Cross-Cultural Differences in Pictorial Metaphors in Advertisements: Iran and the West

Shakiba Fadaee¹ and Mahmood Hashemian²

1: Department of Foreign Languages, Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, Isfahan, Iran
shakiba.fadaee1367@gmail.com
2: Department of English Language, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Shahrekord University, Iran
m72h@hotmail.com

Recent economic, political, and cultural developments have added to the importance of advertisements and the significant role they play in public and private sectors of the society. The discourse of advertisements has triggered a bulk of research and become the target of scrutiny from different perspectives. A fundamental issue in cross-cultural advertising is whether the knowledge which transfers from pictorial metaphor, that is, metaphors which are abundant in pictures, is similar in different cultures. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate cross-cultural differences between the Iranian TV commercials and Western countries. To achieve this aim, a number of Food advertisements were recorded from Iranian and Western TV commercials. Moreover, Barth’s (1986) model-signified and signifier-was taken to analyze the data. The pictorial metaphors in the advertisements from Iranian TV commercials were compared to those of Western in line with Barth’s model and the specific factor of differences, that is, culture. The results indicated relatively cross-cultural differences between the Iranian and Western TV commercials in terms of using pictorial metaphors in communicating knowledge. This study furthers our understanding of how cultures influence the way consumers decode messages. The differences observed are attributed to the cultural differences of Iran and Western countries.