



Multimodality in the Advertisement of Hermes

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ABSTRACT

In the case of high-end brands such as Hermes, advertising goes beyond merely presenting a product; it constructs an immersive world that reflects the brand's heritage, values, and aspirations. Hermes is renowned not only for its craftsmanship and exclusivity but also for the subtle storytelling embedded in its campaigns. A multimodality analysis thus becomes critical for decoding the layers of meaning conveyed through such orchestration. The objective of this research is to identify and analyze the types of multimodalities used in the advertisements of Hermes brand and explain the reason behind the use of it. The research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. The data in this research consist of advertisings from Hermes brand. These advertising were obtained from official sources such as websites, online advertisements, promotional videos, and digital or print campaigns. Each advertising was chosen based on its use of multimodality elements, including verbal text, typography, color, and imagery. The conclusions of this

research were; (1) Hermes advertisements incorporate multiple multimodality elements, including visual, linguistic, spatial, gestural, and symbolic modes, that function interdependently to construct an elegant, aspirational brand identity; (2) The use of specific multimodality strategies in Hermes advertisements is deeply influenced by four meaning-making strata: Discourse, Design, Production, and Distribution. These strategies are employed not only to communicate product features but also to narrate cultural values, emotional experiences, and brand philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Manglik (2023), advertising is an organized method of communicating

information about a product or service, which a company or an individual intends to sell. It is a paid announcement that is communicated with the help of words, pictures, illustrations and music in a medium/media found appropriate for reaching the target audience/prospective buyers.

In the globalized and image-driven world of fashion and luxury branding, slogans in advertisement play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and constructing brand identity. A slogan is not merely a catchy phrase; it is a powerful communicative tool that encapsulates a brand's vision, values, and appeal. Particularly in the fashion and luxury industries, slogans are carefully crafted to resonate with aspirational lifestyles, evoke emotions, and establish a distinctive voice. However, these messages do not rely solely on words. They are often accompanied by visual, typographic, and stylistic elements, making the process of meaning-making inherently multimodal.

The theory of multimodality, as introduced by scholars like Kress and Leeuwen (2010), provides a useful lens to examine how meaning is constructed through the combination of different semiotic resources such as language, image, layout, color, and typography. In the context of fashion and luxury brand slogans, this approach allows researchers to go beyond the linguistic message and explore how visual and design elements interact with text to reinforce or even alter its meaning. This is especially important in luxury branding, where visual aesthetics and symbolic cues are deeply intertwined with the overall brand image and consumer experience.

Luxury and fashion brands carefully orchestrate multimodality elements in their advertisements to communicate exclusivity, craft strong brand identities, and emotionally connect with specific audiences. Elements such as color schemes, composition, typography, imagery, and language choices work together to evoke particular values, lifestyles, and aspirations. For example, a sleek, minimalist visual layout with subdued tones may suggest timeless elegance and prestige, while a dynamic, high-contrast advertisement may convey energy, modernity, or rebellion. These multimodality choices are never random, they are deliberate strategies to create persuasive narratives that distinguish a brand in a highly competitive market.

While branding has long been a subject of academic inquiry, much of the existing research tends to analyze either the verbal or visual components of advertisements in isolation. However, in sectors like luxury fashion where aesthetic appeal, symbolism, and identity projection are paramount, it is essential to understand how various semiotic modes interact to construct layered meanings. A multimodality approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how advertisements function not merely as visual displays, but as complex communicative acts.

Previous study which is done by Hidayati (2017) studied the multimodality discourse on slogan advertisement of Singapore Burger King controversy edition. She found that image and other visual modes are able to represent a particular social relation in communication. Meanwhile, in discussing the meaning of the image in visual communication: representational instead of ideational, interactive instead of interpersonal, and compositional instead of textual. Based on the finding and discussion, the researcher concluded that Burger King's provide the viewers with images have meanings only the meaning of visual image comes from different visual element proposed by the theories were used. In addition to this study, Wu, et al (2024) in their research entitled "Multimodality Hateful Meme Classification Based on Transfer Learning and a Cross-Mask Mechanism". The challenge in detecting hateful memes lies in their unique multimodality nature, where images and text in memes may be weak or unrelated, requiring models to understand the content and perform multimodality reasoning. To address this issue, we introduce a multimodality fine-grained hateful memes detection model named "TCAM". The model leverages advanced encoding techniques from TweetEval and CLIP and introduces enhanced Cross-Attention and Cross-Mask Mechanisms (CAM) in the feature fusion stage to improve multimodality correlations. It effectively embeds fine-grained features of data and image descriptions into the model through transfer learning. This paper uses the Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve (AUROC) as the primary metric to evaluate the model's discriminatory ability. This approach achieved an AUROC score of 0.8362 and an accuracy score of 0.764 on the Facebook Hateful Memes Challenge (FHMC) dataset,

confirming its high discriminatory capability. The TCAM model demonstrates relatively superior performance compared to ensemble machine learning methods.

In the case of high-end brands such as Hermès, advertising goes beyond merely presenting a product; it constructs an immersive world that reflects the brand's heritage, values, and aspirations. Hermès is renowned not only for its craftsmanship and exclusivity but also for the subtle storytelling embedded in its campaigns. These stories are told not just through words or images alone, but through the synergy of multiple semiotic resources such as music, movement, framing, texture, and narrative sequencing in video advertisements, or spatial arrangement and symbolic iconography in print media. A multimodality analysis thus becomes critical for decoding the layers of meaning conveyed through such orchestration. By examining how visual, linguistic, and even auditory elements coalesce, researchers can uncover the deeper cultural messages and emotional appeals embedded in Hermès advertisements messages that contribute to shaping consumer perceptions and sustaining the brand's elite status in the global luxury market.

Hermès is a French luxury fashion house founded in 1837 by Thierry Hermès, originally established as a workshop specializing in saddlery and equestrian accessories. The brand's identity is deeply rooted in traditional craftsmanship, superior quality, and exclusivity, which have collectively positioned it as a global symbol of prestige. Over time, Hermès expanded its product lines to include iconic handbags such as the Birkin and Kelly, as well as apparel, perfumes, watches, and other accessories, while consistently maintaining its image of elegance and timelessness. Its philosophy emphasizes the integration of tradition and innovation, with an understated approach to luxury that distinguishes it from other high-end brands. Based on the description above, the problems of the study are formulated as: (1) What types of modes are used in the advertisement of Hermes brand? (2) Why does the advertisement of Hermes brand use the multimodality the way they do?

METHOD

This study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how Hermes brand advertisings construct

meaning through multimodality elements. This study focused on analyzing the multimodality meaning-making found in selected advertising of Hermes brand. It examined how linguistic can contribute to the construction of meaning in these advertisings.

The data in this research consist of advertisings from Hermes brand. These advertisings were obtained from official sources such as websites, online advertisements, promotional videos, and digital or print campaigns. The researcher focused on brands that were internationally recognized for their strong visual identity and consistent marketing messages.

The selection of advertisings was done purposively to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Each advertising was chosen based on its use of multimodality elements, including verbal text, typography, color, and imagery. These data serve as the primary materials for analyzing how different semiotic modes are combined to create persuasive and meaningful brand communication. The steps of data collection are as follows: (1) Identify a list of leading fashion of Hermes for strong; (2) Visit official websites and digital marketing platforms of this brand; (3) Collect and document slogans along with accompanying visual elements (if any), such as layout, font style, and imagery; (4) Organize the collected slogans into a data table for easier analysis, categorizing them based on the semiotic modes they use. The data was analyzed by using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) which consists of three phases: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. First, data condensation refers to data reduction which means to summarize, to choose subject matters, to focus on the important things, and to look for themes and patterns. Thus, the reduced data will provide a clearer picture and ease the researcher in conducting data display. In this stage, the researcher selected, focused, and organized the collected advertisings by categorizing them according to types of semiotic modes (e.g., text, image). Second, data display. Data display can be done in the form of tables, charts, networks and other graphical format. The reduced data in this research will be displayed by using tables and narrative text. In this stage, the researcher presented the categorized data in the form of tables, charts, or descriptive summaries to make patterns and relationships clearer. Third, conclusion drawing/verification. The conclusion in this research will be written based on the data

shown in the data display. These initial conclusions can then be verified, that is their validity examined through reference to the researcher's existing field notes or further data collection. The final step involves drawing conclusions based on the patterns and themes observed in the data display. In this stage, the researcher interpreted the meanings behind the use of multimodality elements and verified the findings by checking consistency and relevance with the research objectives.

RESULTS

Types of Semiotic Modes Used in the Advertisement of Hermes Brand

The modes used in the advertisement of Hermes were divided into visual, linguistic, spatial, and gestural modes. The visual mode included the image, color, and body language of the model, establishing a signature aesthetic of luxury. The linguistic mode comprised of the minimalist copy, such as the iconic logo and evocative taglines, which reinforced the brand's heritage. Simultaneously, the spatial mode was defined by the strategic use of composition and negative space to highlight the product, while the gestural mode was conveyed through the model's subtle and elegant movements, suggesting narratives of sophistication. Here are some analysis of semiotic modes used in the advertisement of Hermes:



Figure 1. Hermes Advertisement

1. Visual mode (image, color, body language)
 - a. Main subject: A tall, elegant woman dressed in all-white, sleek outfit is striding across a Parisian square. Her confident posture and long step suggest power, elegance, and

liberation.

- b. Background: Features the famous Place de la Concorde fountain in Paris, reinforcing the brand's French luxury and identity.
 - c. Color scheme:
 - Dominated by white, beige, and sky blue, symbolizing purity elegance, and timelessness.
 - The only bright element is the red-orange balloon, drawing attention to the Hermes brand in the upper-left corner, matching the classic Hermes orange.
 - d. Fashion items: the woman carries a Hermes clutch, wears high-heeled sandals, and a stylish hat, all contributing to a sense of sophistication and status.
2. Linguistic mode (textual elements)
 - a. Text reads:

"HERMES IN THE AIR"

Hermes Paris
 - b. This slogan metaphorically suggests lightness, elegance, and aspiration like a balloon rising to the air, inviting consumers to associate the Hermes brand with elevated experiences and emotional transcendence.
 - c. The font is minimalist and classic, reinforcing timeless luxury.
 3. Spatial mode (composition/layout)
 - a. Positioning: The woman's body spans diagonally across the image, creating dynamic movement and guiding the viewer's eye from the bottom right to the top left (where the logo and slogan are placed).
 - b. Foreground vs Background:
 - The subject is in the foreground, emphasizing the fashion and accessories.
 - The background, although detailed (fountain, lampposts, Paris skyline), is slightly desaturated to ensure the model stands out.
 - c. Symbolism of height and taste
 - The exaggerated stride and scale of the model towering over the Parisian scene emphasize freedom, power, and grandeur; positioning the Hermes wearer as a

Dominant figure.

4. Gestural and gaze mode

- a. Gaze: The model does not look at the viewer but confidently gazes forward, suggesting aspiration and self-assurance.
- b. Gesture: Her stride mimics flying or floating, reinforcing the idea of elevation or freedom, consistent with the slogan “*Hermès in the Air*.”

Hermès consistently associates its brand with luxury, elegance, and freedom. This ad successfully combines: high fashion (clothing and accessories), Parisian sophistication (setting and color), symbolic lightness (balloon, stride, minimalism) to promote Hermès not just as a brand, but as a lifestyle philosophy: graceful, aspirational, and above the ordinary. The summary of the modes used in Hermès ads is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Types of Semiotic Modes Used in Hermès Brand

Types of the Modes	Sub-Types	Description of the Modes
Visual Mode	Image, Color, Body Language	Images feature models with poised, elegant postures and fashion items like scarves, bags, and dresses. The color palette frequently uses Hermès’ signature orange, warm tones, and contrasts between foreground and background to convey lightness, exclusivity, and timeless sophistication.
Linguistic Mode	Text, Slogan, Typography	Minimal but meaningful slogans like “Hermès in the Air,” “The Magic Box,” and poetic phrases in multiple languages. Serif fonts convey luxury and tradition. Language is metaphorical and emotionally evocative, reinforcing brand identity.

Gestural Mode	Posture, Movement, Gesture	Models walk, leap, float, or pose in expressive and artistic ways. Gestures symbolize freedom, empowerment, and grace. Movement is often upward or outward, reinforcing themes of elevation and imagination.
Spatial Mode	Composition, Layout, Foreground/Background	Strategic use of diagonal movement, symmetry, and object placement. Layouts guide viewers' attention toward focal points like the brand logo or product, often positioning models in dynamic motion or elevated stance to symbolize aspiration and transcendence.
Color Mode	Iconic Objects, Setting	Recurring motifs like red-orange balloons, scarves styled as wings, and tools of craftsmanship (e.g., needle, leather tools) represent tradition, fantasy, and Hermès' heritage. Parisian landmarks and natural landscapes underscore luxury and identity.

The Reasons of Semiotic Modes Used in the Advertisement of Hermes Brand

Hermès' advertisements are rich in multimodality elements because they aim to construct not merely a product message but an aesthetic and experiential narrative of luxury, elegance, and timeless craftsmanship which was realized through the strata of multimodality. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2001), multimodality meaning-making involves four strata: discourse, design, production, and distribution. Each of these plays a critical role in shaping Hermès' advertising strategies.

1. Discourse

Discourse refers to the socially constructed knowledge embedded within the ad. Hermès draws on elite, poetic, and aspirational discourses to align its products with a global identity of refined taste, heritage, and luxury.

For instance, in Image 1, the discourse of *elevated elegance and freedom* is established through the model's confident stride across Place de la Concorde. Her all-white outfit, minimalist surroundings, and long step evoke a sense of transcendence and sophistication. The slogan “HERMÈS IN THE AIR” reinforces the metaphor of lightness and aspirational living, characteristics often linked with high fashion and status.

Similarly, Image 5 showcases a regal woman in profile, with her head wrapped in a voluminous Hermès scarf. The presence of a gloved hand sewing the scarf into place subtly invokes the discourse of craftsmanship and couture, suggesting that elegance is not merely worn but crafted, embedded in tradition and care. The poetic German text naming the scarf “les Chants du Henné” adds a cultural and artistic dimension, presenting the brand as an embodiment of wearable art and storytelling.

These discourses connect Hermès not just to fashion, but to values of artistry, heritage, and timeless femininity.

2. Design

Design concerns how modes (visual, linguistic, spatial, etc.) are arranged to represent the discourse. It reflects the intentional *semiotic orchestration* that guides viewer interpretation.

For example, in Image 3, the floating model reaching for a balloon in a surreal white space reflects the metaphor of aspiration and imagination. The upward diagonal movement, paired with the slogan “HERMÈS, THE MAGIC BOX,” strategically connects the visual movement (floating, reaching upward) with the verbal message of magic and wonder. The design choice to use balloons as symbolic objects in multiple ads (Image 1, 2, and 3) creates campaign continuity, building a visual motif that viewers associate with the Hermès identity.

In Image 6, the silhouette of a faceless woman in motion holding the structured “Roulis” bag is another clear design choice. The lack of facial identity invites viewer projection, and the placement of tools in the background connects modern femininity with traditional leatherwork. Here, design bridges the artisanal past with a contemporary vision, supporting Hermès brand discourse as both classic and forward-looking.

Moreover, spatial layout is carefully considered. In Image 4, the model balances on a bicycle at the edge of a dock, with her scarf trailing like wings. The flowing lines of the scarf and the open mountain-lake background create a diagonal composition that conveys movement, adventure, and liberation, all values designed to elevate the Hermès product beyond fashion into the realm of experience and self-expression.

3. Production

Production refers to the material realization of the design, including lighting, color tone, texture, camera angle, and editing. These aspects play a crucial role in establishing Hermès' aesthetic of understated luxury and visual poetry.

In Image 2, for instance, production techniques such as soft natural lighting, dreamy color palettes (peach-pink against blue sky), and the use of a slow-motion capture of dress in motion all contribute to a cinematic atmosphere. The choice of camera angle slightly upward and wide, makes the model appear as if she is gliding or floating, a visual metaphor of aspiration. These technical choices materialize the “lightness” discourse through tangible production techniques.

In Image 5, texture is foregrounded through the detailed depiction of silk fabric, the intricate knot of the scarf, and the subtle lighting that accentuates the folds and shadows. The minimalist background enhances this effect, ensuring the fabric becomes the primary communicative mode. The inclusion of a sewing needle and orange glove in the composition also emphasizes Hermès' roots in manual craftsmanship and haute couture, a message communicated without relying on narrative text but fully supported by the production design.

Additionally, Image 6 uses motion blur and silhouette lighting to create a feeling of speed, elegance, and mystery. The contrast between the modern female figure and the

leather tools in the background are enhanced through color grading, warm oranges and browns dominate the image, referencing Hermès' iconic color palette and its association with luxury leather.

4. Distribution

The final stratum, distribution, deals with how the multimodality product is delivered across various platforms, shaping the way meaning is received and interpreted by different audiences.

Hermès advertisements are tailored for print, digital, and social media environments, and each mode of distribution influences the content structure. For example:

- Instagram-based ads (such as Image 1 or Image 2) are highly visual, with minimal text, optimized for fast-scrolling mobile audiences. Here, the emphasis is on immediate visual impact, using colors, posture, and iconic objects (e.g., balloon, scarf, bag) to create brand association within seconds.
- In print media, such as Image 5, the high-resolution and texture-rich aesthetic is ideal for fashion magazines, where readers engage more slowly. The use of small but elegant typography in serif fonts shows Hermès' confidence in brand recognition without over-marketing, appealing to elite consumers familiar with luxury codes.
- On YouTube or fashion film campaigns, Hermès often includes soundtracks, movement, and slow transitions, using time as an additional mode to deepen emotional engagement. Although not visible in still images, the consistent presence of dynamic gestures and dance-like movements in the analyzed ads suggests they may be part of video campaigns, adapted for both print and motion distribution.

Ultimately, Hermès' multimodality strategies adapt seamlessly to platform-specific affordances while retaining coherence in brand identity. Regardless of medium, Hermès emphasizes its values through a carefully orchestrated balance of semiotic modes, evoking emotion, aspiration, and cultural sophistication.

In summary, Hermes multimodality advertising strategy is deeply rooted in a layered meaning-making process. Through the interplay of discourse (luxury, freedom, art), design (composition, mode selection), production (technical realization and sensory appeal), and

distribution (platform-sensitive adaptation), Hermes constructs an identity that transcends products and embodies a lifestyle. The brand uses multimodality not simply for aesthetic effect, but as a tool of cultural storytelling, elevating every scarf, bag, or dress into a symbol of experience, imagination, and timeless elegance.

The reasons of using the modes which was realized in the strata of multimodality form an interrelationship among the strata itself to the existing modes as it can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. The Interrelationship of the Modes in Hermes Brand

Modes Contributing Through Strata	Visual Mode	Linguistic Mode	Gestural Mode
Discourse	Conveys the values of luxury, timelessness, aspiration, and Parisian heritage through imagery, color palettes, and composition. Visuals evoke themes of freedom, craftsmanship, and sophistication.	Expresses poetic and metaphorical narratives such as <i>"Hermès in the Air"</i> and <i>"The Magic Box"</i> , framing products as artistic experiences rather than mere commodities.	Embodies freedom, empowerment, and elegance through posture and movement; gestures communicate confidence, refinement, and emotional elevation.
Design	Employs diagonal composition, foreground salience, and recurring motifs (e.g., balloons, scarves, bags) to maintain visual continuity across campaigns.	Uses minimal serif typography and concise phrasing. The placement and language choices (often multilingual) highlight cosmopolitan and artistic identity.	Integrates upward or leaping gestures with product positioning to narrate symbolic movement and aspiration; gaze direction reinforces emotional tone and audience connection.

Production	Realized through high-quality photography, controlled lighting, selective focus, and deliberate color grading to achieve visual harmony and brand consistency.	Achieved through precise typographic detailing, kerning, spacing, and use of Hermès' signature orange tone to ensure aesthetic coherence and readability.	Captured via slow motion, choreographed movement, and strategic camera angles that emphasize the expressive motion of models; freeze frames convey emotion and style.
Distribution	Adapted for different media: full-bleed images for print, single-frame visuals for social media, and cinematic frames for film campaigns.	Short and impactful slogans for digital platforms; longer poetic texts for print or catalog contexts, reflecting platform-specific engagement.	Dynamic gestures and motion are featured in video formats (YouTube/fashion films), while decisive still frames highlighting key poses are used in print and online editorials.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that Hermès advertisements function not merely as commercial visuals but as cultural texts that narrate a lifestyle and value system. The multimodality approach allows Hermès to position its brand beyond material goods, aligning it with emotions, imagination, and identity.

The repetition of visual themes such as floating, motion, and upward gazes links directly to the brand's core message of aspiration and elegance. For example, in Data 1 and 2, the models appear to be floating or gliding, this is not accidental but part of the intentional design to visually communicate lightness and exclusivity.

The multimodality strategies also affirm that a luxury brand cannot rely on words alone. Instead, Hermès uses every available mode, body posture, fabric motion, spatial composition, minimalist text to create subtle but powerful meaning. This method is not only aesthetically effective but also cross-cultural, enabling Hermès to maintain consistency in branding across international platforms.

By applying Kress and van Leeuwen's framework, this study confirms that multimodality is a strategic choice, not just a creative preference. Each mode plays a specific role in embodying Hermès' values: elegance (via design and body language), artistry (via production techniques), tradition (via discourse), and reach (via distribution platforms).

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis and research findings, the writer draws some conclusion dealing with the topic. The conclusions are given below:

1. Hermès advertisements incorporate multiple multimodality elements, visual, linguistic, spatial, gestural, and symbolic modes that function interdependently to construct an elegant, aspirational brand identity. These elements are carefully arranged to deliver a coherent message of luxury and imagination, showing a high level of semiotic orchestration.
2. The use of specific multimodality strategies in Hermès advertisements is deeply influenced by four meaning-making strata: Discourse, Design, Production, and Distribution. These strategies are employed not only to communicate product features but also to narrate cultural values, emotional experiences, and brand philosophy. Hermès successfully uses multimodality as a branding technique that transcends language and cultural boundaries.

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