

Language and Power Dynamics in Automobile Advertising: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Word Choice and Semiotics

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Abstract

Concepts including communication patterns in public institutions, media discourse (reports, commercials, television broadcasts, etc.), and the construction of individual and group identities that communicate ideological views, authority, and status are all of importance to critical discourse analysis (CDA). Ad discourse is one of the media discourses that this study uses. The three most well-known and valuable brands that the researcher selected were Toyota, Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Land Rover, and BMW. This study's objective is to use semiotic analysis and CDA to analyze the data. Within the technique, the researcher employed a qualitative approach. The findings revealed that each brand crafts a unique narrative, leveraging advanced technology, aesthetic appeal, and emotional resonance to maintain a strong market presence. These advertisements are more than just promotional tools; they are meticulously designed works of art that reflect the evolving consumer preferences and competitive dynamics of the automotive industry. The study underscored the importance of strategic messaging in automotive advertising, demonstrating how these brands effectively capture and retain consumer interest through diverse and dynamic marketing approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Modality refers to communication channels and media, including language, technology, image, color, music, and other semiotic systems that can stimulate different human senses (Zhu in (Ika Purnama Sari et al., 2023) Multimodal discourse analysis (henceforth MDA) is an emerging paradigm in discourse studies that extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music, and sound. (O'Halloran, 2011). Multimodal discourse takes account of the fact that many scholars pay attention to the analysis of words, clauses, or texts, but only a few take account of both the non-verbal and verbal language interpreting them together in the analysis of photographs or video clips with the text. (Luca, 2020). One directly utilized instrument for communication is language. It may be expressed verbally or in writing. It also has to do with media and other communication instruments including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. Language is a tool for persuasion and information sharing. The use of language in advertisements is so justified. Since the purpose of advertising is to convince a consumer to purchase and utilize a product, the language used in it must be clear, memorable, and compelling (Sunardi, 2014).

Cook (2001) notes that the purpose of commercials is to enlighten, convince, remind, impact, and perhaps alter beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. In summary, commercials employ attention-grabbing language and images to sell goods, but they also alter society and force individuals to purchase unnecessary items.

In this country, there is a large user base and interest in cars as a mode of mobility. Many individuals may now purchase cars at both high and cheap costs, depending on their financial situation. A car is a product that many people find helpful. It may be for rent, business, or personal use. As a result, several auto shows are hosted in numerous Indonesian cities. Every auto dealership competes to entice customers to purchase their goods using a variety of tactics, such as providing the customer with a sheet of paper that lists the model and slogan of each vehicle. According to Dyer (1996), advertisements are an effective means of persuasion that can influence consumers to purchase the offered goods. In this sense, the advertisement is crucial to communicating the product's message. To put it simply, advertisement is the process of alerting or educating people about something (Dyer, 1996). The five brands that the researcher used for this study's popular and brand value statistics in 2017 were Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi, Land Rover, and Toyota.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The grammar of visual design theory, which was presented by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), is one of the theories accessible for analyzing media discourse. It offers a framework for dissecting and comprehending visual pictures as well as the way that verbal and visual elements interact in media discourses. Two pioneers of an extensive theory of visual communication, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, have taken into consideration semiotic modalities other than language in a variety of discourse types. They draw attention to the ways that mass communication is evolving, with fewer lines separating words from visual components in printed materials.

Writing is always a visual composition of markings on a page, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1998), who states that all texts are multimodal, which refers to paralinguistic forms of communication including rhythm, intonation, gesture, and facial expressions complementing spoken words. According to their argument, verbal texts or the verbal components of multimodal texts have received the majority of attention in the CDA study. They want to expand on the CDA's methodology by incorporating the usage and organization of pictures through their notion of visual design grammar. Images have a significant part in publications such as newspapers, magazines, public relations materials, ads, and other types of books (Kress & Van Leeuwen: 1996). The visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message, related to the written component, but not necessarily dependent on it; in other words, they are neither wholly merged nor entirely opposed, as stressed by Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996).

According to Van Leeuwen (2005), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), Machin (2007), Jewitt (2009), multimodality sees communication and representation as involving more than just language. It gives greater weight to other modes of communication, such as the visual mode of images, gesture, gaze, posture, color, typography, composition, etc., and asserts that these elements transfer and generate meaning, particularly in relation to one another. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), an element's capacity to communicate meaning is its meaning potential. However, only when an element is a part of a collective whole can its full significance be realised (Machin, 2007; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Understanding the impact and significance of texts that activate many modes (such as visual, verbal, and auditory) is the goal of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2007; Jewitt, 2009). This new direction in discourse analysis allows for

the systematic deconstruction of texts using semiotic analysis. A wide range of domains have been analyzed using MDA, such as magazine covers (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003), magazine advertisements (Bell & Milic, 2002), films (Maiorani, 2007), children's storybooks (Guijarro & Pinar Sanz, 2008), online advertisements (Harrison, 2008), moving images (Maiorani, 2007), commercials (Nina-Pazarzi & Tsangaris, 2008), leaflets about cosmetic surgery (Martinez Lirola & Chovanec, 2012), and surgical websites (Moran & Lee, 2013)

According to Jewitt (2009), there are three methods for carrying out multimodal analysis. According to him, the first strategy is known as social semiotic multimodality. This strategy emphasizes the creation of meaning by decisions (Jewitt, 2009). The second strategy, called MDA, was created by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) and is based on Halliday's research. These two methods differ in that they place different emphasis on the sign-maker. The MDA method lays little emphasis on the sign-maker, but the social semiotic multimodality approach does (Jewitt, 2009). Lastly, Jewitt presents the multimodal interactional analysis as the final strategy. This method, which focuses on how individuals interface with and mediate multimodal texts, tackles a facet of social semiotics that traditional multimodal analysis does not appear to frequently touch, as Jewitt (2009) notes. MDA will be the method used in this investigation, adhering to the guidelines provided by Machin (2007) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001; 2006).

Ajmal and Zainab's article critically examines John Donne's poem "Go and Catch a Falling Star" through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Norman Fairclough's model. The authors argue that Donne's poem portrays women as inherently unfair and untrustworthy, which reflects and reinforces the patriarchal attitudes of the Elizabethan era (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024). By employing Fairclough's three-dimensional framework—textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—the authors dissect the poem's lexical choices, metaphors, and imagery to reveal underlying gender ideologies (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024). The article effectively situates the poem within its historical context, providing critical insights into how literature can shape and reflect societal attitudes toward gender. However, while the analysis is thorough, it focuses predominantly on the negative portrayal of women, potentially overlooking alternative interpretations or broader applications to Donne's other works or Renaissance poetry in general (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024).

METHOD

Descriptive content analysis is used in this study. It is called descriptive because it is designed to obtain information, determine the nature of the situation as it exists, and finally describe what exists in the current study. Investigating and comprehending the significance that people or groups assign to a social or human issue is known as qualitative research. Emerging processes and questions are part of the research process. Information usually gathered in the participant's environment. Inductive data analysis progresses from specifics to broad ideas. Additionally, the researcher interprets the significance of the findings. The final written report is organized in a customizable way. This type of inquiry is supported by those who value an inductive style of inquiry, an emphasis on personal meaning, and the significance of capturing the complexity of a given situation (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher downloads the data from online sources, newspapers, and journal articles to select the top five vehicle companies' advertisements: Toyota, Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Land Rover, and BMW. The researcher then applies the aforementioned theory to analyze the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 1. Advertising 1

For many years, Audi has been associated with premium cars made in Germany that are sophisticated, innovative, and feature state-of-the-art technology. Since its founding in 1909, Audi has grown to become a worldwide symbol for automotive design and engineering, always pushing the envelope to produce cars that are elegant and powerful. As a hallmark of German technical excellence, Audi is a component of the Volkswagen Group, one of the largest automotive corporations in the world. The brand is renowned for its dedication to providing luxurious driving experiences by skillfully fusing cutting-edge technology with handcrafted details. It is well-known for its distinctive four-ring insignia and has a strong history in racing, which has had a big impact on the appearance and functionality of its road vehicles.

We will examine Audi's advertising tactics in terms of the multimodal study of figure 1 disclosed above, looking at the several communication channels the company uses to spread its message. We will examine how Audi uses language, images, music, and other components to craft an engaging story that connects with its target audience and upholds its position as a leader in the automobile sector in print, digital, and audio-visual advertising. We hope to have a thorough grasp of how Audi develops its brand image and engages customers through advertising by looking at these many forms of communication.

The main attraction is the Audi R8 car which is positioned front and centre against a sleek black backdrop. The color black conveys an air of refinement and wealth. The automobile is positioned to draw attention, and well-placed lighting highlights the shape and curves of the vehicle, producing a dramatic and eye-catching impact. The Audi R8's opulent look is highlighted, highlighting its aerodynamic elements, streamlined lines, and upscale accents. The lack of backdrop distractions draws the viewer's focus exclusively on the car, highlighting its uniqueness and significance. The vehicle is prominently displayed, exhibiting its sleek, aerodynamic appearance. Its contemporary and high-performance appearance is enhanced by its clean lines and powerful curves. The use of dramatic lighting highlights the elements of the automobile, producing a visual appeal that emphasizes elegance and power. The advertisement's overall look is opulent, with a high degree of attention to detail shown in the car's design and presentation. The shadow on the floor provides depth and dimension to the automobile, confirming its three-dimensional presence and contributing to its overall visual attractiveness.

The slogan reads: "**The Audi R8. 'Revise your bucket list'**", is both controversial and ambitious. This is a smart play on words and a purposeful choice of wording by Audi to elicit aspiration and desire in potential consumers. It implies that the Audi R8 is more than simply a car; it is a dream-worthy experience that challenges and exceeds expectations. The tagline's wording is aggressive and confident, reflecting the Audi R8's high-end, performance-driven personality. The expression "**The Audi R8**" of the slogan refers to a specific automobile model, the Audi R8. Similarly, the phrase "**Revise**" indicates that the Audi R8 is a game changer, prompting viewers to reassess and raise their expectations. While the expression collectively "**Revise your list of Dreams**" urges people to reconsider their aims and ambitions. By linking the Audi R8 with dreams, Audi is implying that possessing this specific automobile is more than simply a desire, but a goal worth achieving. The word "**Dreams**" is crucial here. Dreams are sometimes related to personal ambitions and wishes that appear elusive or expensive. Audi is tapping into the emotional component of consumers' dreams by promoting the Audi R8 as a dream-worthy object, implying that the automobile is more than simply a source of transportation but a symbol of achievement and success.

The synergy created by the slick visual presentation and the captivating slogan promotes the image of luxury, aspiration, and a refreshed sense of dreams. The advertising is most likely aimed at people who enjoy luxury, high-performance automobiles, and exclusivity. The phrase emphasizes that the Audi R8 is more than simply a car; it's a fantasy that defies convention. To conclude, Finally, this Audi R8 advertising takes a multimodal approach, perfectly integrating visual and verbal components to create a fascinating narrative. The use of opulent aesthetics, an aspirational motto, and clever use of shadow all add to the overall effect, making it a distinctive Audi R8 promotion.



Figure 2. Advertising 2

One of the biggest and most well-known automakers worldwide is Toyota, which is the source of the first Value Brand. This automobile was made in Japan, which is known for having advanced technology in many areas, including auto technology. This is due in part to the country's excellent marketing strategies and use of television and other media to sell its products, in addition to the high caliber and cutting-edge machinery that Japan produces. A C-HR Toyota advertisement can be keenly observed in Figure 1 above. Their original idea is visually appealing. Normally, advertisements merely include a large image of the automobile they are selling, but the image above features three models including two women and one man each with distinct complexion and hair tones.

The most important thing to notice is that the models' glasses are of various models, colours, and sizes. The vision via their glasses reflects their point of view, therefore the automobile is

appropriate for them and may be used by anybody. Furthermore, there is a flawless flow to the phrase in this advertisement. The greatest term to describe what we see is ideal, and flow refers to the way we operate the automobile most efficiently. The commercial appears more vibrant due to the usage of color. Colors like black, yellow, red, white, grey, and others provide contrast and a tight image.

If we ponder over the tagline of this advertisement, it seems to be very strategic and intriguing. The expression "**All new**" emphasizes that the Toyota CH-R being discussed is a new and updated model, not a carryover of an old design. It also suggests that the vehicle in question is a current or revised one. Similarly, "**Toyota CH-R**" refers to the particular model being advertised. Toyota manufactures a small crossover SUV called the CH-R. Using a model name aids in identifying the brand and focusing on a certain market niche. The expression "**Perfect cash flow**" is the pivotal point of this motto or tagline. This is an interesting phrase because it is not usually used in car marketing. "Cash flow" in the context of finance describes the flow of funds into and out of a company. "Perfect cash flow" in the context of a car purchase might suggest that the Toyota CH-R purchase is favorable and financially easy. It might imply that purchasing the automobile has favorable overall financial effects, financing alternatives, or cost of ownership.

Putting these components together, the slogan implies that the Toyota CH-R is a newly revised model and that buying one is a hassle-free and cost-effective experience. Customers searching for a new, fashionable car with favorable financial considerations can find it appealing. The selection of phrases seeks to evoke the Toyota CH-R's modernism, quality, and affordability. The commercial employs effective modes and signs that have the power to alter consumers' perceptions. The automobile is ideal for both men and women, as demonstrated by the two women in the picture. Therefore, the advertisement's premise is suitably taken as a whole.



Figure 3. Advertising 3

BWM is an automobile manufacturer that makes both motorcycles and cars. The primary corporation behind the Rolls-Royce and MINI automobile brands is BMW AG. Mercedes-Benz and BMW are both associated with opulent, expensive vehicles. Compared to Toyota, which offers a wide range of prices at which even customers with low incomes may purchase a car, this one is pricey.

The large image of the vehicle appears in the commercial. The automobile is appropriate for the city region based on the background of the city, which features some bright buildings next to it. The blue and yellow lights indicate the car's high speed. It indicates that the technology is advanced in its kind. To catch the customer's attention and showcase the car's flawless appearance, the image of the vehicle features two sides: the side profile and the back.

Moving the slogan, "**Fasterpiece. Designed for driving**" seems to be a wordplay, fusing the terms "faster" and "masterpiece" to form the new word "fasterpiece," all the while highlighting the

design element and driving pleasure connected to BMW automobiles. If the slogan is to be dissected, “**Faster**” probably highlights the BMW automobiles' dynamic qualities, speed, and performance. BMW is renowned for making vehicles that provide a snappy and exhilarating driving experience, frequently linked to excellent performance. While “**Masterpiece**” is the result of the fusion of the words "faster" and "masterpiece". The tagline implies that BMW cars are not only very quick but also exquisitely designed pieces of art. This can suggest an emphasis on advanced technology, precision engineering, and close attention to detail throughout the design and production phases. Moving on, the expression, “**Designed for driving**” highlights the notion that BMW automobiles are particularly designed with the driver in mind. It implies that the design of BMW vehicles is focused on improving handling, responsiveness, and overall driving enjoyment.

Therefore, the car's rapid technology combined with its opulent appearance and cutting-edge technology may entice a buyer to purchase it. Additionally, the phrase "designed for driving pleasure" appears beneath the term "fasterpiece." It refers to drawing the customer's attention and guaranteeing that the automobile is extremely comfortable and pleasurable to drive.



Figure 4. Advertising 4

Land Rover is a luxury car brand that specializes in four-wheel-drive vehicles, owned by British multinational car manufacturer Jaguar Land Rover, which has been owned by India's Tata Motors since 2008. Established in 1948, this well-known British automobile company has carved itself a distinct position in the premium SUV industry. Land Rover has become synonymous with exploration and a symbol of uncompromising performance, thanks to its devotion to off-road prowess, robust design, and a strong tradition based on adventure. Land Rover has flawlessly integrated elegance with off-road prowess as a subsidiary of Jaguar Land Rover, which is part of Tata Motors, producing a brand that resonates with both urban sophistication and the excitement of the great outdoors. From the recognizable Land Rover Defender, which personifies the brand's spirit of adventure and tenacity, to the opulent Range Rover series, which epitomizes luxury and state-of-the-art engineering, Land Rover provides a broad range of vehicles that appeal to a wide range of discriminating customers.

We will examine the visual and textual components used by the brand to communicate its identity, values, and distinctive attraction to its cars as we begin a multimodal examination of Land Rover's advertising. We want to disentangle the story that Land Rover spins in its ads by analyzing the way these modalities interact, illuminating the company's techniques for captivating viewers and conjuring images of adventure, luxury, and dependability.

The aquatic setting offers both adventure and elegance. The water implies that the vehicle can handle a variety of terrains. The play of light and shadow on the water emphasizes the presence of the Range Rover and produces a visually pleasing setting. Indeed, it symbolizes the Range Rover's impact on its surroundings, leaving a lasting impression. The fact that the headlights are turned on indicates that the vehicle is prepared for any travel, even in low-light situations. This could signify the vehicle's ability to illuminate the path ahead, providing a sense of safety and confidence. The clouds in the background lend a dramatic touch, presumably suggesting how well the vehicle performs in adverse weather situations. The prominent display of the Range Rover logo reinforces the brand identity and communicates a sense of luxury and prestige. Placing the logo in a visible area suggests confidence in the brand and aims to create brand recognition.

Moving on, if we consider the tagline of the above-shown advertisement, it seems that Range Rover's catchphrase, "**Keep a Safe Distance from Ordinary**," is a deft wordplay that expresses the company's unique personality. To grasp the phrase's intended meaning, let's dissect it:

"**Keep a Safe Distance**", expression conveys the notion of keeping a safe distance from something, meaning that Range Rover automobiles shouldn't be compared to or closely linked with regular cars. It encourages customers to choose the extraordinary instead of the typical by projecting an air of exclusivity and uniqueness. One interpretation of "Keep a Safe Distance" that takes safety into account, can be regarded as Range Rover is highlighting the safety features of its cars to imply that selecting one guarantees a secure and safe driving experience. The term "**ordinary**" designates things that are typical or commonplace. In the context of Range Rover, this word presumably refers to typical, daily automobiles. The tagline suggests that Range Rover vehicles are extraordinary, exceptional, and different from the norm by advising consumers to stay a safe distance from the ordinary. This part of the expression suggests the concept that Range Rover automobiles are special and unusual cars, not simply regular cars. This can sway the audience's opinion by elevating the prestige and sense of pride that come with being a Range Rover owner. The entire slogan "Keep a Safe Distance from Ordinary" conveys a sense of exclusivity, elegance, and breaking away from the norm. It suggests that Range Rover cars provide a superior and outstanding driving experience, inspiring customers to aim further. The language used carefully crafts the impression of exclusivity and high caliber that is connected to the Range Rover brand.

Keeping in view the perspective of influencing the target audience, this phrase is probably intended to appeal to a certain target market that appreciates exclusivity, elegance, and a spirit of adventure. Associating Range Rover with these ideals, it may shape the audience's perspective and increase the brand's appeal to those looking for a unique and high-end driving experience. Range Rover wants its brand to be distinguished from other mainstream car alternatives, so it encourages buyers to break away from the usual. This can support Range Rover in maintaining its distinct position in the market and help differentiate the brand.

To sum up, a multimodal study of Range Rover's advertisement uncovers a skillfully constructed story that goes beyond conventional automobile advertising. Range Rover skillfully conveys a luxurious, adventurous, and sophisticated lifestyle by means of a well-balanced combination of visual, aural, and verbal cues. Linguistically, the use of powerful language helps to create a memorable brand identity. Key brand concepts, such as technical innovation, outstanding performance, and an unshakable devotion to luxury, are reinforced by the judicious placement of taglines and slogans. This multimodal analysis makes it clear that Range Rover's marketing approach promotes a lifestyle rather than just a product. The advertisement creates a comprehensive and immersive experience that goes beyond the bounds of traditional automotive marketing by engaging viewers on multiple sensory levels. Range Rover is able to successfully market itself as a prestige, adventure, and refinement icon in addition to being a means of mobility. In essence, the multimodal aspects interact synergistically to tell a narrative that connects with the target demographic, making Range Rover more than a vehicle—it's a statement of desire and a tribute to a life well-lived.

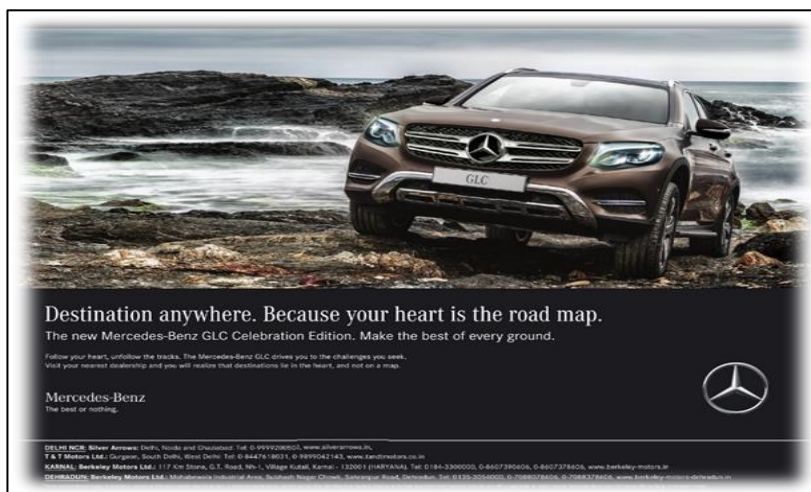


Figure 5. Advertising 5

The German automaker Mercedes-Benz is one of the world's most opulent automobile brands. The company uses its reputation and style to entice consumers from a wide range of nations to purchase its products. One of the company's marketing tactics is to advertise its products to as many people as possible.

A large image of an automobile with the rocky beach edge in the backdrop can be seen in the advertising above. This implies that the client may travel wherever in the vehicle, even on hard surfaces like the side of a hill, beach, or mountain. It can alter the customer's viewpoint, since they may no longer believe Mercedes-Benz vehicles are only utilized in urban settings. Mercedes-Benz also advertises that its vehicles are capable of transporting their customers wherever. The car's front side can be seen as a stronger point, indicating that it is the best aspect and that most buyers are more likely to examine it than the other side.

The tagline "**Destination Anywhere. Because your heart is the road map**" by Mercedes-Benz reflects the idea of freedom, exploration, and the emotional connection people have with their vehicles. If we break it down, we come to know that. Basically, "**Destination Anywhere**" conveys an idea of boundless opportunity and adventure. A Mercedes-Benz can carry you any place you want to go; it's not simply a car for getting from one place to another. It encourages people to enjoy the adventure and discover new frontiers by exuding an air of freedom and openness. The phrase "**Because your heart is the road map**" "The phrase here plays on the emotional component of driving. It suggests that the voyage is guided by the driver's emotions, wants, and passions. The "heart" depicts the emotional connection individuals have with their automobiles and the driving experiences they enjoy. Instead of depending exclusively on actual maps or directions, the tagline implies that the driver's emotions and desires serve as a metaphorical road map, directing them on their unique and personal journey.

The slogan emphasizes that Mercedes-Benz is about more than simply getting somewhere; it's about the journey itself and the emotional bond between the driver and the automobile. It promotes the notion that Mercedes-Benz automobiles are built to meet not just the functional needs of transportation, but also the emotional and aspirational parts of the driver's trip. In essence, the first function of advertising is that consumers buy and drive automobiles, and they can simply go anywhere without worrying about the sort of car that is appropriate for the area or place to which they want to go.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings demonstrate that advertising is a complicated topic that requires careful consideration and that it has several facets that may be thoroughly examined. Certain commercials can be regarded as works of art since they pose as movies rather than just commercials. The examination of five samples of visual and textual auto advertisements was done to complete this piece of research. The complicated analysis was given to the studied samples after taking into account their pictorial, linguistic, and syntactic-semantic characteristics folded in the dimensions of CDA and multimodal analysis. In summary, the thorough examination of vehicle ads for BMW, Range Rover, Audi, Mercedes, and Toyota offers fascinating new perspectives on the various approaches taken by these industry titans to win over customers. Every business has uniquely developed its messaging, highlighting USPs that complement its target market and brand identity.

These companies continuously modify their advertising tactics in response to the shifting customer tastes and the ever-changing automobile market to remain relevant. The commercials show how attentive the brands are to the changing automobile market, whether it's by supporting eco-friendly efforts, endorsing electric vehicles, or showcasing cutting-edge safety features. To interact with their audience, highlight new features, and foster a feeling of community among auto fans, all five companies make use of a variety of internet venues. To conclude it can be stated here that the comprehensive study offers insightful information on the subtle strategies used by BMW, Range Rover, Audi, Mercedes, and Toyota in the cutthroat field of auto advertising. Every brand deliberately builds its story to appeal to its intended audience, enhancing its distinct value offer and preserving a firm place in the international automobile sector. We may infer from the top five automotive product advertisements that the companies strive to create distinctive and well-thought-out ads that both define the kind of automobile they sell and entice consumers to purchase it.

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