

Semiotic Analysis of Facebook Video Ads: The Case of Renault Kadjar

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Abstract—The present paper seeks to analyse a Renault Kadjar video advertisement launched on Facebook. It argues that with the widespread use of new technologies, electronic gadgets, and social media, clearly-demarcated boundaries between disciplines can no longer be pinned down. While in this paper we assert that conducting a study that pertains to digital culture and marketing is a daunting task since Human Sciences (HS) are intermingled with various disciplines and fields of study, namely art, cinema, and new media, to mention but a few, this work tries to bring to the fore that the research methodology adopted which goes beyond Critical Discourse Analysis to image and video analysis helps solve this issue. In this respect, the results revealed that images, verbal, non-verbal elements deployed to persuade prospect clients are fluid and unstable because of the dynamic interplay between (PICM) Presentational, Interactive, and Compositional Meaning.

Keywords— New media; Video Ad ; dynamic interplay; visual grammar; PICM.

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the breakthrough in digital technology and the widespread of social media, companies and brand marketers have shifted their interest from traditional modes of advertising, such as newspapers, magazines, street panel to the adoption of new media, namely, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Youtube, and the like. In justifying the companies' use of social media, Goyal and Eilu (2020) put forward the following argument that Companies' investments into digital media including social media are increasing undisputedly. Being social is considered as the smartest way to reach target groups strategically by minimizing expense and optimizing return; that is how luxury brands take social media. Within, this respect, the present paper aims at analysing advertisement video on Kadjar car launched via the social network platform Facebook. Drawing on Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar, the paper seeks to answer the following question: How are images, verbal and non-verbal elements deployed to persuade prospect clients?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics has tremendously evolved over the last few decades. Halliday (1978) proposed and developed Systemic Functional Linguistics, which has later on been extended into other semiotic systems within the framework of multimodal discourse (Yao & Zhuo ,2018)

In their part, Kress and Leeuwen (2006) developed Visual Grammar, a theoretical framework that aims to understand how images communicate meaning through a systematic analysis of their visual features. According to Kress and Leeuwen, images can be thought of as visual texts that use specific visual elements, such as color, shape, size, and spatial arrangement, to convey meaning.

Visual Grammar builds on the principles of systemic functional linguistics, which is a linguistic theory that explores the relationship between language and social context. In Visual Grammar, images are analyzed using a similar approach, focusing on the way in which visual elements are organized to create meaning.

The concept of Visual Grammar has been used in a variety of fields, including visual communication, design, and art. It has been applied to analyze various types of visual media, such as advertisements, websites, and films, to better understand how they communicate meaning and influence audiences.

Moving on, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the application of visual semiotics to the analysis of pictures, posters, and video ads on new media, especially Facebook. As such, Madani (2016) applied visual semiotics in the Moroccan television advertisements. He has focused on 'Garlic Cube Knor' and

‘Prince Biscuit’ advertisements on the Moroccan second channel. Madani investigated the construction of meaning of visual messages in these two television ads from a semiotic perspective. The research targeted the manner in which meaning is created. Methodologically speaking, adopts Peirce (1931-35) patterns of meaning in signs as iconic, symbolic and indexical.. The results yielded iconic, symbolic and indexical message components.

Within the same line of thought and based on a Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Liu (2019) conducted a study on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics. Liu analyzed the ways in which PSAs (Public Service Advertisements) use different modes, such as visual images and language, to convey meaning and engage with audiences. The study focused on a specific PSA campaign in China, and Liu used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data. The study contributes to the field of multimodal discourse analysis by highlighting the ways in which PSAs use different modes to create interactive meaning and engage with audiences.

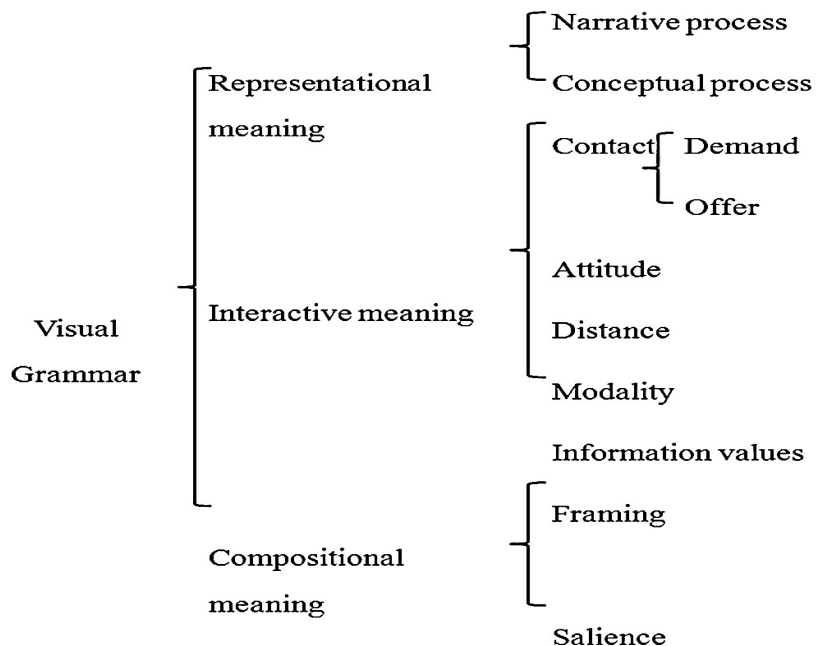
By the same token, Yao & Zhuo (2018) analysed a promotional video of the Chinese city of Hangzhou. In so doing, they adopted multimodal discourse analysis informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics. Premised upon Visual Grammar and frameworks of intersemiotic complementarity, this study investigates how various semiotic resources, especially the visual, audio, and verbal construct meaning. As for the results, the dissemination of different modes in this dynamic discourse contributes to constructing city images that are glorious in history, unique in culture, picturesque in landscape, and innovative in spirits.

These works are just a few examples of the extensive literature on the application of visual semiotics to the analysis of pictures, posters, and video ads on new media. The next section therefore explains the methodology and methodological approaches and tools adopted in the current study.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, the authors opt for Visual Grammar to analyse Renault Kadjar video advertisement that was launched on Facebook early January and late February 2020. To facilitate the application of Visual Grammar to the analysis of the video, a few shots were taken at intervals. Visual Grammar is a framework for multimodal discourse analysis, which comprises three main categories: representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning as shown in Fig. 1.

Fig.1: Visual Grammar Dynamics(Adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen , 2006)



- 1- Representational meaning comprises narrative process and conceptual process. Narrative process consists of action process, reaction process, verbal and mental process; whereas the conceptual process includes relational process and existential process.
- 2- Interactive meaning targets the social relations between the producer, the viewer and the object; it subsumes contact, attitude, distance and modality.
- 3- Compositional meaning covers information value, framing and salience.

Besides, the study makes use of Derrida's concept of "deconstruction" as a complex and multifaceted method of textual analysis that seeks to uncover the ways in which language (images, videos and so forth) constructs meaning and shapes our understanding of the world .According to Derrida, language (and here we refer to the language of ads) is always inherently unstable and constantly in flux, and any attempt to pin down a single, fixed meaning is ultimately doomed to fail.
 (Silverman,1989).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Kress and Leeuwen’s Visual Grammar, we analyse the representational meaning of visual resources; In so doing, we use deconstruction as a tool of analysis so as to dismantle the video ad into its smaller components. In this context, Derrida (1983,p1-5) asserts that “deconstruction means to disassemble the parts of a whole. To deconstruct a machine to transport it elsewhere.” We, therefore, focus on participants and circumstances which yield four themes as shown in **Fig. 2**

Themes	Participants	Circumstances
Renault Kadjar	Car, driver (Said Taghmaoui)	Car equipments (interior design, multi-media screen, gear, park assist..), exterior design.
Boxing competition	Protagonist / Said Taghmaoui ; adversary.	Gym club, boxing arena, bell
Ancient city	Said Taghmaoui	Old medina of Casablanca: narrow streets, old houses.
Modern city	Said Taghmaoui ; old man (green grocer); flocks of pigeons.	Five star tourist resort, modern buildings, postmodern bridge, Hassan II Mosque, Mohamed V Square

Fig. 2: Themes, participants and circumstances inscribed in the video.

The above-mentioned themes are demonstrated through the trajectory of the car rolling through different parts of Casablanca. The rolling path of the car symbolically connects the past, the present and the future. The video opens up with an unidentified figure standing at the entrance of what appears – later on – to be a gym club (*Shot 1*). It functions as an attention getter. The camera lens alternately shifts between two narratives: the boxing fight and the rolling of Kadjar car through various parts and suburbs of Casablanca. The Moroccan international actor Said Taghmaoui plays the lead role in both narratives. In the first narrative, the referee strikes the bell, announcing the beginning of the boxing match (*Shot 2*).

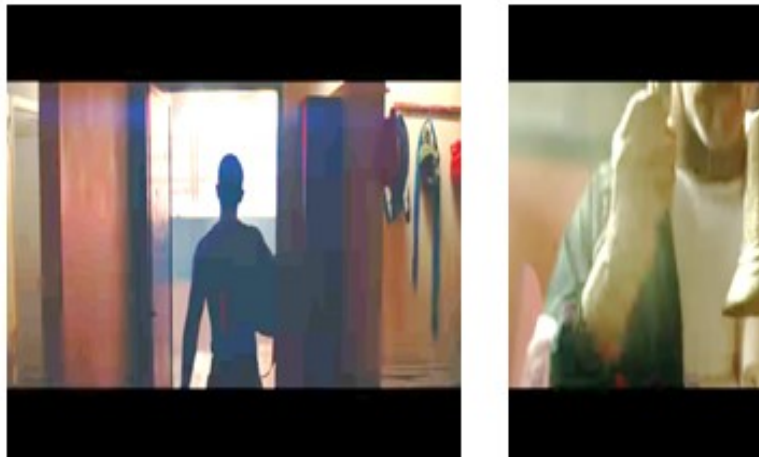


Fig. 3: Visual Grammar in Motion I

Taghmaoui engages in a fight against his rival *Shot 3*; while, at the same time, the camera shifts to the car, the object of advertising ad, which starts moving swiftly along the narrow streets of the old medina.

The car shift from the old medina to the modern city is marked by traversing the bridge *Shot 4*. The bridge, by further implication, symbolises ‘a purgatory’ phase or a continuum between traditional heritage and modern urban life.

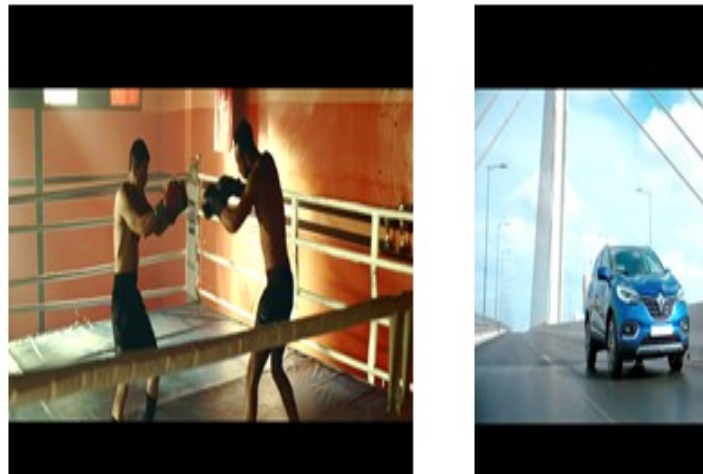


Fig. 4: Visual Grammar in Motion II

The car rolls through the city passing by houses, modern buildings, and Mohamed V Square, where flocks of pigeons fly around *Shot 5*; it finally comes to a halt near Hassan II Mosque *Shot 6*.



Fig. 5: Visual Grammar in Motion III

Representational Meaning

In this video, visual images can be analysed in terms of conceptual representations and narrative representations.

Conceptual Representation

Conceptual representations are concerned with classification processes as Kress and Leeuwen (2006, p.79) assert that “Classification processes relate participants to each other in terms of a ‘kind of’ relation, a taxonomy: at least one set of participants will play the role of *Subordinates* with respect to at least one other participant, the *Superordinate*.”

Participants are determined through part-whole relationships. Thus, the Superordinate is Kadjar car; whereas the steering gear, the rear view mirror, the park assist and the multimedia screen are subordinates of the same Superordinate as shown in the following taxonomy:

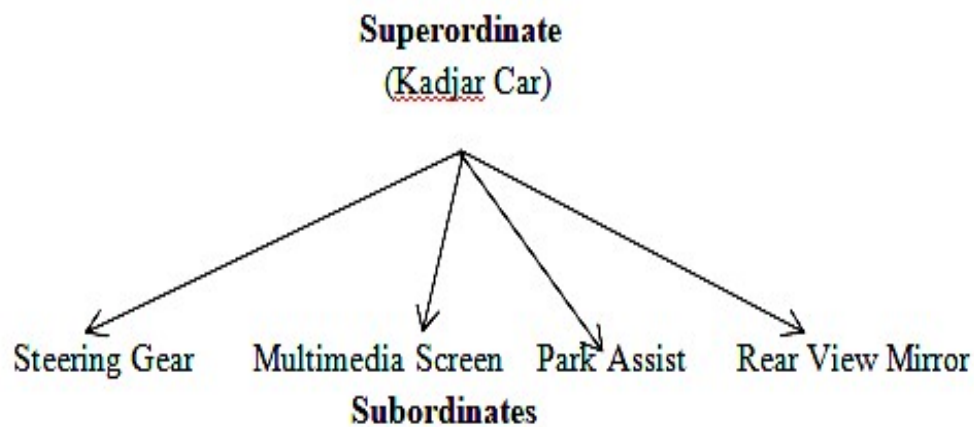


Fig. 2: Taxonomy of Conceptual Representation (Adapted from Kress & Leeuwen, 2006)

Narrative Representation

Narrative processes subsume action processes and reactional processes. Action processes involve actors, a vector and a goal. In this respect, Kress and Leeuwen (2006,p.63) argue that the “Actor is the participant from which the vector emanates, or which itself, in whole or in part, form the vector.” A vector can be defined as “oblique lines formed by glances and outstretched arms.” (*Ibid*, p.46). Kress and Leeuwen add that the goal is the participant at whom or which the vector is directed, hence it is also the participant to whom or which the action is done.

It follows, then, that Shot 7 contains action processes as illustrated in **Fig. 3**, in the sense that actor 1 and actor 2 are looking at a particular point in the car; therefore, their looks form a vector.



Fig. 6. Shot 7 & Illustration Design by Authors (based on Kress and Luwen's Visual Grammar, 2016)

Visual Interactional Meaning

Visual interactional meaning includes aspects of contact, demand, social distance, and modality.

Contact and demand

Shot 7 is a dynamic scene where participants engage in an interactional emotional relationship with the Goal (the advertised car) as well as with the viewers through smiling. Actor 2 / the old man, in particular, addresses the viewers by directing his gaze towards them. From the smiles on the faces of Said Taghmaoui and the old man, it is obvious that their demand is to invite or persuade the viewers to undergo the same experience of driving and possessing the advertised car.

Social distance

Apart from contact and demand, social distance is another dimension that pertains to the interactive meaning of images, which is linked to the size of frame, be it close-up, medium shot and long shot and so on, depending on the purpose of the image-producers. Since the close shot or close-up shows head and shoulders of the subject, Shot 7 is a close-up, displaying clear head and complexion of Said Taghmaoui. Social distance determines the relations people keep among each other. In this sense, Kress and Leeuwen contend that “at close personal distance we take in the head and the shoulders.” (Hall (1964), quoted in Kress and Leeuwen, 2006,125).

As for the representation of objects, frame size can suggest social relations between the viewers and objects, buildings and landscape. In this context, Kress and Leeuwen claim that “(a)t close distance, we would suggest, the object is shown as if the viewer is engaged with it as if he or she is using the machine, reading the book or the map, preparing or eating the food.” (Kress and Leeuwen, *ibid*, 127). Such is the case with shot 8, which is a close-up of the car. It establishes an affiliation between the object and the viewer as details of the exterior design of the car are foregrounded.



Shot 8

Fig. 7: Visual Grammar in Motion IV

Attitudes

In ad videos, the represented participants are displayed from horizontal or vertical angles. Horizontal angles can be frontal or oblique, denoting the viewer's involvement or detachment from the represented participants. Shot 9 is videoed from a frontal angle, which displays a flock of pigeons in Mohamed V Square.



Shot 9

Fig. 8: Visual Grammar in Motion V

Still, vertical angles highlight power relationships between viewers and participants. A low angle makes the represented participant look imposing and awesome. Consequently, the car in Shot 8 gives the impression of superiority and triumph as it is videoed from a low angle.

High angles provide a panoramic view of buildings and landscape. Shot 10 and Shot 11 present a bird view of the luxurious tourist resort and the modern bridge respectively. Viewers, therefore, have symbolic power over the city.



Fig. 9: Visual Grammar in Motion VI

It is worth mentioning that the symbolic power of the viewer is fulfilled through the deployment of high-angle shot and the use of metaphor “Dominez la ville” (Shot 12) (gloss: ‘dominate the city’); metaphorically speaking, possessing and driving this car would enable the viewer / prospect client to ‘dominate the city’.

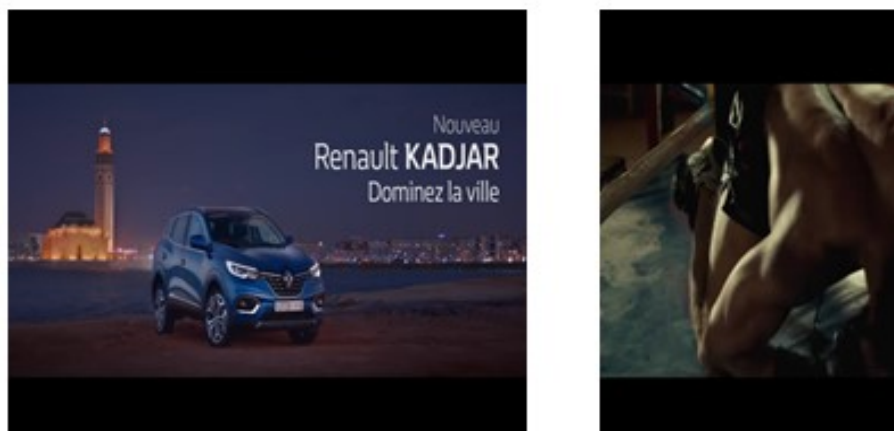


Fig. 10: Visual Grammar in Motion VII

Related to the symbolic power of the viewer is the fighting scene where the protagonist Said Tagmaoui technically knocks out his rival (Shot 13). Since the two boxers wage fight within the same weight category, the winner symbolically represents the winning of the advertised car over other unspecified cars of the same category.

Modality

Modality is manifested through the use and manipulation of colours from the part of the producer. Illumination and brightness provide a sense of naturalness and increase modality to the images. High modality is associated with reality and truth as Kress and Leeuwen suggest.(Kress and Leeuwen, *ibid*, 155).

Visual Compositional meaning

In this video, the visual compositional meaning is fulfilled through the interconnectedness of information value, salience and frame as set by Kress and Leeuwen (2006). Nevertheless, one of the limitations of this study stems from the fact that it is difficult to pin down the specific information value, because pictures are progressive and not static. Each shot is part and parcel of a continuation of scenes within this video. As a result, it is difficult to identify “the specific information values attached to the various ‘zones’ of the image: left and, top and bottom, centre and margin.” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006,p.177).

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we adopted Visual Grammar to analyse Renault Kadjar's ad video. In attempting to answer the research question: How are images, verbal, non-verbal elements deployed to persuade prospect clients? We conclude that the dissemination of various visual, verbal, and audio modes contribute to the construction of meanings. The video under study is undoubtedly effective, because the interplay between presentational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning has a positive impact on the viewers. This can be endorsed by the feedback of the viewers on Facebook as the video received more than ten thousand 'likes' and more than two hundred commentaries within about twenty days of its launch. Most of the viewers have shown interest in the advertised car. Still, this ad video lasts 30 seconds. Despite its very short time span, the video juxtaposes visual, verbal and non-verbal components, along with steady instrumental music in the background. Instrumental music gets the viewers focused on the video content; it keeps also recurring in the psyche of the viewers. By the same token, success of this video ad is due – in part – to the choice of Facebook as an advertising platform, as Goyal and Eilu (2020, p.234) assert that "It is because social media platforms provide ease of putting messages along with images, which is more eye-catching than simple messages."

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