 1**, we can see that the three most frequently used concrete nouns in the 20 posts belong to the same type, and they are all about our earth. The word "nature" appears 12 times in these posts, which represents Zegna's focus on the connection with the earth and the environment. For example, the sentence "The collection provides unparalleled comfort in cold conditions, bringing you closer to nature" not only shapes the comfortable and warm features of the clothing but also shows the brand's focus on letting customers be close to nature. Such a brand image can appeal to outdoor enthusiasts. Another sentence, "Spend time in expansive landscape." shows the brand's view of nature more directly, which further builds the image that the brand is closely connected to nature.

In the use of abstract nouns, the brand often uses words such as "principles" and "values" which shows that the brand pays attention to its own cultural heritage and tradition. Such an image will make the brand appeal to consumers who care about the culture and ideas of the brand. The word "tranquility" expresses the humanistic care of the brand. The sentence "Immerse yourself in the tranquility of Oasi Zegna natural territory with our Luxury Outdoor collection." Shows Zegna hopes that consumers can wear its clothes to enjoy inner peace in-

nature. This not only shows the brand's emphasis on nature and the outdoors, but also reflects the brand's care for its customers. This also realizes the interpersonal relationship of the text, reflecting the brand's "conversation" with the customer. In addition, the word "craftsmanship" also shows the brand's image of focusing on quality. The sentence "Named after the Italian for 'Peak', the Vetta represents the pinnacle of our craftsmanship." shows the high craftsmanship of Zegna and the high quality of the clothes.

Regarding the use of adjectives, the words "luxury" and "outdoor" appeared in each of the 20 posts. These two adjectives position the brand image as "high-quality menswear with a focus on the outdoors." Words like "finest" and "impeccable" convey the brand's pursuit of perfection, making consumers believe that the brand's products have undergone strict quality control and design. The word "natural" is used to describe the material of the clothes. It not only echoes the "brand attaches importance to the outdoors and nature" mentioned above but also shapes the brand's image of environmental protection.

Through the analysis of frequent concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives in posts, this study finds that Zegna builds an image of caring about nature, pursuing quality, and paying attention to environmental protection. This positioning can attract outdoor enthusiasts and consumers who are concerned about brand culture and environmental issues. If viewers read these 20 Facebook posts, these recurring key words will form their impression of Zegna in their minds.

4.2. Image Analysis

In this part, this paper analyzes the images of clothing models in 20 posts and the background of the pictures. From **Figures 1-4**, we can see that the models selected by the brand are mature men, which shows the brand's mature and reliable image. The models' facial expressions in the pictures are calm. There are no exaggerated expressions on their faces. This helps the brand construct a peaceful and confident image. In addition, the shooting methods for these photos are close shots and medium shots. According to visual grammar, such shooting methods can narrow the distance between the models in the photos and the audience, which can more effectively convey the information (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002). Therefore, the image of the brand can be more accurately captured by the audience.

In terms of background, most of the background of the pictures in the posts are natural landscapes, such as the grasses in **Figure 1**, the blue sky in **Figure 2**, and the snow mountain in **Figure 4**. This background further emphasizes the brand's value of connecting with nature. In addition, the picture will further arouse the imagination of outdoor enthusiasts and make them want to wear clothes for outdoor sports, so as to attract potential consumers. Through the analysis of images, this paper finds the similarities between the models and the background in the posts, which can help the brand build a favorable image and attract the target consumers.



Figure 1. An advertisement picture with grass as the background.



Figure 2. An advertisement picture with sky as the background.

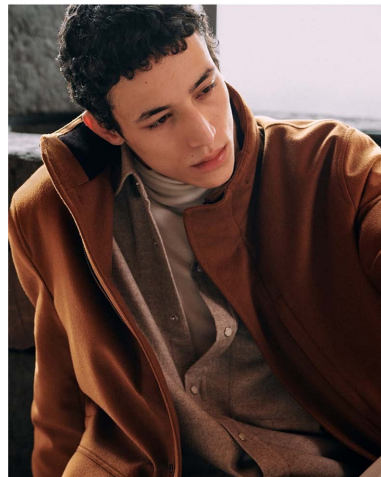


Figure 3. Advertising images with high color saturation.



Figure 4. An advertisement picture with mountains as the background.

4.3. Color Analysis

In the color analysis, this study finds that the colors of the pictures in the tweets are mostly low-saturation colors. These colors are earthy colors borrowed from nature. This can give the audience a sense of peace and comfort. In the posts, we can also find that the color of the clothes in the picture is highly unified with the background color. For example, in **Figure 4**, the gray color of the clothing is very harmonious with the gray and white color of the snow mountain, which brings people visual comfort and increases the elegance of the brand. While brown and gray are classic colors of Zegna, in the posts, this study also found a highly saturated, high-brightness color: red. For example, the main color in **Figure 5** is red for the clothes, and the gray and white sky even highlights the color of the clothes. The appearance of red shows the other side of the brand: passion and boldness. In the choice of colors, Zegna builds an elegant, classic, but at the same time passionate image.



Figure 5. Advertising images with high color saturation.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study have important implications not only for luxury menswear brands but also for marketers across various luxury goods categories. As the analysis reveals, the interplay of verbal, visual, and color modalities is crucial in constructing a compelling brand image that resonates with the target audience. By understanding the specific strategies employed by Zegna, marketers can draw lessons and apply these insights to their own advertising efforts. One key implication is the importance of using carefully selected language in advertising messages.

The study shows that high-frequency concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and adjectives play a significant role in conveying the brand's messaging. Marketers should consider the choice of words and phrases, ensuring that they align with the brand's identity and values. This can help create a consistent and coherent brand image across various marketing channels. Another important implication is the use of visual strategies to communicate luxury. The portrayal of clothing models and the backgrounds used in advertisements can have a significant impact on consumers' perception of the brand. Marketers should pay close attention to the visual elements of their advertisements, ensuring that they evoke the desired emotions and associations that contribute to the luxury image. The color analysis also highlights the importance of color in shaping the visual aesthetic and brand identity. The use of low-saturation colors in Zegna's advertisements contributes to a sense of sophistication and elegance, which is characteristic of luxury brands. Marketers should carefully consider the color palette used in their advertisements, ensuring that it aligns with the desired brand image and appeals to the target audience.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based on a relatively small sample size of 20 Facebook posts, which may not be representative of the brand's entire advertising strategy. Future research could expand the sample size or include other social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multimodal strategies employed by luxury brands. In addition, the study focuses exclusively on Zegna, a luxury menswear brand. While the findings may be applicable to other luxury goods categories, future research could explore the advertising strategies of other luxury brands in different sectors, such as accessories, automobiles, or cosmetics, to determine the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the study employs a specific analytical framework that combines verbal, visual, and color analyses. While this approach provides a holistic understanding of Zegna's multimodal discourse strategies, future research could consider alternative methodologies or analytical frameworks to provide different perspectives on the construction of brand image in luxury advertising. Additionally, researchers could investigate the impact of these multimodal strategies on consumer behavior, perceptions, and decision-making processes, to better understand the effectiveness of these strategies in driving con-

sumer engagement and sales.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper explores Zegna's brand image by analyzing the text, image, and colors of Zegna's 20 recent Facebook posts. By analyzing the text, this paper finds that Zegna constructs an image that focuses on nature and the outdoors, quality and brand culture. Through the analysis of image, this paper finds that Zegna builds a mature and reliable brand image. In the analysis of color, this article explores Zegna's elegant but passionate image. Zegna's multi-dimensional brand image allows it to appeal to a wider range of potential customers. In addition, the role of media in constructing the brand image of Zegna is also very important. The continuous posts on Facebook can deepen readers' impression of the keywords and main colors in a short time, so that the brand image can really stay in their minds.

This paper can help readers better understand the process of how luxury menswear builds brand image through media. In addition, it can also fill in the neglect of male luxury advertising in many advertising discourse studies. However, as a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, the number of samples studied in this paper is still not enough, which will influence the results and objective degree of the research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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