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Scripting the Communication Strategy for Mineral Water Advertising in the USA

A Multimodal Textual Analysis

Abstract

The discourse of advertising, along with its functions and structure, has been studied for many years from several points of view. Modern communication relies both on explicit messages and, more frequently, implicit messages, which can be more effective in delivering an intimate promotional essence. The germinal idea behind this paper stems from the prototype theory— formulated by Rosch (1978) and developed by a number of other scholars (e.g., Geeraerts 2006; 2016; Ross and Makin 1999; Aitchison 1994)—and, more specifically, from the prototypical paths it generates (scripts). We explore the possibility of applying scripts to advertising. Of particular interest are the effects that changes to the script produce in terms of the promotional message and consumer perception of the advertised product. The advertising sphere chosen for this study is the US mineral water market; a corpus of Instagram advertisements, retrieved from the pages of the main US producers of bottled mineral water (2,223 tokens), was selected and both their verbal and non-verbal aspects were analyzed. The results confirm our hypothesis of the presence of script change in advertising: such results offer a basis for further research to establish a predictive model for advertising communication that can be applied to various advertising channels (commercials, digital advertisements, etc.) and different products.

Keywords: *script theory, fold and swap theory, multimodal analysis, advertising discourse, advertising strategies*

1. General introductory remarks[1]

This study started from the prototype theory formulated by Rosch (1978). We focused our investigation on the scripts, generated by prototypes, which identify and contextualize single events, and on the possibility to apply them to advertising. A script is a schema of factors associated with the actions that people habitually carry out in a particular location or

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[1] Walter Giordano has written Sections 1, sub. 2.1, 3, 5 (sub. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5) and 6. Emanuela Ammendola has written Subsection 2.2 and Section 4 (sub. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5).

context (St. Amant 2015; 2017). Script-related factors are the variables that people expect to encounter and interact with in a certain context (what they will do, who and what they will encounter). The concept that lies at the basis of this study was formulated by empirically observing the advertisements used to promote certain products that shift audience attention away from the product's basic function or context (Giordano 2022). These advertisements place the product in new scenarios or depict it as an item of a different nature (e.g., water as wine, coffee as a luxury item, baby food as a drug). To answer the research question "can recurring advertising communication strategies be identified by changing the scripts?", Instagram advertisements for mineral water in the USA were chosen as the subject of the study. Many communication strategies are of a linguistic nature, while others use images or other semiotic resources (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2021). A qualitative multimodal analysis of a corpus of advertisements was therefore carried out, where mineral water is contextualized in several different scripts, including pharmaceuticals, nutrition, sports, and soft drinks. Section 2 of this paper reports the theoretical foundations of prototypes and scripts, and the multimodal approach theory used to analyze the advertisements. Section 3 contains a description of the corpus and its components, and Section 4 the multimodal analysis of the advertisements. Section 5 is a discussion of the results and possible extensions of the research, and Sections 6 contains concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical background

The literature review is divided into two parts: the first includes the conceptual fundamentals of our investigation, namely the theories on prototypes and scripts, along with the changes that they bring about in the perceived reality. The second part, instead, refers to the linguistic analytical tools used for our investigation: discourse analysis and multimodal analysis.

2.1 Research concept and theoretical pillars

The investigation started from Rosch's prototype theory (1978)—later developed, integrated and expanded by other scholars (Geeraerts 2006, 2016; Ross and Makin 1999; Aitchison 1994)—which relates words to their own visual representation: essentially, each word/concept has a corresponding idealized version, or prototype, of what the item should look like, behave/perform, be used for, etc. (St. Amant 2017, 116). People connect any new event or object to their mental database of prototypes to establish possible matches. If there is no perfect match, the new item is processed for an acceptable resemblance. The more factors or features the new item has in common with a given prototype, the more likely it is to be identified as a type or variety of that

prototype, e.g., the more something resembles our prototype of a "car" or has features in common with our prototype of a "car," the more likely we are to recognize it as a car. These prototypes are neither random nor innate. Rather, we learn them through exposure over time; if individuals are continually told that an item with certain features is a "car," they develop a prototype image of a "car" based on this exposure.

It is this experience-based factor that allows individuals to learn different prototypes, which they then use to identify objects around them (St. Amant 2017, 120). Advertising, in the form of commercials or digital advertisements, operates according to similar principles. It is possible that consumers have the same prototype for advertising since they are all exposed to it in varying degrees and, therefore, have a mental model, or prototype, with which they associate advertising, both in general (e.g., distinguishing an advertisement from a news story) and in particular (e.g., an advertisement for a car rather than soda). Individuals identify their prototypical car advertisements from their mental or visual representation of a car advertisement. In general, people identify an advertisement as being prototypical for a particular product due to specific features, depending on their cultural background.

An interesting development of this concept appears in the work of Rapaille (2006), a Swiss psychiatrist who reported a promotional strategy by Nestlé for selling coffee in Japan (2006, 8). The Japanese were (and are) strongly attached to tea by tradition, while coffee had little emotional resonance with them. Exposure to tea in their culture meant that many Japanese consumers had developed a prototype which they used to recognize and understand what tea was and how it was advertised; conversely, they had no image of coffee, nor of its function or the way it could be depicted in the context of an ad. Rapaille reports that Nestlé was able to break into the Japanese market by changing the function, the setting, and the product itself to create an imprint on the Japanese consumer culture, and marketed children's desserts flavored with caffeine-free coffee (2006, 9). In so doing, Nestlé used repeated exposure to create a particular mental imprint (or prototype) for Japanese consumers to identify what coffee was and the function it served in society (i.e., as a dessert for children). The strategy was successful as it created an emotional experience and a cultural imprint. Nestlé simply placed a new product into a behavioral sequence of actions in Japanese life: they included it in a script.

Script theory is therefore a step further in the development of our research idea. Many scholars have studied script theory (Ekblom and Gill 2016; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2004; Shore 1998; Tomkins 1978; 1987; Schank and Abelson 1977). St. Amant (2017, 119) defines a script as the pattern of actions in particular contexts, biased by a number of variables that would affect the behavior of an individual in a particular setting. This means that a person is perfectly aware of

the script for going to a restaurant (St. Amant 2015) or emergency room, or for being at school. In the latter case, a student knows what his/her classroom is like, what objects are in the room, what the instructor will do, say and ask, what he/she will be asked to do: in a nutshell, all the prototypical actions and objects in the script for "attending a class." Essentially, if someone recognizes where they are, they automatically expect to find certain objects in that location and know how they are expected to use those objects. Because such factors operate on a subconscious level, we are rarely aware of how they affect our reactions to and use of objects in a location. Interestingly, prototypes and scripts are interconnected in ways that subliminally guide behavior. To know what to do and what objects to use in a particular location, we need to know where we are; we therefore rely on the prototypes we have for certain places to identify where we are and how to behave at a given time. If the location looks like the prototype of a restaurant, we recognize it as a restaurant and behave like a customer in a restaurant. The reflex behavior we adopt once we know where we are is the script that guides how we behave and what we use in that place. Accordingly, we expect to find and use certain objects in the recognized setting, such as tables and chairs in a restaurant. Thus, we use prototypes to identify locations and access the related script for how to act in that particular site. At the same time, the script we have for a location contains prototypes of objects we expect to encounter and use when we are there (St. Amant 2018, 46-49). If a script changes, for example an alien element is added or the setting and context altered, the message is received differently. St. Amant and Giordano (forth.) call these external changes *folds* (addition of a new item) and *swaps* (change of context). If we were to describe a prototypical mineral water advertisement, we would focus our attention on the main function of the water, i.e., quenching thirst. A prototypical advertisement may depict a person drinking a glass or a bottle of water, with no reference to other purposes or functions. The verbal part of the advertisement might generally include words related to the main function: thirst, life, refreshing, need, etc. The setting would be neutral, with no embedding of the mineral water in artificial scenarios. To answer our research question, on whether researchers can use changing script patterns to identify recurring advertising communication strategies, this study explores bottled water advertisements to detect changes in their scripts, identifying *folds* and *swaps* that help shift attention from water's (main) function.

2.2. Literature review on multimodal analysis of advertising and methodology

In the incredibly vast literature related to advertising, various noteworthy aspects have been explored by many different authors. Cook (1992, 6) focused on the functions of advertisements to persuade people to buy, and later investigated the evolving genre of advertisements,

highlighting their "restlessness" as typical in new genres and drawing a parallel with the nature of volcanic lava as it erupts through the "hardened rock of older discourse" (Cook 2001, 222). Other scholars have analyzed different aspects of advertising, including spatial constraints on advertisement writing (Bruthiaux 2005), the creation and manipulation of meaning (Chand and Chaudhary 2012), the canonical structure of written advertising (Şimon and Stoian 2020), and multimodal metaphor and metonymy as the foundation for interpreting the advertising message (Peréz Sobrino 2017). The analysis of promotional discourse in print advertisements must consider pragmatic and linguistic factors in the process of producing and decoding messages; these factors include text typology, communicative purpose, contextual information and participants' previous knowledge and expectations. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), discourses originate from the use of language as a social practice in which context is a crucial element. In this sense, discourse mediates between abstract structures (languages) and concrete events (texts) (Fairclough 2003). A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective (Wodak and Meyer 2009; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Fairclough 1995; 2003), focusing on how discourse evolves as a social phenomenon rather than as simple linguistic evidence, was adopted by these authors as the basis for investigating Instagram advertisements and the impact they may have on potential public. Multimodal discourse, intended as communication through different semiotic resources, is one of the fields of interest in CDA which also explores the evolution of new media and new genres of communication (Wodak and Meyer 2009). In this context, van Leeuwen (2006, 292) argues that

> [c]ritical discourse analysis has […] moved beyond language, taking on board that discourses are often multimodally realized, not only through text and talk, but also through other modes of communication such as images […]. Overall, then, critical discourse analysis has moved towards more explicit dialogue between social theory and practice, richer contextualization, greater interdisciplinarity and greater attention to the multimodality of discourse.

In this context, texts such as advertisements should be considered in a broader sense, as they make use of semiotic devices other than language, which is why a multimodal approach is necessary to investigate how meanings are verbally and non-verbally constructed through different modes—verbal, non-verbal, visual, acoustic (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; 2021; Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen 2003; Fairclough 1995; 2003). As Gunther Kress (2010, 104) maintains, "all modes of representation are, in principle, of equal significance in representation and communication, as all modes have potential for meaning, though differently with different modes." The nature of print advertising, however, requires a multimodal

approach mainly centered on the visual components (verbal and non-verbal) for the description of "what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication), and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001, 134).

As far as the analysis of these semiotic resources is concerned, it can be said that, although the grammaticality of non-verbal resources is different from that of verbal resources (O'Halloran 2011), the images consist of inter-connected components which may or may not co-occur with verbal language. Among the various contributions on the grammar of different modes (e.g., Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; Martinec 2000; van Leeuwen 1999) and the cooperation of such modes (e.g., Zabalbeascoa 2008; O'Halloran 2003; 2006; Lemke 1998), Kress and van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996; 2021) provides useful tools for exploring communication achieved by means of visual devices in digital advertisements, establishing a connection between the internal coherence of a multimodal text and the three Hallidayan metafunctions (Halliday, 1978). Halliday's ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are taken into account here in exploring the types of messages conveyed in advertisements. While the ideational metafunction refers to the possibility of representing things, experiences, or aspects of the world using any semiotic mode, the interpersonal metafunction concerns the social relationships between the represented meaning, the producer, and the viewer. The textual metafunction, dealing with the type of resources used to compose the message and the relationship between them, integrates the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions. For this reason, the textual level was the starting point for carrying out the present analysis.

The verbal and non-verbal elements used in Instagram advertisements were explored on the basis of the three main interrelated compositional principles proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen in their *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996; 2021): information value, salience, and framing. These principles can be applied not only to simple images but also to "[t]he way the whole field of meanings is mapped across different semiotic modes" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021, 3), combining text, image, and other graphic elements. Information value concerns the spaces of the image (left/right, top/bottom, center/margin) in which different elements are placed according to their degree of importance. For example, on a horizontal axis in static or dynamic images, the left side of the images is usually where the "given" information is placed, i.e., the information the receiver is assumed to already know; conversely, the elements placed on the right are considered "new." On a vertical axis, information value may also be expressed through the opposition of ideal and real information, where the first part of the image, i.e., the most important part, is usually at the top, while the second part is at the bottom of the image. The positioning of the components at the center or at the margins of the image is also considered, as

the center is seen as the "heart" of the information. The second principle, salience, refers to the size of the elements, their placement either in the foreground or background, their color and tonal contrasts, sharpness, etc., representing the varying degrees of importance of the image components. Finally, framing concerns the use of devices such as frames and lines, empty spaces, and continuities of color that connect or disconnect the different parts of an image.

As Stöckl states, "the essence of multimodality seems to be that the various modes are integrated and interrelated on a number of levels (syntactically and semantically)" (2009, 206), which is why it is worth exploring the different principles according to which the co-occurrence of different semiotic resources may be structured (Zhang 2009; Zabalbeascoa 2008; Royce 2007). Zabalbeascoa's classification of audiovisual text components (2008, 31-2) was used to explore the intersemiotic relationship between visual, verbal, and non-verbal resources in Instagram advertisements. The author lists six types of cooperation between different resources (visual, acoustic, verbal, non-verbal):

- complementarity: when the various elements are mutually dependent to convey the full meaning;
- redundancy: when partial or total repetitions are made at the same level or different levels (words, images, sounds, etc.);
- contradiction: when some elements are incongruent with each other to create irony, satire, paradox, humor, etc.;
- incoherence: when the elements are not meaningfully combined;
- separability: when the different elements can work better when separated from the others, e. g. movie soundtracks which can act independently of the images on the screen;
- aesthetic quality: when the beauty of the combined elements has priority over their semantic value.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the construction of meaning employing different semiotic systems can be considered a social practice. Therefore, a social semiotic perspective based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by Halliday (1978; 1994) was used to analyze the multimodal discourse in Instagram advertisements. This approach was adopted to deal with the "multi-semiotic character of most texts in contemporary society," and to investigate "the relationship between language and visual images" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 164).

The interplay of social semiotics (see Kress 2010) and multimodal discourse analysis (see O'Halloran 2006) lends itself to an exploration of the pluri-semiotic strategies applied to create and convey meaning to the audience. The latter was also investigated by Kress and van Leeuwen, who argued that "the way some things can be 'said' verbally, others better expressed visually, is also culturally and historically specific" (2021, 3). Consequently, the two scholars investigated the interaction between the elements represented on the page or screen and the viewers whose responses may change according to different linguistic and cultural contexts and social needs (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021, 113-148).

Against this background, the multimodal analysis of Instagram advertisements centers on the various semiotic resources employed in constructing the message (textual metafunction). Specifically, the researchers took previous scripts and knowledge of the receivers (ideational metafunction) into account as the basis for decoding the messages (interpersonal metafunction). In this sense, a critical social semiotics perspective (Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen 2003) was adopted drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar (1996; 2021) and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) paradigm (1995; 2003). Based on this premise, the investigation of the verbal and non-verbal components used in US mineral water advertisements took into account the following elements:

- discourse design (how information is conveyed through the combination of verbal and non-verbal components);
- type of information (what type of information is given verbally and non-verbally);
- production and consumption (what kind of product is being promoted and on what cultural scripts the promotional discourse is based).

3. Corpus creation and description

The analysis of promotional discourse of mineral water in the USA was carried out on a corpus collected from the Instagram pages of the top bottled water brands in the country. To identify the most prominent brands in the bottled mineral water sector, the data from three websites, Amazon.com, Statista.com, and Thrillist.com, was intersected to match multiple parameters: statistical data on sales, number of orders via the website and recognizability of brands. All the brands present in each of the three sources consulted were considered. Each page was kept under scrutiny for five years (2018-2022). It is important to note that not all posts can be considered advertisements. We carried out a fine-grained analysis of the inventory of posts, selecting those we could label as advertisements; the elements that allowed us to identify them

as such were the presence of the brand's logo, the display of the product (entirely or a part of it), and a promotional text (Giordano 2022).

A corpus was finally created, comprising posts including static images, employing different social and personal scripts, and showing different visual verbal and non-verbal strategies aimed at promoting the same product in different ways.

Table 1 shows the number of posts representing the corpus and the number of posts considered as advertisements to be investigated.

Brands	Posts 2018-2022	Advertisements 2018-2022[2]
Glaceau Smartwater (https://www.instagram.com/smartwater/)	112 since 2019	42 since 2019
Mountain Valley Spring Water (https://www.instagram.com/mountainvalleywater/)	999 since 2018	638 since 2018
Fiji (https://www.instagram.com/fijiwater/)	176 since 2018	80 since 2018
Nestlé Pure Life (https://www.instagram.com/purelifeus/)	96 since 2021	65 since 2021
Voss (https://www.instagram.com/vossworld/)	314 since 2018	281 since 2018
Aquafina (https://www.instagram.com/aquafina/)	6 since 2020	1 since 2020
Perrier (https://www.instagram.com/perrier/)	250 since 2018	100 since 2018
Icelandic (https://www.instagram.com/icelandicglacial/)	540 since 2018	218 since 2018
Evian (https://www.instagram.com/evianwater/)	520 since 2019	238 since 2019
Dasani (https://www.instagram.com/dasaniwater/)	15 since 2022	10 since 2022
La Croix (https://www.instagram.com/lacroixwater/)	3,440 since 2018	550 since 2018
Total	6,468	2,223

Tab. 1: Best-selling brands in the bottled water sector in 2022

There are numerous brands in the bottled mineral water market which are owned by a small number of multinationals; in the above list, for example, PepsiCo owns Aquafina, Nestlé owns Pure Life, Perrier and Evian, and the Coca Cola Company owns Smartwater and Dasani. Another market share is held by private labels that are not active on social media, so there were

[2] Some brands started posting content in their official pages after 2018. The first available post of Nestlé Pure Life, for example, is from 2021.

no Instagram pages to consult. Social media presence is more significant for some brands, such as La Croix and Mountain Valley, while others either rely on other channels or invest fewer resources in Instagram (e.g., Fiji, Smartwater, Perrier).

The selection process was carried out to ensure the corpus was representative and to provide significant evidence of promotional discourse over five years, featuring the verbal and non-verbal language used in the advertisements under investigation. The concept of representativeness "refers to the extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population" (Biber 1993, 243); in other words, significance of the language or language variety collected in the corpus. The relatively high number of advertisements included in the analysis was intended to ensure that the corpus was representative of the promotional discourse relating to mineral water by providing different examples of Instagram advertisements and the marketing strategies used in them.

The advertisements were scanned manually to identify similarities and tendencies from both a linguistic and communicative perspective, and to discover whether any change in the script (such as inclusion of an alien element or change of setting) could modify the promotional message.

4. Multimodal analysis of US mineral water advertisements on Instagram

The main purpose of the analysis was to identify patterns in the production, reception, and transformation of the social practices connected to the advertising of mineral water in the US. The choice of Instagram posts used as marketing strategies mainly involves the analysis of still images, which is why the visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2021) was crucial for adopting a bottom-up approach to explore the corpus textuality in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication. Against this background, the analysis focused on the visual resources used in the US bottled water Instagram advertisements included in the corpus, taking into account the three metafunctions, with a particular focus on composition (textual metafunction), and the type of intersemiotic relationship between the different resources (modes). From the search for material on the Instagram pages of the leading bottled water brands in the United States it emerged that bottled water promotion varies depending on the different ideas with which water is associated. The most frequent ideas suggested on Instagram can be categorized as follows:

1. water associated with sport (137 advertisements);
2. water associated with health (67 advertisements);
3. water associated with purity and nature (geographical origin) (140 advertisements);

4. water associated with luxury goods (158 advertisements);
5. water promoted as a soft drink (550 advertisements)[3].

As shown in the list above, not all the advertisements included in the corpus belong to these categories. The remaining advertisements were not relevant as they associated water with concepts which are not significantly frequent or common to all the different brands (i.e., gastronomy, cosmetics, art). An analysis of the corpus showed that different compositional and communicative choices tended to be made for the different concepts framed by the brands mentioned above.

4.1 Water associated with sport

The first macro-category identified in the corpus includes advertisements that adopt the promotional strategy of modifying the advertising script for the brand to indicate a connection with athletic activity. It leverages the benefits that the consumption of mineral water can have for athletes, portraying it as a key factor for training and post-training. The association with sports is made by means of verbal and non-verbal elements and is frequently found in brands like Voss, Mountain Valley Spring Water, Fiji and Evian.

After analyzing the corpus, it emerged that written text tends to be absent from posts indicating a connection between water and sport. In the absence of any written captions[4] for the Instagram posts, images usually form the salient element (full-page images with no verbal message, the only verbal element being the name of the brand, which is usually placed at the margins of the image or appears in the image on the bottle). In this type of advertisement, evocative promotional strategies are used to represent water in the form of sports equipment, as in the example below, where Fiji water is represented as a part of an item of training apparatus.

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[3] The number of advertisements for each category depends on the number of Instagram posts created by each brand. Indeed, the high number of advertisements promoting water as a soft drink is largely due to the remarkable amount of posts in La Croix's page. Notably, La Croix is a major brand in the flavored sparkling water market.

[4] An Instagram caption is a written text including words, hashtags, emojis that combine with the photo or video post to provide additional information and catch followers' attention.

Fig. 1: Fijiwater Instagram page

Differently from these advertisements where water plays a decorative role, fewer rhetorical strategies are used in advertisements where water is shown as an integral part of sports equipment and accessories. An example of this is the following posts where water is promoted as part of the training routine.

Fig. 2: PureLife Instagram page

Fig. 3: Vossworld Instagram page

The salience of the visual representation of water is also emphasized in terms of its size, color contrast, and informational value. It appears from the examples above that this category commonly includes a visual representation of the water bottle, which is usually placed at the center of the image and is immediately visible due to its color and sharpness. Another strategy is to exploit the authority of famous people; for example, the Evian campaign involves professional tennis player Emma Raducanu as a sponsor.

Fig. 4: Evianwater Instagram page

Even when there is no visual representation of the bottle, as in Emma Raducanu's image, the name of the brand is clearly recognizable due to the size and positioning of the logo in the image. In addition to full-page pictures, some advertisements combine two or more images that can be analyzed according to the information value criterion outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2021). Some Fiji advertisements, for example, show water in its primordial form—rain, clouds, waterfalls—on the left side of the image, and its function in athletic training on the right side.

Fig. 5: Fijiwater Instagram page

Fig. 6: Fijiwater Instagram

From a narrative point of view, the transmutation of water can be implied, introducing the idea of "before" (left side) and "after" (right side). In this case, the verbal components play an important role as the metaphoric use of language contributes to give a more abstract representation of water. Examples of this are slogans like "our rain, your gain" (Figure 5) and "starts as rain, ends as a thunder" (Figure 6), which verbally describe the scenes in the images. Other examples of verbal language used as the most informative element are advertisements in which words do not repeat what is already conveyed through the image but provide more technical information about the properties of water and encourage people to drink it. In the figure below, for example, the connection with sport is only suggested by the apparel that the figure is wearing, while the properties of water are verbally described by the term 'alkaline.'

Fig. 7: Smartwater Instagram page

In this case, the focus is on the properties of the water being promoted, which are written at the top of the image, and there is no visual reference to water represented in the other posts on the page.

The presence of more specific information about water composition and properties is strictly connected to the idea of water being associated with pharmaceutical and beauty products, a device frequently used over the last few years in bottled water print advertisements (Smartwater, Evian, Icelandic, Pure Life).

4.2 Water associated with health

This is another type of advertisement that highlights the intrinsic properties of water and the health benefits it may have on consumers. As mentioned above, advertisements may verbally list the minerals contained in the water and their properties, but there is a difference which distinguishes this category from the former. In 'sports' advertisements, in fact, the verbal representation of these properties is accompanied by images of athletes or sport equipment. Differently, in this category, advertisements refer to the healthy properties of water, depicting it as it is: either a stand-alone bottle of water or a spring. In many cases, the written text is as salient as the visual representation of the bottle that appears alongside it. In terms of color, tonal contrast, and size, the written text is as visible as the bottle of water placed in the middle of the advertisement.

Fig. 8: Icelandicglacial Instagram page   **Fig. 9:** Icelandicglacial Instagram page

A different rhetorical stance is used for advertisements in which water is depicted as a product that is simply good for the body. This is the case with posts that focus on the physical and physiological benefits of water rather than on the health benefits of its chemical composition, with slogans like "hydration wins" (Figure 10) and "good things happen to those who hydrate" (Figure 11), which persuade consumers to take care of themselves.

Fig. 10: Evianwater Instagram page   **Fig. 11:** Evianwater Instagram page

In these advertisements, the verbal message acquires more power than any non-verbal element, relying on the audience's background knowledge of water properties and benefits.

In other cases, reference to health and wellness is only made in the caption to the image, as in the case of the Smartwater post in Figure 12, where the caption reads "bring wellness into focus. new smartwater + clarity with ginseng and green tea extract," associating wellness with natural ingredients.

Fig. 12: Smartwater Instagram page

4.3 Water associated with purity, nature and geographical origin

The third category identified in the corpus introduces the concepts of purity, nature and geographical origin of water which frequently occur in brands like Mountain Valley, Evian, Icelandic and Fiji. Geographical origin is often used as a guarantee of water quality, leveraging the idea that giving the consumer precise information about the origin of bottled water may positively affect their likelihood of purchase. From a multimodal perspective, the advertisements in the corpus generally show the bottle of water in the foreground, with an idyllic place representing the origin of the water in the background; the latter varies from Arctic landscapes (Figure 13) to mountains (Figure 14) and exotic lands (Figure 15).
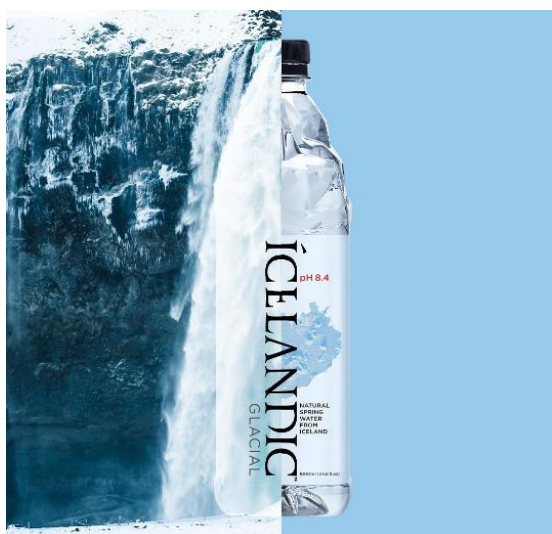

Fig. 13: Icelandicglacial Instagram page

**Fig. 14:** Evianwater Instagram page

Fig. 15: Fijiwater Instagram page

Fig. 16: Icelandicglacial Instagram page

Apart from the origin of different brands of water, natural landscapes are the main subject of this group of advertisements, and one of the most common elements is the presence of blue or white in the background or on the bottle of water in the foreground (85 advertisements out of 140 present these features).

The geographical provenance is often indicated in the slogan included in the advertisements, for example "Yes, It's from Fiji" in Figure 15. Some brands also feature the origin of the water in their name, and sometimes in the slogan as well, as in the example in Figure 16.
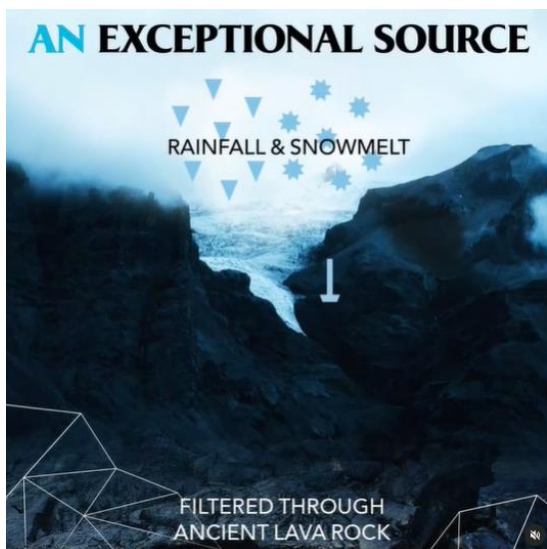
Fig. 17: Icelandicglacial Instagram page

Fig. 18: Icelandicglacial Instagram page

In some cases, verbal elements provide additional information, such as the properties of the water, as in Figures 17 and 18.

Other advertisements show a more evocative use of verbal language, conveying the idea of purity, freshness, and natural forces, as in this example:

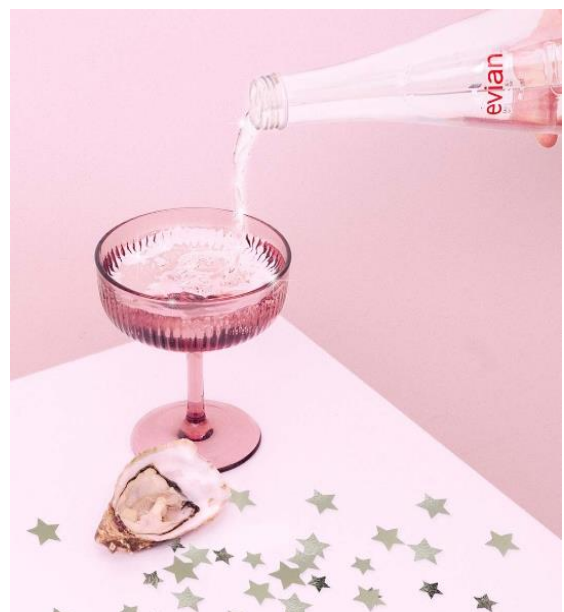**Fig. 19:** Evianwater Instagram page

As regards the relationship between verbal and non-verbal language, it can be said that images generally play the most pivotal role, while the verbal components offer little information about the brand and are mainly evocative slogans that integrate the non-verbal components. Unlike the category of advertisements that associates water with health and beauty, the idea of purity and nature presented in these advertisements is a more explicit strategy to gain consumers' interest and trust; the aim is to persuade them to buy the product by providing precise information about the origin of the water through verbal and non-verbal means.

4.4 Water associated with luxury goods

The fourth category identified in the corpus is advertisements that promote water as a luxury item. These advertisements do not focus on water's intrinsic properties or qualities, or its benefits for the body; instead, water is depicted as a sophisticated product on a par with wine and alcohols. Advertisements in this category focus on the aesthetic qualities of the bottle, rather than on water itself. From a non-verbal perspective, it can be said that these advertisements, unlike those that promote water in connection with sports or geographical origin, do not usually combine background and foreground elements; the bottle often appears alone against a single-color background. The choice of a monochrome setting is consistent with the bottle depicted in the advertisement—usually black, white, or translucent—giving the idea of elegance, sometimes reinforced by the presence of sparkling stones or diamonds on the bottle. 75 advertisements out of 158 present these compositional features which are frequently used in the Instagram posts of Evian and Voss.

Fig. 20: Evianwater Instagram page   **Fig. 21:** Evianwater Instagram page

The bottle itself is sometimes accompanied by additional elements that contribute to raising water to the status of an exquisite drink. These elements act on readers' consciousness at different levels of implicitness based on previous socio-cultural scripts and constructions. Cocktail glasses presumably deliver non-standard messages since water is not prototypically associated with these objects.

Fig. 22: Vossworld Instagram page

Fig. 23: Vossworld Instagram page

In this regard, the unexpected combination of elements leads viewers towards a particular mental script, i.e., to interpret the message and associate water with luxury goods such as cocktails or wine rather than a drink to quench their thirst. These promotional strategies are used by brands that are in a higher price bracket than others, like Evian and Voss.

The idea of water as a luxury good is also encouraged by the promotion of water as a gift, as with the gift boxes sponsored by Voss on its Instagram page (Figure 24).

Fig. 24: Vossworld Instagram page

The examples above suggest that verbal language is only used for captions found in posts where there are references to cocktails like the images in Figure 22 and 23, which are combined with captions saying "Cocktail 2 & 4," and "#NYC: Introducing @stayaka's STRAWBERRY SPRING #VOSSTAIL." Other images are accompanied by less explicit references to cocktails like in the post reproduced in Figure 21, whose caption says: "Don't forget to raise your glasses to all the accomplishments achieved this year and let's go even bigger for 2022." In this context, verbal communication plays a secondary role if compared to non-verbal communication, which is the most salient and informative element of the posts.

4.5. Water promoted as a soft drink

An analysis of the Instagram pages of the leading bottled water brands in the United States revealed that water is also promoted as a soft drink, with different flavors and colorful cans. From a non-verbal perspective the advertisements in this category do not show clear compositional patterns in terms of how the elements are positioned in the image, i.e., whether they are in the background or foreground and their size. While some advertisements show a bottle or a can of water in the center of the image, others display multiple cans representing the different flavors, or one can in combination with other elements. Different advertisements focus on different scripts associated with soft drinks and use them to reproduce these associations in viewers' minds. Examples of background images include a party (Figure 25), a beach, and a garden, i.e., situations where soft drinks are typically found.

Fig. 25: Lacroixwater Instagram page

Fig. 26: Perrier Instagram page

Other soft-drink related elements frequently used in these advertisements are straws (Figure 27), coolers (Figure 28), and glasses filled with ice and fruit (Figure 29).

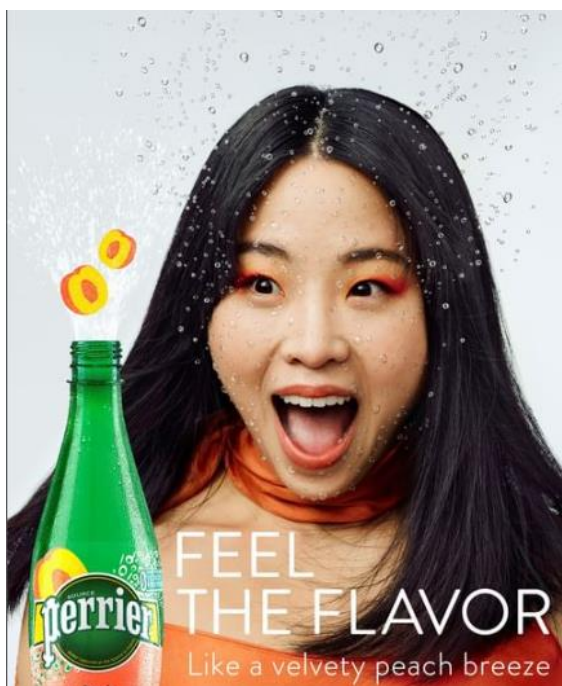

Fig. 27: Lacroixwater Instagram page

Fig. 28: Lacroixwater Instagram page

Fig. 29: Vossworld Instagram page

Despite this heterogeneity, some common traits can be identified in the advertisements in this group. In terms of subjects represented, for example, flavors are usually expressed through the visual representation of fruit or colors associated with them. In these cases, colors are one of the most important elements used to express the main characteristic of this type of water, which can also be delivered via other semiotic resources: flavors are often verbally indicated on the can or bottle that appears in the image.

The use of verbal language is limited to the name of the brand and the flavor indicated on the can, as well as to claims and slogans such as "Feel the flavor. Like a velvety peach breeze" (Figure 30).

Fig. 30: Perrier Instagram page

Fig. 31: Lacroixwater Instagram page

From both a verbal and non-verbal perspective, this category shows multiple overlaps with other categories, such as that concerning the geographical origin of the water. Some flavored water advertisements refer to geographical places, as in the La Croix slogan "Taste your dreams," which promotes La Croix *Limoncello* with a visual image of the Amalfi coast (Figure 31).

This category includes many advertisements from the Instagram pages of Voss, Perrier, Mountain Valley and La Croix; however, while the first three brands promote flavored water, La Croix's promotional pitch bridges the sectors of mineral water and soft drinks. Indeed, La Croix produces sparkling flavored water only, and promotes it as a full-fledged soft drink rather than water.

5. Discussion

The analysis has revealed a common promotional strategy which is based on the representation of water in a different light and for multiple functions of use. The multimodal analysis of mineral water Instagram advertisements has shown that each category makes specific use of visual, verbal, and non-verbal resources, that these resources work together in several ways, and that the communication strategies based on numerous types of scripts may be explicit to a greater or lesser extent in each group. The main features identified for each category are listed in the table below:

Category	Non-verbal semiotic resources	Verbal semiotic resource	Inter-semiotic relations	Explicit/implicit (message)
Sport	Non-verbal components are more salient than words in terms of size, framing and position. They mainly represent sports activities and equipment.	Verbal language integrates visual components through direct reference to sport and water benefits or through evocative slogans aimed at encouraging consumers to drink water.	Complementarity and redundancy	Explicit/implicit
Health and beauty	Non-verbal components are less informative than verbal components. They complement verbal information, commonly showing a bottle of water in the center of the image or play a more evocative role to catch consumers' attention.	Verbal language is more informative and more salient than images as it provides additional information to the non-verbal resources, indicating water properties and benefits for human health, encouraging people to drink. A more metaphorical and less explicit language is used in advertisements concerning water as a beauty product.	Complementarity	Explicit/implicit
Purity and nature	Non-verbal components are mainly organized	Verbal resources give information about the qualities and origins of the water,	Complementarity	Explicit

	according to the background/ foreground compositional principle, showing a color design focused on the natural origin of the promoted water. Non-verbal components give a visual representation of what the verbal components express.	sometimes providing additional information of various kinds.		
Luxury goods	Visual components play the most important role in the process of communication, recontextualizing socio-cultural knowledge concerning represented participants and practices. Non-verbal components' salience is largely expressed through colors and sharpness.	Verbal components only occur on the bottles represented in the advertisement or, occasionally, as slogans referring to cocktails, spirits, and wine.	Aesthetic	Implicit
Soft drink	An interplay of verbal and non-verbal components occurs as flavors are visible on the cans of water usually placed in the foreground. Vivid colors help deliver information on flavor, too. Instead, background images vary in each advertisement.	Verbal components give additional information regarding water properties and combine with non-verbal components when present on the can represented in the advertisement. Evocative slogans are frequently used to send persuasive messages to the consumer.	Complementarity and redundancy	Explicit

Tab. 2: Categories for classifying the features of water promotional discourse

The table above was compiled after identifying discursive and compositional patterns: they result in most of the advertisements investigated showing common traits. The possibility of other advertisements using different communication strategies, however, is not excluded. The identification of communicative features and overlaps among these categories may provide a foundation for identifying promotional strategies based on specific scripts and perceptions. The decision to use particular settings, colors, and associations, which may be explicit or implicit, demonstrates that discourse for water promotion works through different scripts that change according to the type of audience rather than the type of product. With the exception of flavored water, the product does not change from one category to another; in other words, the analysis demonstrates that different personal and social needs call for different promotional choices, based on patterns and mental schemes other than the prototypical one of representing water as what it is, i.e., a drink for quenching thirst.

It is useful to recall that the research question was to identify any shifts that might change the advertising message. Based on St. Amant and Giordano's study (forth.), the change of setting for the script can be defined as a *swap*, embedding water in a different context, and the addition of an element in the script can be defined as a *fold*. Both swaps and folds can potentially restructure the advertising message, especially in terms of the function of the advertised product. The following subsections discuss the evidence of such script changes and the way they become apparent.

5.1 Water associated with sport (137 advertisements)

In this category, both types of script change (folds and swaps) were detected in the advertisements investigated. Many folds were found: oversized tennis rackets, footballs, gym weights and bars, etc. In terms of swaps, the contexts for which water was swapped are gyms, fields, courts and sports facilities. Where the sports setting was not explicit, the script was changed by adding a sports item and vice versa. Textual elements were brought in to complete the promotional message in some cases, along with folds and swaps. Slogans such as "Our rain, your gain" (Fig. 5), which makes reference to the typical 'no pain, no gain' expression used in training, are another hint at healthy habits and at rewards for the efforts of people who practice sports.

5.2 Water associated with health (67 advertisements)

The change of script concerns the properties and composition of the water brand: the image of the bottle is surrounded with written text that lists the water qualities, e.g., "hydration" (Evian),

"high Ph 8.4" (Icelandic), "naturally alkaline" (Icelandic). This kind of change in the script can be classified as a swap, since such textual information helps contextualize water in the window of a pharmacy. The swap to healthcare and wellbeing is achieved by enumerating the mineral and chemical components, the benefits that the water can bring to the body, and reference to hydration, health, physical wellness, and a better life. A further declination of this macro category is the depiction of drinking water as a part of a beauty routine, which represents another swap of the advertising prototypical script from water domain to a different one, namely daily beauty routine. Some evidence was found in the corpus, but it was not considered significant enough to constitute a separate category. There are also some advertisements where folds in the scripts are present: external items such as flowers, apples, cosmetic creams, brushes, mirrors, etc. appear in the advertisements. Overall, the presence of folds is less significant than the occurrence of swaps.

5.3 Water associated with purity, nature, and geographical origin (140 advertisements)

There is a clear strategic communicative change in the script for water advertising in this category, where many folds and swaps are present. The script is swapped for natural settings entirely different from the household and conventional social contexts, i.e., different from prototypical settings. Volcanoes, arctic landscapes, mountains, shorelines, rivers, and lakes form the new scenario for a product that is promoted as being "pure" through the use of these modified scripts. Geographical references are also present, either with displays of specific landscapes (e.g., Fijian beaches) or by onomastic textual occurrences: Iceland, Fiji, Alps, etc. Several folds were identified in this category: waterfalls, icebergs, tropical island palms, snowfalls, and lava, which help change the function of water into a scarce, valuable, pure drink.

5.4 Water associated with luxury goods (158 advertisements)

The changes to the prototypical script for water advertising in this category are mainly folds, with the addition of alien elements representing water as something valuable and exclusive. A wide range of alien elements associated with luxury is folded into the advertisements: oysters, precious stones, glittering stars, etc. In addition, another particularly interesting element was detected in many of the advertisements using this type of communication strategy, namely the popular 'luxury' prototype of the glass shape: tumblers, flutes, snifters, tulip champagne glasses, coupes, etc., often contain or appear next to cherries, berries, lemon slices or other fruits generally associated with social drinking, cocktails or alcohol. Neatness and minimality peculiar

to luxury design are common characteristics: glass tables or shelves, silky clothes, soft, monochrome colors (often white, black, and shades of grey), etc.

5.5 Water associated with soft drinks (550 advertisements)

There is a significant presence of swaps and folds in this category. In a number of instances, the bottled water is placed in contexts evocative of holidays, social seaside settings in summer, parties, picnics and outdoor activities. La Croix, in particular, represents water in these settings (525 advertisements out of 550 present these features). The perception is reinforced by folding it into items like straws, ice, sliced fruit, summer hats, coolers, etc., completing the framework for soft drinks in social entertainment settings. Other brands, however, seem to exploit this communication strategy by suggesting a different function for water. As with the previous category, the shape of the glass or water container helps frame the script for the product; in the "soft drinks" category, water is usually packaged in cans rather than glass or plastic bottles, for example. Voss is an interesting case of how the communicative promotional strategy is effectively directed. Its advertising is found in both the luxury items and soft drinks categories, with two different lines of products: a classy bottle and a practical can. Sliced fruit is found in the advertising for both products, but the context supports the fruit in attributing the appropriate function to water.

6. Concluding remarks

The aim of this research study was to apply script theory to advertising. Mineral water advertising was therefore analyzed using a multimodal approach to discover whether it shows modifications of the prototypical scripts in promotional and communication strategies. With reference to previous and current studies, the kinds of change to which prototypical scripts might be subjected were then identified. These latter are defined either as *swaps* in the scripts, a situation where advertisers rely on the presentation of the product in new settings to present mineral water in different social, personal, and natural milieus, or as *folds*, namely, a strategy for presenting unusual, alien items into the scripts in a way that modifies either the function of use or the perception of water as a commodity. A thorough multimodal analysis of a corpus of US mineral water advertisements was carried out and script changes detected and subsequently arranged in five categories of mineral water representation: as a medical remedy, as a sports energizer, as a luxury item, as a soft drink, and as a pure, natural item. The results showed that promotional strategies very often rely on recontextualizing the water in various scripts with different functions: water is recontextualized and likened to a fashionable cocktail, a

miraculous medical treatment, a luxury ticket to a higher social status, or a delicious refreshing drink on a tropical beach.

This research methodology provides a foundation for further research to investigate whether the patterns detected here are common across other product categories. In addition, the methodology is open to including other variables that may be added to the study, such as the price of the product, its positioning on the market, customers' cultural background biases, and technical product specifications that may enhance the change to the advertising script. The intended audience is worth investigation, too. The interpretation of results depends, indeed, on audience width and on other variables like age, race, religion, nationality, cultural status, etc. All these research elements would eventually contribute to fulfilling the overall aim of the original research project: to establish a model to predict responses to advertising following changes to the script. This could be beneficial to communication scientists who aim to provide companies with an assessment of the impact of applying such script-change strategies to a product's market performance.

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