



Idioms as a Powerful Means in the Discourse of Advertising

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Abstract: Idioms are a specific yet very broad linguistic means and are important because they can convey a message to a receiver without saying the idea in literal words. They can be categorised and divided from multiple points of view formed from their meaning or structure. On the basis of different approaches, our research is grounded on such types of idioms as semi-opaque, opaque, and semi-idioms, with their further subdivision. Our aim is to clarify how idioms are used in advertising texts, considering the division of common and prestigious brands. Our corpus material includes examples covering such brands as automotive clothing, retail and fashion beauty and personal care food and beverages financial services and real estate, and travel and tourism. Semantic, quantitative, and contextual analyses give us the opportunity to specify which types of idioms and with what frequency they are used by each brand; comparative analysis of the advertisements of the products and services of common and prestigious brands vividly shows what kind of idioms prevail in each group under discussion. Advertising, which consists of offering products and services to people, is expected to generate profits. Thus, the methods and techniques employed by companies are constantly changing, with specialists working on their further improvement. In so far as advertising refers to the specific ways of using language, symbols, and visual communication to persuade audiences to buy products or services, taking into account cultural systems, societal values, and behaviours, it can be considered as a discourse. Many linguistic and stylistics means are very useful in the discourse of advertising, and idioms, as shown in the results of our research, are one of them.

Keywords: Idioms, Advertising, Prestigious Brands, Common Brands.

1. Introduction

Advertising has become part and parcel of present-day life. From everywhere around us, advertisements of diverse types attack our privacy through print media, broadcast media, outdoor or mural media, and the Internet. Undoubtedly, visual content and design in advertising have a great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people identify a product and remember it. Language, with its powerful influence over people and their behaviour, is one of the most important means of conveying messages in advertisements intended to persuade people to buy products and services, thus, fulfilling the main aim of marketing – to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of the audience. In other words, language is a tool to send an idea, information, and express a feeling in communication that works well in the fields of marketing and advertising. It is not an overstatement to say that idioms are important expressive tools of everyday communication possessing specific emotive power, which is of extremely high value in the advertising industry. For the above-mentioned reasons idiomatic expressions are frequently encountered in magazines, newspapers, and on TV. Posing a challenge to our understanding of grammar and lexis, idioms immediately catch our attention. Idiomatic phrases are used not only in the text of an advertisement but also in the headline, slogan, or the name of the product, to establish an immediate dialogue with the audience.

Advertising is a communication process. As per the principle of any basic communication model, the advertising communication takes place between the sender (usually a company or political party) and the receiver (the customer or voter). This process involves the process of encoding the message by the sender (the company



creates a visual, video commercial, or text ad) and decoding the message (the customer interprets what the company wanted to convey with their advertisement). The advertising process produces advertisements, which can be considered as media texts. Advertisements can be conveyed to the consumer mass through various channels. Each channel has different requirements for the format of the advertisement, so it is very important to choose the right channel/medium for the advertisement to be effective. The primary channel is print media, typically magazines and newspapers.

Advertisements have always evoked interest in scholars. Attention was paid to the language of advertising (Goddard, 2001) and its persuasive techniques (Fuertes-Olivera, 2001; Schudson, 1993); advertisement text was considered as semiotic construal (Panasenکو & Mudrochová, 2021) and analysed according to the channel of communication (Zabuzhanska *et al.*, 2022). The comparative analysis of slogans in English and Slovak advertisements produced interesting results (for more see Stashko *et al.*, 2022). The role of colour in specific advertisements appeared to be important (Panasenکو & Fillová, 2023), as well as semantic roles in the advertisements of cosmetics (Panasenکو & Yudkina, 2024).

Though the use of idioms in advertisements (Abu Joloud, 2014; Lundmark, 2006; Morozov, 2022) and their translation (Kovács, 2016; Mudrak & Kravchuk, 2023; Nga, 2025) was discussed by scholars, we find the number of such studies insufficient, and try to make our own contribution to the discussion of this topic. Let us consider idioms and their classification in detail.

2. Idioms and their Classification

Idioms cannot be described by one uniform definition so easily (Collins, 1985). Many authors provide slightly different definitions because idioms are very versatile, variable, and hard to describe (Makkai, 1972; Seidl, 1988). The definitions differ in the works of Kvetko (2009), Kövésces and Szabo (1996), Lančarič (2016) among other scholars. Idioms can be derived from different situations in life that inspired them. Some are related to historical events (*Pyrrhic victory*), mythology or religion (*Achilles' heel*), literature and folklore (*Don't look a gift horse in the mouth*), or occupations (*Hit the nail on the head*).

Idioms are phraseological units, along with collocations and fixed expressions. Alisoy (2025) states that "phraseological units are not uniform; they differ in syntactic flexibility, semantic opacity, and usage across registers and genres". Idiomatics is the study of idiomatic expressions. Liontas (2025) describes idiomatics as the art of persuasion and mentions three main appeals, also known as pillars: ethos (the ethical appeal) to ensure credibility, pathos (the emotional appeal) to provoke an emotional response, and logos (the logical appeal) to provide rational justification. Based on the research that has been done so far, we can agree that idioms are at least two-word constructions whose meaning is not immediately clear from their written form. The recipient needs to have a certain level of general knowledge or personal experience in order to understand the message behind the words.

All these definitions offer us space for saying that an idiom is an umbrella term for many verbal means, which need to be sorted further into categories. They can be categorized and divided from multiple points of view based on their meaning or structure.

Kövésces and Szabó (1996) claim that idioms are not necessarily fully unpredictable linguistic expressions, but rather their meaning is conceptually motivated. Kvetko (2006, p. 28) divided idioms from different points of view: based on their fixedness to unchangeable idioms, and changeable idioms. He states that changeable idioms can be further divided into grammatical, lexical, orthographic and geographical variations. When it comes to construction, idioms can be divided into verbal idioms (*Spill the beans*), verbless idioms (*In hot water*), sentence idioms (*It's raining cats and dogs*) and minimal idioms (*from now on*). From the point of view of semantics, idioms can be divided into pure idioms (*Kick the bucket*), partially motivated idioms (*Break the ice*) and semi-idioms (*Shine through*). The last classification he provides are two special groups of idioms called paremiological expressions (proverbs, sayings, and aphorisms), and non-paremiological expressions (phrasal verbs, similes, binomials, and social formulae) (Kvetko, 2015, p. 107-108).

Kvetko (2015, p. 103) offers the following characteristics of idioms:

- "They have a multi-word character."



- They are institutionalized, i.e. considered as units by a language community.
- They are relatively fixed/stable combinations of words.
- Their meaning is non-literal, but fully or partially figurative and unique".

According to Lančarič (2016, p. 147-149), idioms are most usefully classified on the basis of semantic transparency to opaque idioms (*Once in a blue moon*), semi-opaque idioms (*The last straw*), and semi-idioms (*In our nature*). The basis is largely similar to Kvetko's semantic classification, but Lančarič uses slightly different terms. He recognizes classification based on the part of speech where an idiom is used, because idioms can function as a substantive (*A black sheep*), a verb (*Set on fire*), an adjective (*Spick and span*), an adverb (*Once in a blue moon*), or an interjection (*For heaven's sake*). Finally, functional classification is also mentioned, wherein he divides idioms into paremiological idioms such as proverbs (*Better late than never*) and sayings (*the coast is clear*), and non-paremiological idioms, including phrasal verbs (*Shine through*), similes (*Drive like an animal*), binomials and trinomials (*Far and wide*), social formulae (*Come as you are*) and idioms proper (*An arm and leg*). This classification is similar to that of Kvetko, with a few alterations. These two classifications (with examples) are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences in classification of idioms illustrated by several examples.

Source: Own processing after Kvetko (2006) and Lančarič (2016)

Idiom	Meaning	Type after Kvetko	Type after Lančarič
<i>When life gives you lemons...</i> (Make lemonade)	Make the best of a bad situation	Semi-opaque sentence idiom	Semi-opaque paremiological idiom (proverb-like)
<i>Once in a blue moon</i>	Very rarely	Opaque verbless idiom	Opaque idiom proper (adverbial)
<i>Time flies</i>	Time passes quickly	Semi-opaque sentence idiom	Semi-opaque idiom proper (verbal)
<i>Spill the beans</i>	Disclose a secret or let classified information become known	Opaque verbal idiom	Opaque idiom proper (verbal)
<i>Every nook & cranny</i>	Every small place	Semi-opaque binomial verbless idiom	Semi-opaque binomial
<i>In hot water</i>	In trouble	Semi-opaque verbless idiom	Semi-opaque idiom proper (adjectival/ adverbial)
<i>The last straw</i>	The final problem that causes anger or collapse	Semi-opaque nominal verbless idiom	Semi-opaque idiom proper (nominal)
<i>It's raining cats and dogs</i>	Raining very heavily	Opaque sentence idiom	Opaque idiom proper
<i>The best of both worlds</i>	Enjoying two advantages at the same time	Semi-opaque nominal idiom	Semi-opaque idiom proper (nominal)
<i>Break the ice</i>	Make people feel more comfortable	Semi-opaque verbal idiom	Semi-opaque idiom proper (verbal)

Summing up various definitions of idioms, we can state that it is a phraseological unit consisting of two or more words, which has a figurative meaning you cannot guess only by looking at the literal meanings of the individual words; this unit performs various functions.

Discussing the functions of idioms, Kvetko writes that their subject matter is "human life, human relations, attitudes, feelings, humour, as well as determination, unwillingness, hostility, and rivalry" (2006, p. 37). Thus, "they fulfil an important social function in many situations" (ibid.). Among other functions of idioms, Kvetko mentions their ability to name things, objects, actions or to describe situations. They "may express certain generalizations, truth, and advice, make evaluation, emphasize, organize the discourse" (ibid.). If we apply this classification to our corpus



material, we will see that idioms are powerful instruments in naming products and services; they evaluate the product and emphasize the advantages in using it.

3. Aim, Methodology, and Research Sample

This study aims at investigating the use of idiomatic expressions in advertisements for luxury and common brands through four prespecified research questions:

RQ1: What types of idiomatic expressions are used in advertisements for luxury and common brands, and what meanings or communicative functions do they convey?

RQ2: How frequently do different types of idioms occur in luxury and common brand advertisements, and are there statistically significant differences in their distribution?

RQ3: How does the use of idioms vary according to the advertising context, including product category, medium, and communicative purpose?

RQ4: In what ways does the use of idiomatic expressions differ between luxury and common brand advertisements with respect to frequency, semantic characteristics, and communicative function?

The analysis is structured around these research questions. Semantic analysis identifies the meanings and functions of idioms, quantitative analysis evaluates their distribution across the corpus, contextual analysis examines how idioms are shaped by advertising context, and comparative analysis assesses systematic differences between luxury and common brands. Illustrative examples are used to clarify the findings but are not treated as evidence for population-level claims, which are based solely on the analyses of the complete dataset. Using a combination of these methods, we reached a complex view on the usage of the idioms in advertisements and their role in the discourse of advertising.

We have thoroughly investigated 300 adverts, of which only those which contained idioms were selected. Our corpus consists of 52 advertisements in total. The advertisements used in this research were published between the years 1996 and 2025. We aimed to find advertisements with the newest dates possible, but since some good examples from the past were not yet examined, we decided to include them in our research. All of them were published in English worldwide, including countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, India, Germany, and Italy. Most of these advertisements were published as TV commercials, YouTube advertisements, or social media campaigns and were retrieved from multiple sources, such as official brand websites, YouTube channels, an online advertising archive, and brand social media pages. Advertisements were collected through systematic searches using keywords such as 'luxury perfume campaign', 'fashion advertisement slogan', and 'beauty brand commercial', etc. using brand names as keywords on the search engine Google, and directly through website search bars on the sites *adsoftheworld.com* and *ispot.tv*. The materials were accessed on various days between October 2025 and February 2026.

These 52 advertisements were sorted first according to the brands belonging to the common or luxury category, and were later arranged into two groups according to the division by Kvetko (2006; 2015) and Lančarič (2016). These advertisements were chosen from prestigious (Glenmorangie, Maserati, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Estée Lauder, Four Seasons, etc.) and common (Ford, Nike, Coca Cola, Nivea, Ryanair, etc.) brands. The main sources for data collection were online campaigns, video advertisements and brand slogans, mostly posted on the online sites *adsoftheworld.com* and *ispot.tv*. The selected collection is based on the choice of the advertisement specificities: whether the advertisement included an idiom and whether it was relevant (the idiom was visible enough or could be described properly). Detailed information about analyzed advertisement, such as the dates during which the campaign was launched and continued, country(ies), language(s) of the ad, media channels, source(s), inclusion rule, and the date of the online material access is presented in Appendix A.

4. Discussion

In so far as our research is based on the comparative analysis of the use of idioms in prestigious and common brands, we find it important to specify how these two groups were formed. Prestigious or luxury brands are known mainly for their exclusive feel that can be appealing to customers. Having a product or using a service provided by



a luxury brand can be a symbol of status for many people, especially in today's consumer society. It also comes with higher prices for the products, so they are not so easy to obtain for ordinary people. The tone that the brand wants to maintain is most typically elegant and minimalistic. When it comes to the language with which they choose to convey information to their potential and existing customers, they tend to choose refined and polished words that will attract premium customers. It is obvious that they often use short slogans, with more sophisticated vocabulary, oftentimes accompanied by metaphors and plays on words.

Prestigious brands are characterized by rarity, high price, exclusivity, and uniqueness, while common or mass-market brands prioritize affordability, broad distribution, and accessibility (Berthon *et al.*, 2009; Yuqi, 2022; Vock, 2022). The distinction is not merely one of degree but reflects inherent differences in brand nature, management approach, and consumer motivation (Kapferer, 1997; Mrad *et al.*, 2020).

Scholars (Ma, 2024; Kapferer, 1997; Mrad *et al.*, 2020 among others) have defined criteria for the Luxury–Common Divide (see Table 2).

Table 2. Basic criteria of subdivision between prestigious and common brands across price, distribution, quality, motivation, and communication. Source: Own processing after Ma, 2024; Kapferer, 1997; Mrad *et al.*, 2020; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022; Taplin, 2019 and Internet sources.

Criterion	Luxury Brands	Common (Mass-Market) Brands
Price & accessibility	Very high price, limited supply, difficult to procure	Affordable, accessible to most consumers
Distribution	Deliberately limited availability	Broad, mass-market distribution
Quality & craftsmanship	Hand-crafted, rare materials, superior quality	Mass-produced, trendy, replicates luxury designs
Consumer motivation	Status, self-expressiveness, perceived quality	Variety, perceived value, product assortment
Communication style	Enrichment, distancing, abstraction in advertising	Direct, functional messaging

Luxury is frequently associated with conspicuousness, uniqueness, superior quality, hedonism, heritage, and tradition (Vock, 2022). Mass-market brands, by contrast, are characterized by low prices, long-lasting range rotation, and accessible trendy products that copy and replicate luxury designs (Mrad *et al.*, 2020). Luxury brand advertising systematically differs from mass-market advertising through enrichment, distancing techniques, and higher-level discourses (Gurzki *et al.*, 2019). It is possible to characterise some luxurious brands in the following way:

- Dior exemplifies luxury through visionary designers, shrewd marketing, and superlative craftsmanship sustaining its high-end status (Ma, 2024).
- Louis Vuitton maintains luxury through VIP services, customization, and cultural heritage, targeting a small group with unaffordable-for-most pricing (Yuqi, 2022).
- Gucci and H&M represent opposite poles — luxury and mass-market — within the fashion sector, studied for their contrasting masstige strategies on social media (Bilro *et al.*, 2021).
- H&M collaborates with luxury designers like Balmain and Moschino through limited-edition collections, illustrating fast-fashion's replication of luxury (Mrad *et al.*, 2020).
- LVMH, Kering, and Hermès leverage quality, heritage, and multi-brand campaigns to target ultra-high net-worth individuals globally (Taplin, 2019).

In the ads of luxurious brands, space for the application of idioms is optimal, because a customer seeking status will most likely be interested if the advertisement is not very easy to decode for everyone (for example, if only a person with a certain level of cultural understanding or an owner of the already mentioned status can understand a certain saying, it will create an illusion that they are special because other people would be less likely to understand). The typical target audience of a prestigious brand are those people with a high-income level (e.g. entrepreneurs, managers, etc.). Another target group are people seeking status, that might not inherently be wealthy but want to impress and create an image of themselves that they do possess enough to afford these prestigious



brands. Young people are prone to fall into this category, with social media constantly pushing them more. A good example of luxurious brands are cars, such as Lamborghini, Maserati, Lexus, or Genesis. All these brands use a combination of figurative language and impressive, professional visuals to evoke the feeling of high-end, quality products – luxury cars.

On the other hand, common brands are not working with status or specialty but are rather practical and accessible to the public. In this case, a customer will get actual value for their money, instead of luxury. As opposed to the luxury brands, they are more direct with the customers and usually use a friendly tone of voice and humour in their communication. The goal is to be relatable, so that an ordinary person thinks they need the advertised product. In their advertisements, idioms can be used differently. The language they use will include informal expressions, puns, and of course colloquial language and idioms to leverage humorous aspects. Here, the target audience is much broader, involving mostly middle-class people, who tend to be regular shoppers and are everyday consumers of the media.

Another important group are families, who can be money-sensitive, especially young families or bigger families that rely on one or two incomes of the parents. These people seek practicality and products to use every day. Contrary to the luxury car brands, regular automotive brands are also worth mentioning in connection with idioms in advertising: Ford, Hyundai, Renault, and Jeep. They all use idioms across their advertising and marketing communication, but in a different way than the luxury brands, as we will explain below.

Between the luxury and common extremes there exists a continuum where masstige brands combine prestige imagery with reduced prices, rendering them affordable for the mass market (Vock, 2022; Mansoor *et al.*, 2024). Masstige marketing targets middle-class consumers by making high-end brands more accessible and affordable (Chaurasia *et al.*, 2024; Mansoor *et al.*, 2024). Unlike luxury brands, which deliberately limit availability to preserve exclusivity, masstige brands strike a balance between accessibility and prestige (Mansoor *et al.*, 2024). Co-branding between luxury and mass brands can create perceived fit when the mass brand possesses brand coolness, though product category involvement negatively impacts this fit (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). We have not taken into account masstige brands, but rather concentrate our attention on prestigious and common brands, but find it perspective for the studies to come later.

For this research, we were able to compile 52 advertisements where idioms were used. Since these prestigious brands often rely on visual rather than linguistic components, it was quite hard and time consuming to find examples that would illustrate the essence of what idioms can bring to a luxurious advertisement. We selected advertisements from regular brands that use idioms in their slogans or body copy. There are plenty of examples in this category, as these brands typically use more linguistic means that are at the centre of the advertisement and are only accompanied by visuals. This stage of the analysis resulted in creating Table 3.

Table 3. Industry Categorisation: Luxury and Common Consumer Brands. Source: Own processing

Type of product	Luxury Brands	Common Brands
Automotive	Lamborghini, Maserati, Lexus, Genesis	Ford, Hyundai, Suzuki, Jeep, Renault, Royal Enfield, Avis
Clothing, retail and fashion	Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Balenciaga, Gucci, Tiffany & Co., Dior, Bottega Veneta, Alexander McQueen, Rolex, Prada	Nike, Marshalls, Columbia, Steve Madden, Red Wing, Tmall
Food and beverages	Glenmorangie, Dom Pérignon, Moët & Chandon, Hennessy, Lindt	Bud Light Seltzer, Coca Cola, Skittles, Burger King, Merchant Gourmet
Beauty, personal care	Ralph Lauren Fragrances, Estée Lauder, Lancôme, Charlotte Tilbury	Maybelline, Sirona, Garnier, Dove, Nivea, Neutrogena, CeraVe, Vaseline
Financial services and real estate	Sotheby's International Realty, GoldmanSachs, J.P. Morgan Private Bank	Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Sunteck Realty, Progressive.com,
Travel and Tourism	Crystal Cruises, Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, Emirates (First Class)	Prontotour, Ryanair, Avis, Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Airbnb



This table is visual representation of the division of several brands based on whether they fall into the luxury or common category. Further, they are grouped according to the industry the brands focus on, allowing us to find patterns and schemes between brands offering similar products.

4.1. Advertising of Prestigious Brands

Why does language matter in luxury advertising? Through carefully picked language means, luxury brands can create exclusivity, often using such words as *rare* or *limited*. Luxury brands have the perfect position to use all kinds of creative writing means, mainly stylistic devices, symbols, etc. They tend to be rather brief in words, but every word is used with precision and has a hidden meaning behind the obvious. This is done strategically, not randomly. Elevated vocabulary is typically a sign of higher social class with higher education.

4.1.1. Automotive

Luxury automotive brands, such as Genesis, Lamborghini or Maserati often position themselves on the market as brands with high status, emphasizing mostly the precise design of their cars. In their advertisements, they tend to use some clickbaits that will be immediately identified by consumers with the immense power and status that owning a luxury car brings. When it comes to vocabulary, they want to attract mainly the attention of the masculine side of the population, using such words as *beast*, while their visuals are usually quite simple, lacking complex animations or long sentences; they are known to use many stylistic devices, such as metaphors, similes, etc.

Idioms are nonetheless used in automotive brands advertisements. They pair perfectly with simple visual designs. A great example is the 2024 advertising campaign for the brand Genesis. In their approximately one-minute-long video advertisement titled "Illuminated", they show the new GV80 car in a dark city, being shone upon by a spotlight, paired with the idiom "*steal the spotlight*" (see Fig. 1). It means that when a person owns this car, they will get all the attention from other people. This is a semi-opaque verbal idiom, using the word "*steal*", which usually has negative connotation, but in this case, figuratively, it can mean a positive thing. This visual and verbal combination elicits immediate desire to grab the attention of other people and therefore to buy the luxury product.



Figure 1. The Illuminated advertisement by the brand Genesis USA.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYA-dI-g7eE>



Figure 2. Maserati Folgore campaign featuring Damiano David.

Source: <https://www.naiveagency.com/en/works/maserati-folgore-ft-damiano-david/>

Another great example is the advertisement created for the brand Maserati in 2024. Starring the well-known Italian singer Damiano David posing while leaning against a Maserati Folgore, a clean and sharp look is visually represented. It is accompanied by the idiom *"it turns you on"*, which, when used in a figurative and not literal way, means something that excites or interests a person, especially in a sexual way. It is important to note that this advertisement uses this slight sexual connotation, mainly because David is perceived as a sex symbol of this generation. This works perfectly in attracting female attention as well as the desire of the male audience to look up to him and act like him. This can be a strong buying force (see Figure. 2).

4.1.2. Clothing, Retail and Fashion

As in other industries, the visuals dominate the advertising world of luxury fashion brands. Colourful, attractive photos and graphics are beyond important when it comes to fashion advertisements – customers need to see the products in an aesthetic way before they are buy them. When it comes to the language of such advertisements, most often only the names of the brands are used, and other verbal means are scarce. But, if they are indeed present, many borrowed words from French and Italian can be found. If needed, these can be paired with very short creative slogans, also with the use of idioms.

A creative example from the fashion industry is the advertisement entitled "Once upon an icon" by the luxury jewellery and watch brand Cartier (2022). This campaign focuses on famous people that own Cartier products, for example Alain Delon, Jean Cocteau, Alberto Santos-Dumont, or Rudolph Valentino. The series of videos shows graphic visualisations of famous people that are connected by one singular line with the Cartier products. In this case, the idiom is not used in its original form, but rather as a creative twist on the idiom *"once upon a time"*, substituting the word *"time"* with *"icon"*, pointing to the prestigious products (see Figure. 3).



Figure 3. Campaign "Once upon an icon" featuring Alberto Santos-Dumont.

Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/once-upon-an-icon>

4.1.3. Food and Beverages

Among the most famous luxury food brands we shall consider the chocolate brand Lindt and the ice cream brand Haagen-Dazs – however, these brands are still considered pretty affordable; although they are more premium and usually of higher quality than common brands found in supermarkets, they are not luxury in the proper sense of the word. Genuinely prestigious brands are brands of caviar, such as Petrossian or Kaviari.

In this industry, we can also find many brands of luxury beverages, such as Glenmorangie (Scotch whisky), Dom Pérignon (vintage Champagne), Moët & Chandon (another Champagne brand), or Hennessy (Cognac). Their advertising is usually based on aspirational marketing – they do not want the viewer to think they are just trying to sell them a drink, but rather, they are trying to sell them a way of life. Most frequently, again, they use celebrity endorsement to convince people that they want to live the lavish life celebrities have.

In 2025, luxury Scotch Whisky brand Glenmorangie launched the advertising campaign "Once upon a time in Scotland". The famous actor Harrison Ford is pictured in a series of short video episodes showing Ford visiting Glenmorangie's distillery and the Scottish Highlands landscapes. The idiom *"once upon a time"* is an expression used mostly at the beginning of fairytales, meaning that something was a long time ago. Here, the figurative language supports the fairytale-like setting of the videoclips. The brand combines the presence of a well-known person

(celebrity endorsement, which is an important strategy in advertising) with creative writing, creating a premium and luxury setting (see Figure. 4).



Figure 4. Once upon a time in Scotland campaign by Glendmorangie.

Source: <https://www.luxurydaily.com/top-luxury-campaigns-of-2025-luxury-daily/>

4.1.4. Beauty and Personal Care

In the luxury beauty industry, creative spaces invite brands to combine complex visuals with playful, inventive language. Ralph Lauren Fragrances, a subdivision of the brand Ralph Lauren, launched a very creative campaign for the re-launch of Polo Red, starring one of the most currently prominent Formula 1 drivers, Lando Norris. In this advertisement, Lando describes the similarity between racing and the Polo Red fragrance. He is pictured driving his racing car, explaining that wearing Polo Red fragrance is just like his driving, describing it as: "*the fine line*", "*it's game on*", "*over the limit*". These are all classified as idioms. Firstly, Lando mentions the idiom "*game on*", which means that the race is about to start and which also implies that he is excited about the start. "*Fine line*" is a semi-idiom used in the sentence "*Red and racing is that fine line of perfection*", which means that there is small difference between how he feels about both the fragrance and racing – he deems both perfect. Lastly, the idiom "*over the limit*" is used, which typically means having a higher than legal level of alcohol in the blood of the driver, but here, it is used literally, as the formula one race car is extremely fast. These claims are supported by visual material of Lando driving and using the fragrance, evoking the feeling that men who see this advertisement will want both to be like him and use the fragrance (see Figure. 5).

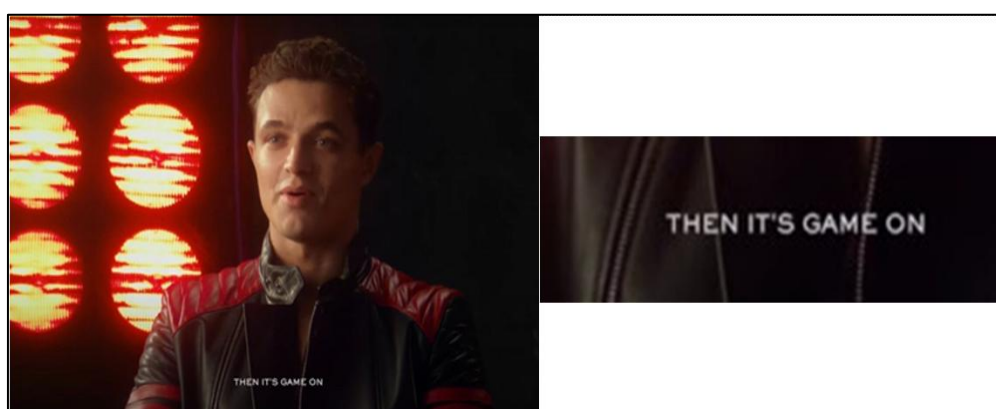


Figure 5. Ralph Lauren Fragrances Polo Red campaign, using the idiom "*game on*".

Source: <https://adsofbrands.net/en/ads/ralph-lauren-fragrances-polo-red-lando-norris/16366>

4.1.5. Financial Services and Real Estate

Luxury financial services are mainly targeted at high-net-worth individuals and investors. They put emphasis on exclusivity and expertise in the financial sector. Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan Private Bank are perfect examples of banks targeted at affluent clients who need personal and discreet care of their finances.



Sotheby's International Realty focuses on wealthy buyers and sellers of real estate. They are looking for luxury residential properties. This brand claims to provide personalised real estate services to their clients, which is also reflected in their advertising. They use language means that support their exclusivity, for example, the idiom "*like no other*". This idiom means that something is very special, just like their services (see Figure. 6).

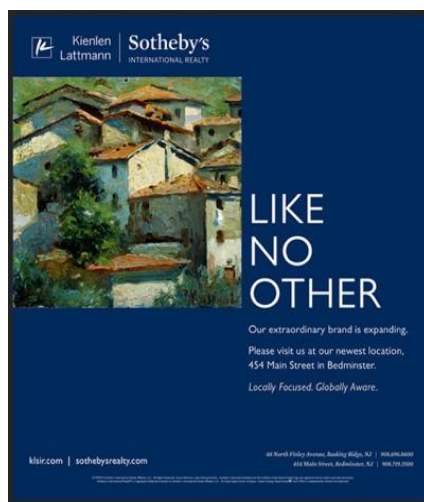


Figure 6. Sotheby's International Realty Advertisement using the idiom "*like no other*".

Source: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/1386253/Kienlen-Lattmann-Sothebys-International-Realty-Ads>

4.1.6. Travel and Tourism

Luxury travel and tourism is a popular category. Here belong for example the brands Four Seasons (luxury hotel and resort company), Ritz-Carlton (luxury hotel chain), Emirates (long haul airline, for this research we will consider their First Class). These brands mainly focus on highly aesthetic visuals and impressive, refined language in their advertising.

Another great example of luxury travel is the brand Crystal Cruises. In the year 2024, they launched a promotional video which used the idiom "*crystal clear*". This idiom is also part of their slogan "*The difference is crystal clear*". It means that the difference in their services, as opposed to other competitors (the less luxurious brands), are very easy to understand, and that customers will feel the difference right away (see Figure. 7).

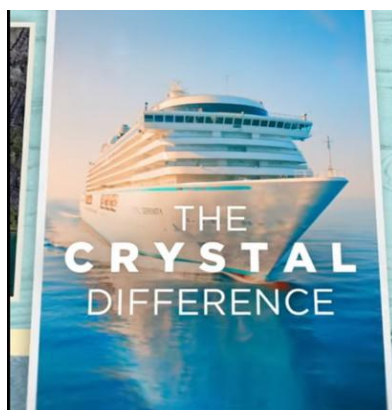


Figure 7. Crystal Cruises advertisement using the idiom "*crystal clear*".

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtBIImLa278>, 2024)

4.2. Advertising of Common Brands

The language used in advertisements from common brands is important because they can convey the message plus focus on reaching a broader audience than the luxury brands. They are promoting products that are diverse, accessible, and affordable. The range of product and services is quite wide, with brands, such as Ford, Nike,



Coca-Cola, Dove, Booking.com, etc. This implies that both the language and the stylistic devices used must be simple and easily understandable to the ordinary customer.

4.2.1. Automotive

Automotive brands such as Hyundai, Renault, Jeep, Royal Enfield, and Avis all use idioms in their advertisements in different forms. This category is very wide in its range of stylistic devices. For example, the brand Ford launched an advertisement in 2008 with a visual of a car key in the shape of a city skyline. This visual representation was accompanied by the claim "*The city is in your hands*", where "*in your hands*" is an idiom meaning that something is under one's control. This can mean that when one owns a Ford car, one will be in control of the city (see Figure. 8).



Figure 8. The idiom "*The city is in your hands*" used by Ford.

Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/key-skyline>

4.2.2. Clothing, Retail and Fashion

Some of the most famous clothing brands are Nike, Columbia, Zara, H&M, Uniqlo, Levi's, Primark, Adidas, and Mango. All these brands need to come up with very creative advertisements – the market is constantly growing, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract new customers. In recent years, an especially popular brand is Shein – a fast fashion brand that is attractive mainly for its low prices. However, all brands need to stand out when in such competition.

Columbia is an American sportswear company. In 2023, they launched an ad titled "*Shirt off our back*", which is aimed at their Silver Ridge Utility shirts. In the one-minute advertising spot, they show the shirt in nature, showcasing all its qualities and details. They describe it as "*the shirt off our backs*", which is an idiom meaning "*the last thing that someone has left*". So, it can be deduced that they wanted to show the shirt can withstand even extreme conditions, and that it might be the last thing that remains when everything else fails us in the wild (see Figure. 9).



Figure 9. The silver ridge utility shirt ad campaign by the brand Columbia.

Source: <https://adsofbrands.net/en/ads/columbia-shirt-off-our-back/15290>

In the retail sector, we can identify not only clothing brands, but also malls and retailers such as Marshalls, T.J. Maxx, or Macy's. As in clothing brands, these malls also have strong and cheap competition in the famous online marketplace Temu. Tmall is a similar Chinese e-commerce website, providing online retail services for the Chinese market. In 2018, Tmall celebrated their ten-year partnership with the Olympics. They launched a campaign for the Winter Olympic Games, using a short film called "*Set winter on fire*". Here is used an idiom "*set something on fire*", which means to cause something or someone to start burning – in this case, they used visuals that show fire in the winter – fire is a sign of "*being alive*" – it represents the energy they want to bring to the gloomy winter weather (see Figure. 10).



Figure 10. Tmall x Olympics campaign.

Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/set-winter-on-fire>

4.2.3. Food and Beverages

When it comes to the gastronomy industry, some of the strongest brands on the market include Coca Cola, Burger King, or Skittles. All of these brands make products for a wide variety of customers, from children to adults. They often use humorous approaches in their advertisements, which are an easy way to grab the attention of an ordinary customer. Often in connection with an interesting visual, their advertisements will evoke the emotion of hunger in the brain, prompting the customers to treat themselves to their products. There is also plenty of space for using creative verbal means in their advertisements, such as metaphors, similes and, of course, idioms.

A great example is the video ad campaign by the brand Coca Cola originally made in 2011 and later reused in 2017. In 2011, Coca Cola started creating cans with names and funny nicknames printed directly on their cans. This sparked immediate interest because people love finding cans with their names or with their loved one's names on. In the 2017 ad, titled "Share a coke: Break the ice", young people are encouraged to "*break the ice*", which is also used in the headline (title) of this campaign. This is an idiom which means "to make people who have not met before feel relaxed with each other, often by starting a conversation" (Cambridge Dictionary). In other words, young people can share a coke with one another and with this simple gesture, they can create new relationships. This ad targets the need of young people to create a certain bigger group. Young people have a strong need for relationships and friendships in their life, and when is there a better time to gain new friends than with a coke in their hands? (see Figure. 11).



Figure 11. Coca-Cola campaign titled "Share a Coke: Break the ice".

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSEy_OoCagY



Another great example is last year's Burger King campaign for their new King Double Cheeseburgers. Here, they attract the customers with an interesting visual of a woman eating the cheeseburger, enjoying it, describing the scene with the phrase „*it is love at first bite*“. This is a creative take on the famous idiom „*love at first sight*“, but here, it is tailored to the advertised product (the cheeseburger). This idiom means a situation in which you start to love someone or strongly like something immediately, the first time you see them or it (see Figure. 12).

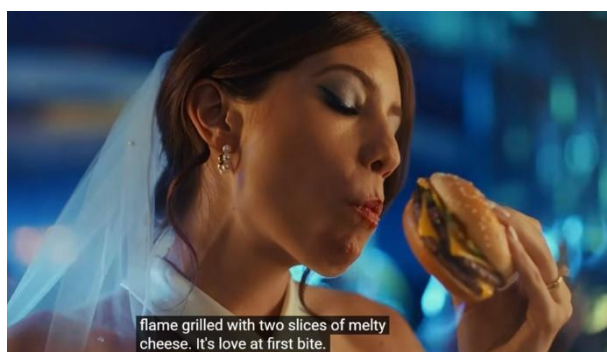


Figure 12. Burger King "Love at first bite".

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= poK1u1BqIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poK1u1BqIQ)

4.2.4. Beauty and Personal Care

When it comes to the beauty industry, we can name such brands as Maybelline, Dove, Nivea, Neutrogena, Vaseline, or Garnier. All these brands are generally quite accessible and widely popular among customers. They can usually be found in drugstores. In their advertising, there is plenty of space to use creativity and different linguistic means. Targeted mainly at women and showcasing female products, they can use creative copywriting to attract the attention of young girls and women of all ages. Some of these brands often use idioms in their advertisements.

In 2023, the famous beauty brand Maybelline launched a campaign titled "Through their eyes". Its aim was to clarify how young women are perceived as something "less" in the online gaming world. Female gamers are often verbally abused by their male competitors. This three-minute clip was broadcast to streamers worldwide, using the phrase "*change the game*" to inspire and encourage male players to respect women gamers. Nonetheless, they intended to bring attention to an online mental health service for players who did suffer some type of abuse while gaming. The idiom "*change the game*" means to have an impact on or transform something in drastic way. Here, it can be understood both figuratively and literally, since we are speaking of games and the gaming world (see Figure. 13).

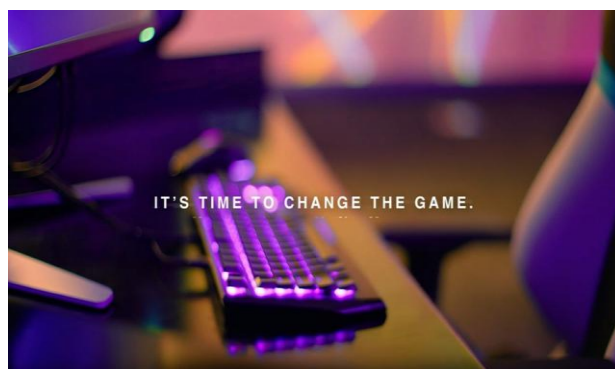


Figure 13. Maybelline: It's time to change the game in their "Through their eyes" campaign.

Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/through-their-eyes-cb05edd1-1aaf-408b-a557-92864b61a359>

4.2.5. Travel and Tourism

It would be an understatement to say that the travel and tourism industries do not use creative language in their advertisements. Quite frankly, since the tourism market is massive and competition is worldwide, brands such as Booking.com, Ryanair, Airbnb, or Tripadvisor very often have to find creative ways to attract customers. This

includes also using figurative, non-literal language across their advertisements. Other, smaller companies are nonetheless similarly creative. The airline brand Prontotour used the famous idiom "time flies" in their 2022 advertisement. It means that time passes surprisingly quickly, pointing at how comfortable and fast their flights are (see Figure. 14).



Figure 14. Prontotour advertisement using the idiom "time flies"

Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/if-your-vacation-is-nice-time-flies>

5. Comparative Analysis of Advertising of Prestigious and Common Brands

In order to determine whether idiom use in advertisements is indeed useful, we need to identify which brands use which types of advertisements (see Table 4).

Table 4. Idiom use in luxury brands advertisements. Source: Own processing

Brand	Idiom	Meaning (short)	idiom type
Guinness	<i>Good things come to those who wait</i>	patience brings reward	semi-opaque
Crystal Cruises	<i>crystal clear</i>	very obvious	semi-idiom
Genesis	<i>steal the spotlight</i>	attract attention	semi-opaque
Lexus	<i>over the years</i>	over time	semi-idiom
Ralph Lauren	<i>fine line</i>	small difference	semi-idiom
Ralph Lauren	<i>over the limit</i>	go too far	semi-opaque
Cartier	<i>once upon an icon</i>	legendary status	opaque (creative)
Maserati	<i>it turns you on</i>	excites you	semi-idiom
Lamborghini	<i>from now on</i>	starting now	semi-idiom
Glenmorangie	<i>once upon a time</i>	long ago/storytelling	opaque
CIBC	<i>the world is your oyster</i>	many opportunities	opaque
Maybelline	<i>change the game</i>	innovate	semi-opaque
Sunteck Realty	<i>shine through</i>	be visible	semi-idiom
Corsair	<i>time flies</i>	time passes quickly	semi-opaque
Swedbank	<i>come as you are</i>	be yourself	semi-opaque
Aura Freedom	<i>to die for</i>	highly desirable	semi-idiom

This table includes a detailed analysis of various types of idioms that have been used in each luxury or common advertisement. From this data, we can see that luxurious brands use semi-idioms and semi-opaque idioms that function as symbols and which serve the aesthetic purpose more. They are open for creative interpretation to



sound more exclusive and aspirational. These idioms are mostly poetic, and they require higher cognitive effort, which is appealing to premium customers. The number of gathered idioms is 16, they were chosen from available data. This is because luxurious brands use mostly visual language and scarcely any text. From the total of 16 luxury brand advertisements, three used opaque idioms (18.75%), seven used semi-opaque idioms (43.75%), and six used semi-idioms (37.5%) (see Graph 1).

The number of idioms revealed in the advertisements of common brands is considerable larger (see Table 5).

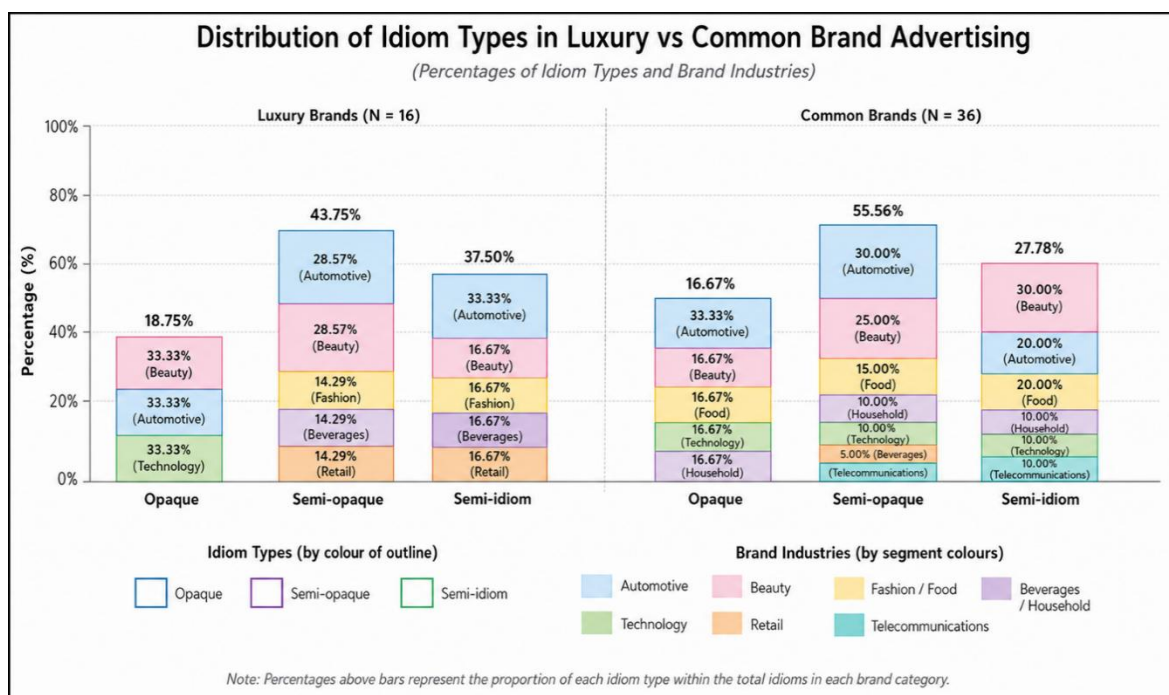
Table 5. Idiom use in common brands advertisements. Source: Own processing

Brand	Idiom	Meaning (short)	Idiom Type
Bud Light	<i>when life gives you lemons</i>	make best of bad	semi-opaque
Skittles	<i>once in a blue moon</i>	very rarely	opaque
Prontotour	<i>time flies</i>	time passes quickly	semi-opaque
Merchant Gourmet	<i>spill the beans</i>	reveal secret	opaque
Virgin Media	<i>every nook & cranny</i>	everywhere	semi-opaque
WWF	<i>in hot water</i>	in trouble	semi-opaque
Last Straw Project	<i>the last straw</i>	final problem	semi-opaque
TRICO	<i>raining cats and dogs</i>	heavy rain	opaque
Hyundai	<i>best of both worlds</i>	two advantages	semi-opaque
Coca-Cola	<i>break the ice</i>	ease tension	semi-opaque
Avis	<i>make history</i>	do something important	semi-opaque
Honda	<i>arm and a leg</i>	very expensive	opaque
Skyrizi	<i>in the picture</i>	involved	semi-opaque
Burger King	<i>love at first bite</i>	instant liking	semi-opaque (modified)
Marshalls	<i>far and wide</i>	everywhere	semi-opaque
Progressive	<i>drive like an animal</i>	drive badly	semi-idiom
Nike	<i>run with it</i>	Continue confidently	semi-idiom
Ford	<i>in your hands</i>	under control	semi-opaque
Robin Wood	<i>comes with a price</i>	has consequences	semi-opaque
Severn Trent	<i>in our nature</i>	natural	semi-idiom
Steve Madden	<i>never miss a beat</i>	react quickly	semi-opaque
Columbia	<i>shirt off our back</i>	give everything	opaque
Dogs Trust	<i>happy place</i>	place of comfort	semi-idiom
Uber	<i>like a boss</i>	confidently	semi-idiom
CIBC Foundation	<i>long way to go</i>	much progress needed	semi-opaque
Suzuki	<i>cross the line</i>	go too far	semi-opaque
NHS	<i>draw the line</i>	set limit	semi-opaque
Tmall	<i>set on fire</i>	excite strongly	semi-opaque
Renault	<i>stick to something</i>	continue	semi-idiom

While common brands also use semi-opaque and opaque idioms, their function is different. Their primary function is to simplify the message and possibly add humour to the advertisement. Because the meanings are instantly recognizable, customers understand them quickly with little to no cognitive effort. Sometimes one-word modifications of widely recognised idioms are present, such as *love at first bite*. They are supposed to be well-known, humorous, and familiar to everybody. Since there are many more common brands than luxury brands, there are only



36 examples. This is not a very representative sample, but the examples were chosen rather based on available public data. When it comes to common brands, of 36 examples, six used an opaque idiom (16.67%), 20 used semi-opaque idioms (55.56%), and 10 used semi-idioms (27.78%). The number of examples in each category is not identical, because there are not as many luxury brands compared to common brands (see Graph 1).



Graph 1. Percentage distribution of idiom types. Source: Own processing

From these graphs, it is evident that semi-opaque idioms are prevalent in both luxury and common advertisements, but the noticeable difference is that in luxury advertisements, semi-idioms are percentually used more than in common brands. Opaque idioms are the least used idiom type of the three.

6. Conclusion

Our study sets out to explore idiom usage in advertisements from common and prestige brands. The findings indicate that idioms are widely used across the many industries we have analysed, such as automotive; clothing, retail and fashion; food and beverages; beauty and personal care; financial services and real estate; travel and tourism. We divide them into two groups: prestigious and common brands.

Special attention was paid to various approaches to the study of idioms and their typology. It was stated that scholars specify such types of idioms as semi-idiom, semi-opaque, and opaque. The next stage was to clarify how these types of idioms are connected with the above-mentioned brands.

The results of our research show that semi-opaque idioms are the most used type by many brands; at the same time, prestigious brands prefer semi-opaque idioms, with common brands preferring opaque idioms. This difference can be explained by the fact that common brands use them more often in their advertisements, whereas prestigious brands tend to use less wording.

Functions of idioms in advertisement texts, both nominative and communicative, are universal and can also be found in literary texts or oral speech. In advertisement texts idioms do not only describe various products and services. More important is the obvious or hidden evaluation of the offered products and services, expression of personal opinion, and involvement in the discourse.

Idioms can be grouped on the basis of their common meaning: emotions and feelings, work and business, time and opportunity, success and failure, communication and relationship, money and resources, challenges and problems, and everyday life, among others. Logically, idioms containing strong motivation, positive emotions,



success, etc. should prevail in advertisement, making the discourse of advertising successful. We have not considered our examples from this aspect. We find it a good and promising perspective for the future.

Our study demonstrates that idioms have the potential for further important implications in the future of advertising. However, this study is limited by the number of examples, which may affect the percentage results and therefore may limit the generalizability of the findings. Despite these constraints, the study still provides meaningful contributions to the field. Future research should consider other examples and industries for greater in-depth research. In conclusion, idioms play a crucial role in the discourse of advertising, and continued investigation is essential to ensure proper usage.

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Yes



Conflict of interest

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