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Master's Thesis

**SENSORY MODALITIES
IN MULTIMODAL ADVERTISING OF AUTOMOBILES
(BASED ON BMW, MERCEDES-BENZ AND VOLVO ADVERTISEMENTS)**

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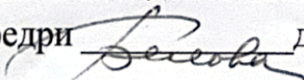
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ABBREVIATIONS

ADAS – Autonomous driving technologies

AR – Augmented Reality

AVAS – Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System

CBT – Conceptual Blending Theory

CMT – Conceptual Metaphor Theory

COCA – Corpus of Contemporary American English

ECUs – Electronic Control Units

EEG – Electroencephalography

EV / EVs – Electric Vehicle / Electric Vehicles

fMRI – Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging

ICE – Internal Combustion Engine

MDA – Multimodal Discourse Analysis

NVH – Noise, Vibration, Harshness

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

PAD – Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (emotional state model)

S-O-R (or SOR) – Stimulus-Organism-Response

SDVs – Software-Defined Vehicles

SFL – Systemic Functional Linguistics

vmPFC – Ventromedial prefrontal cortex

Abstract

The master's thesis explores the linguistic and extralinguistic mechanisms of sensory modalities in contemporary automotive advertising. The relevance of the study is driven by the industry's transition towards electric vehicles, which compels premium brands to shift from promoting mechanical specifications to crafting immersive, multi-sensory lifestyle narratives. The object of the research is the English-language multimodal advertising discourse of premium automotive brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo) from 2020 to 2026. The subject encompasses the functioning and cognitive-emotional impact of visual, auditory, and tactile modalities, realised through multimodal metaphors and synesthetic effects.

The aim of the paper is to classify and analyse the multimodal mechanisms representing sensory perceptions in modern car commercials. The study applies a novel methodological framework, integrating Multimodal Discourse Analysis with cognitive linguistics approaches, specifically the Somatic Marker Hypothesis and the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance model.

Structurally, the work consists of an introduction, three main chapters focusing on theoretical foundations, practical multimodal analysis, and cognitive perception evaluation, along with conclusions. The findings demonstrate that premium brands deploy distinct sensory strategies to construct archetypal identities: BMW utilises kinetic dynamism and zoomorphic metaphors, Mercedes-Benz employs intense sensory saturation to create a sense of opulence, Volvo utilises silence and minimalism to foster a low-arousal psychological sanctuary. The research proves that modern advertising uses somatic markers that subconsciously guide purchasing decisions.

Keywords: sensory linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis, automotive advertising, cognitive linguistics, embodied cognition, synesthetic effects.

86 p., 4 tabl., 1 schem., 16 pictures., 6 appendices., bibliography: 255 items.

Анотація

У роботі досліджено лінгвістичні та екстралінгвістичні механізми сенсорних модальностей у сучасній автомобільній рекламі. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена переходом індустрії до електромобілів, що змушує преміальні бренди відмовлятися від рекламування механічних характеристик на користь створення імерсивних, мультисенсорних наративів способу життя. Об'єктом дослідження є англomовний мультимодальний рекламний дискурс преміальних автомобільних брендів (BMW, Mercedes-Benz та Volvo) у період з 2020 по 2026 рік. Предмет охоплює функціонування та когнітивно-емоційний вплив візуальної, аудіальної і тактильної модальностей, що реалізуються через мультимодальні метафори та синестезійні ефекти.

Мета роботи полягає в класифікації та аналізі мультимодальних механізмів репрезентації сенсорного сприйняття в сучасних автомобільних рекламних роликах. У дослідженні застосовується новітня методологічна база, яка інтегрує мультимодальний дискурс-аналіз із підходами когнітивної лінгвістики, а саме гіпотезою соматичних маркерів та емоційною моделлю PAD.

Структурно робота складається зі вступу, трьох основних розділів, присвячених теоретичним засадам, практичному мультимодальному аналізу та оцінці когнітивного сприйняття, а також висновків. Результати свідчать про те, що преміальні бренди використовують різні сенсорні стратегії для конструювання архетипних ідентичностей: BMW використовує кінетичний динамізм та зооморфні метафори, Mercedes-Benz – інтенсивне сенсорне насичення для створення відчуття розкоші, Volvo – тишу та мінімалізм для формування психологічного прихистку. Дослідження доводить, що сучасна реклама систематично використовує соматичні маркери, які впливають на рішення про покупку.

Ключові слова: сенсорна лінгвістика, мультимодальний дискурс-аналіз, автомобільна реклама, когнітивна лінгвістика, втілене пізнання, синестезійні ефекти.

86 с., 4 табл., 1 схем., 16 рис., 6 дод., 255 джерел.

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INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive landscape of the 2020s, the automobile industry has shifted its marketing focus from purely technical specifications to the promotion of a holistic lifestyle and driving experience. Modern advertising does not merely inform; it attempts to simulate reality, engaging the consumer's senses through a complex interplay of language, image, and sound. This thesis explores the linguistic and extralinguistic mechanisms used to trigger these sensory responses, analysing how cars are marketed not just as machines, but as sensory experiences.

In this work, we are also exploring sensory perception, which is a complex phenomenon, and language offers valuable insights into how we experience and communicate about the world around us. By studying sensory modalities in language, we can gain a better understanding of the nature of sensation, its relationship to human culture, and how our brains process sensory information.

It should be mentioned that at different times such outstanding scientists as B. Winter (2018, 2019), A.D. Belova (2023), D. Lynott (2009, 2010, 2014, 2016), L. Connell (2009, 2010, 2014, 2016), A. Majid (2014, 2016), S. Levinson (2014), A. Viberg (1983), I. Croijmans (2016), C. E. Schroeder (2001), F. Strik Lievers (2015, 2016) and others devoted their scientific works to sensory linguistics.

Furthermore, scientists such as M. Louwerse (2011), L. Connell (2018), L.J. Speed (2017), C. Spence (2001, 2015), M.E. Nicholls (2001), J. Driver (2001), M. Dingemanse (2012) and D. Lynott (2009, 2013) studied the issue of sensory modalities and perceptual modality.

The aim of the research is to identify, classify, and analyse the linguistic and multimodal mechanisms used to represent sensory perceptions in modern automobile advertising (2020–2026), and to determine how these sensory modalities interact to construct distinct brand identities, induce specific cognitive-emotional states, and influence audience perception.

To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** were defined:

- to systematise the theoretical foundations of sensory linguistics, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), and embodied cognition within contemporary advertising discourse;
- to classify and trace the evolution of the English sensory vocabulary utilised to describe automotive experiences;
- to conduct a comprehensive multimodal analysis of the visual, auditory, and tactile modalities in the commercial campaigns of premium automotive brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo);
- to identify and explicate the mechanisms of cross-sensory interaction, specifically focusing on multimodal metaphor, synesthesia, and digital sensescaping;
- to evaluate audience perception by mapping these cognitive linguistic strategies onto neurobiological frameworks, namely the Somatic Marker Hypothesis and the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) emotional state model.

The object of the paper is the English-language multimodal advertising discourse of the premium automobile industry, with a specific focus on campaigns and commercials released by BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo between 2020 and 2026.

The subject of the research is the functioning, interaction, and cognitive-emotional impact of sensory modalities (visual, auditory, and tactile) realised through verbal and non-verbal components, multimodal metaphors, and synesthetic effects in car advertisements.

To fulfil the objectives of the study, the following complex of **research methods** was applied:

- multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to decode the synergistic integration of visual grammar, auditory soundscapes, and linguistic text.
- cognitive linguistic analysis to examine the conceptual mappings of multimodal metaphors, synesthesia, and the principles of embodied cognition within the advertising narratives.
- contextual and stylistic analysis to determine the pragmatic functions and stylistic nuances of the English sensory vocabulary used in the commercial copy.

- method of typological comparison to contrast the distinct sensory strategies and archetypal brand identities of BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo.
- method of systematisation and generalisation to organise empirical data, draw theoretical conclusions, and map the analysed modalities onto the S-O-R and PAD emotional state frameworks.

The novelty of the study lies in the comprehensive integration of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) with cognitive neuroscience frameworks, specifically the Somatic Marker Hypothesis and the PAD emotional state model, to decode automotive advertising. Furthermore, the study explores the linguistic and semiotic examination of the sensescaping phenomenon and the sensory paradigm shift initiated by the industry's transition to Electric Vehicles (EVs) during the 2020–2026 period. It provides a novel comparative analysis of how premium brands leverage multimodal metaphors to replace traditional mechanical engine cues with digitally engineered sensory stimuli, transforming the vehicle into a psychological sanctuary or kinetic entity.

The practical value of the work is that its findings, categorised sensory lexicons, and established multimodal patterns can be directly utilised by marketing professionals, copywriters, and brand strategists in the automotive industry to optimise the emotional, neuro-cognitive, and narrative impact of their advertising campaigns. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks and empirical materials gathered in this study can be successfully applied in academic environments for university courses and seminars on Sensory Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Marketing Communications.

The work includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, references, and appendices. Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical framework of sensory linguistics; Chapter 2 presents the multimodal analysis of specific car advertisements; and Chapter 3 explores the cognitive perception of sensory elements in advertisements.

1. SENSORY LINGUISTICS in the 2020s

1.1. Current studies of sensory modalities

Sensory perception constitutes the basis of human interaction with the world. Sensation is not merely a mechanism for navigating the environment or ensuring survival; it is the primary interface through which reality is experienced. Language, in turn, offers a crucial lens for examining how these sensory experiences are encoded and communicated. Therefore, the linguistic analysis of the senses is indispensable for comprehending the nature of sensation, its interplay with culture, and the cognitive processes underlying human perception [Majid, Levinson 2011, p. 7].

Perception is inherently structured. For instance, the eye does not just “see”; it simultaneously registers motion, shape, distance, and colour. Since these features are processed by a single sensory organ and present themselves to our consciousness concurrently, they form a unified perceptual experience. While auditory experiences are typically distinct from visual ones, sound is also capable of conveying spatial information, such as motion. The terms “sense” and “sensory modality” are generally used to denote a specific category of perceptual experience associated with a particular sensory organ and its corresponding neural framework [Winter 2019, p. 12].

Although the classical “Aristotelian” model of the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell – has been a subject of inquiry for millennia, Sensory Linguistics emerged as a distinct and prominent field only at the turn of the 21st century. Research into embodied cognition and sensory vocabulary offers valuable insights not only for theoretical linguistics but also for applied fields [Belova 2023, p. 52]. In the context of the automotive industry and advertising, understanding how sensory experience is lexicalised is crucial for crafting persuasive multimodal messages that resonate with the consumer’s embodied experience.

The classification of senses remains a subject of debate. The traditional five-part model is attributed to Aristotle, who linked the senses to the four elements: sight to water, hearing to air, smell to fire, and touch to earth. He posited touch as the primary sense, essential to all living beings, noting that through touch the body feels properties

like heat or cold [Sorabji 1971, p. 59]. Despite its intuitive appeal and historical longevity, this model has faced scrutiny in modern scholarship.

An alternative framework is proposed by Åke Viberg (1983), who analysed perception verbs and identified three core components of the perceptual process: activity, experience, and copulative (or phenomenon-based) [Viberg 1983, p. 123].

1. Activity refers to a controlled process (e.g., “to listen”).
2. Experience refers to an uncontrolled state (e.g., “to hear”).
3. Copulative refers to the entity being perceived (e.g., “to sound”).

Viberg noted that while English distinguishes these three aspects lexically for sight and hearing (e.g., look at/see/look), other modalities often rely on a single verb form, with context determining the specific meaning [Viberg 1983, p. 124]. Based on a cross-linguistic study of fifty languages, Viberg established a universal hierarchy of sense modalities: sight > hearing > touch > taste, smell [Viberg 1983, p. 136].

This hypothesis of visual dominance is supported by more recent studies. San Roque et al. (2015) examined perception vocabulary across thirteen languages and found that references to vision were the most frequent in the vast majority of cases. This suggests a cross-cultural preponderance of visual experience that supports the vision dominance concept [San Roque et al. 2015, p. 19]. For research into automobile advertising, this finding provides a theoretical basis for the industry’s heavy reliance on visual cues – such as the sleek lines of a car body or the play of light on metal – as the primary vehicle for consumer engagement.

However, linguistic diversity challenges the universality of the five-sense model. For example, research by Van Putten demonstrates that some languages distinguish primarily between “seeing” and a general verb for all non-visual sensations (hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling). This indicates that the Aristotelian model does not always correspond to the underlying concepts on which the linguistic encoding of perceptual experience is based [van Putten 2020, p. 458].

Bodo Winter also critiques the traditional model, arguing that it fails to align with modern neurophysiology. Scientists recognise numerous subcategories that do not fit neatly into the five classical senses, such as pain, which involves distinct neural

processes compared to ordinary touch [Winter 2019, P. 13–14]. In automotive marketing, this nuance is relevant when considering complex sensations like proprioception and kinesthesia – the feeling of acceleration and control – which go beyond simple tactile feedback.

Furthermore, the classification of senses is complicated by multisensoriality and cross-modal interactions. The boundaries between senses are often blurred, as seen in the strong relationship between taste and smell [Spence et al. 2014, p. 266]. Similarly, in the automotive context, the “sound” of a car door closing (auditory) creates a perception of “quality” and “safety” (tactile/cognitive), illustrating a synesthetic marketing approach.

Consequently, scholars suggest alternative methods for grouping senses: by the type of energy perceived (light energy, mechanical energy, molecular energy), by the sensory organ involved, or by the type of receptor [Winter 2019, p. 14]. Such a classification is particularly useful for analysing multimodal advertising, where visual (light energy) and auditory (mechanical energy) stimuli are orchestrated to create a cohesive brand narrative.

1.2. Sensory vocabulary in English

The English sensory lexicon is a sophisticated system that reflects both the communicative needs of its speakers and the historical development of the language [Головацька 2024, p. 37]. Large-scale corpus studies using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) reveal that vision dominates the perceptual landscape, both in frequency of usage and in lexical differentiation [Winter et al. 2018, p. 216]. This “Vision Dominates” hypothesis suggests that the English lexicon is geared toward communicative efficiency, providing a greater number of unique words for the domains most frequently discussed [Winter 2019, p. 136]. In contrast, the modalities of taste and smell show more diminished lexical differentiation but are found to be more affectively loaded and emotionally flexible parts of the lexicon [Wang et al. 2020, p. 271].

The lexical-semantic subsystem of sensory verbs in Modern English is organised as a hierarchical, open system where lexemes migrate between five sensory fields corresponding to the primary sensory modalities to express nuanced meanings. These words are categorised based on specific differential traits and their denotative sema, forming complex macro- and micro-integral connections – a core, a main part, and a periphery, reflecting a gradient of semantic specificity and usage frequency [Головацька 2024, p. 37]. The historical composition of this subsystem is remarkably diverse, reflecting waves of lexical borrowing and internal evolution (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 – Historical Development and Sources of the English Sensory Verb Subsystem

Historical Source	Approximate Percentage	Role in Modern Perception Subsystem
Old English	37%	Foundational, high-frequency verbs forming the core of sensory perception.
French Borrowings	32%	Represents the majority of sensory vocabulary; periods of expansion.
Latin Borrowings	15%	Integrated during Middle/New English periods; often specialised.
West Germanic Borrowings	8%	Shared etymological roots with foundational English terms.
Imitative/Other Languages	5%	Onomatopoeic words and minor borrowings from diverse languages.
Unknown Origin	3%	Words whose origin hasn't been clearly defined.

Source: compiled by the author based on [Головацька 2024, P. 38–49].

The core of these fields consists of dominant, high-frequency verbs of Old English origin that convey the most general meaning of perception without specifying the manner or intensity of the act (*see, hear, feel, smell, taste*). Surrounding this core is the main part, which encompasses a dense collection of synonyms that provide qualitative detail regarding the process of perception, often distinguishing between involuntary sensation and intentional observation (*glance, overhear, sniff, savour*). The periphery of the system contains specialised or technical terms, many of which were integrated into the English language through later Latinate or French borrowings, often carrying additional evaluative or metaphorical connotations (*scrutinise, detect, caress, relish*) (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 – Hierarchical Structure and Lexical Composition of Sensory Verb Fields in Modern English

Lexical-Semantic Field (Sense)	Core Verb (Dominant)	Examples from the “Main Part” (Manner/Intensity)	Examples from the “Periphery” (Specific/Technical)
Visual Perception	<i>See</i>	<i>Gaze, stare, glance, peer, glimpse</i>	<i>Scrutinise, behold, witness, inspect</i>
Auditory Perception	<i>Hear</i>	<i>Listen, harken, overhear</i>	<i>Attend, hearken (archaic), detect</i>
Tactile Perception	<i>Feel</i>	<i>Touch, handle, finger, paw</i>	<i>Caress, stroke, grope, manipulate</i>
Olfactory Perception	<i>Smell</i>	<i>Sniff, scent, snuff</i>	<i>Nose, inhale, whiff</i>
Gustatory Perception	<i>Taste</i>	<i>Savour, sample, sip</i>	<i>Relish, palate (rare), try</i>

Source: compiled by the author based on [Головацька 2024, P. 40–45].

These fields are not equal in size; the visual domain exhibits the highest degree of lexical differentiation, reflecting the cognitive and communicative priority of sight

in human experience. Throughout the development of the English verb system, the proportion of lexemes remains relatively consistent across the three zones of each field, though the main part typically contains the largest number of units, as language users require a diverse vocabulary to describe the nuances of sensory experience in various social and technical contexts.

All products, including complex mechanical items like automobiles, demand a holistic sensory engagement. The interaction with a product involves a sequence of sensory events: the initial visual appraisal, the tactile interaction with materials, the auditory feedback of operation, and the olfactory signature of the environment. Consumption is rarely a mono-sensory event; rather, it allows individuals to perceive complex attributes through a synthesis of inputs. In the context of advertising, language must bridge the gap between the physical product and the consumer's imagination, using sensory vocabulary to simulate this experience.

Sensory vocabulary is linguistically defined as the lexicon describing experiences mediated by the five "Aristotelian" senses. This vocabulary is not merely descriptive but evocative, functioning to trigger sensory simulation in the mind of the receiver.

Sight constitutes the primary channel for information gathering. The vocabulary of vision encompasses descriptors of colour, dimension, luminosity, and geometry. Adjectives such as "vibrant," "colossal," or "trapezoidal" provide factual data, whereas metaphorical expressions carry a heavier emotive load and encompass other sensorial experiences. For instance, terms like "crystal clear" or "velvety" (used visually) transfer additionally tactile or material qualities to the visual domain.

Vision significantly contributes to the automotive experience by allowing individuals to perceive attributes such as colour, size, shape, stance, and surface texture. Just as natural hues provide cues regarding biological ripeness, the depth and reflectivity of car paint provide consumers with cues regarding manufacturing quality and luxury status. Moreover, visual perception plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer preferences by shaping what is considered visually appealing.

In the automotive realm, designers often describe visual appeal as the art of styling and stance, wherein body panels and lighting signatures are creatively arranged to enhance consumers' initial interactions with the vehicle. Examining images from car brochures across various eras indicates that automotive design, akin to art and fashion, evolves with trends. Recent trends in vehicle presentation include aggressive grill designs for heightened visual impact, employing LED matrix technology for dynamic signalling, and crafting visually captivating interiors suitable for social media sharing.

The **auditory** lexicon includes descriptors of volume, pitch, rhythm, and timbre (e.g., “deafening,” “melodious”). However, sound is frequently described through onomatopoeia or metaphor, such as “purring” (like a cat) or “roaring” (like a beast), “hissing” (like escaping steam), “crisp” (like the snap of a gear change), “muffled” (like soundproofing), and “humming” (like an electric current). While the influence of sound on perception is sometimes underestimated, it significantly shapes tactile interpretation. While the influence of sound on product perception may not be immediately apparent, it significantly shapes various tactile experiences. Considering the solidity of door latches, the responsiveness of switches, and the power of engines, all are intertwined with auditory cues. For example, a car door is perceived as safer and better built when the overall sound level of closure is lower and deeper (a “thud”). Similarly, the power of a sports car is gauged by the intensity of sound when revving the engine. Likewise, the quality of assembly is discernible from the sound of driving over bumps. Employing sound strategically, such as active sound design in electric vehicles, can enhance the overall driving experience in diverse ways.

Touch vocabulary describes texture, temperature, and pressure. This modality is particularly rich in metaphorical transfers. Words like “silky” or “velvety” are borrowed from textiles to describe surfaces that are smooth and luxurious. Similarly, advertisers manipulate adjectives to create a “textural landscape” for the viewer, using words like “plush,” “responsive,” or “rigid” to convey the physical sensation of driving without the consumer ever touching the wheel.

Although less relevant to non-edible products, the vocabulary of **taste** is vast. It describes basic qualities and intensities (e.g., “zesty,” “decadent”). The biological

model of taste includes the SNQHU framework introduced by Pfaffmann in 1941 [Pfaffmann 1941, p. 249] and developed by Fulton:

S-group: Sweet or sugary (sweet, honeyed).

N-group: Salty (briny, mineral).

Q-group: Bitter (chocolaty, espresso-like).

H-group: Acidic (tart, tangy, zesty).

U-group: Umami (savoury, meaty) [Fulton 2020, p. 7].

Beyond physiological taste [Li et. al. 2024, p. 1513] and organoleptic evaluation [Zhubantaieva, Papunidi 2023, p. 168], there exists the concept of “gastronomic taste,” which involves harmony and balance [Perullo 2023, p. 249]. Most crucially for advertising, there is “aesthetic taste” – the capacity for critical judgment and the evaluation of beauty [Uysal Ürey 2023, p. 487]. In automobile advertising, “taste” is almost exclusively used in this aesthetic sense. When a car is described as “tasteful,” it refers to a social and artistic refinement rather than a flavour profile.

Smell is often termed the “mute sense” due to the poverty of specific olfactory vocabulary in English [Ackerman 1990, p. 17]. Unlike colours, which have abstract names (red, blue), odours are typically named after their source (floral, woody, leathery). Subjectivity plays a massive role; an odour originates from personal experience rather than collective creation [Almagor 1990, p. 256], [Engen 1987, p. 498]. This presents a challenge for linguistic research, as individuals often struggle to associate specific labels with odours, a problem known as the lack of “veridical labels” [Mantel 2021, p. 29]. Dubois and Rouby suggest that olfactory language does not represent objective entities but rather volatile representations in the air [Rouby et al. 2002, p. 284]. Consequently, advertisers often rely on descriptions of source and impact [David 2002, p. 84] or linked memories to convey scent. Research shows that common odours are described using vague or borrowed terms [Iatropoulos et al. 2018, p. 41], and the olfactory system has limited connections to the brain’s linguistic centres [Olofsson 2015, p. 316].

In the automotive industry, the “New Car Smell” is a pivotal sensory branding tool. However, the significance of subjectivity presents a challenge. A key concern

revolves around the notion of a veridical label, or a true descriptor, for objects in the olfactory domain. Unlike in vision, where objects often have clear, agreed-upon names, individuals often struggle to associate specific names with odours, despite vivid recollections. Consumers may struggle to articulate the specific blend of adhesives, plastics, and leather that constitutes “luxury,” yet they recognise it instantly. Hence, it becomes imperative to reassess the nature of the connection between olfactory representation and advertising language.

Thus, when it comes to expressing sensory perceptions of a drive, we realise that language is limited. In some cases, it is very difficult or even impossible to translate sensory perception into words. The limitations of language lead to the concept of “ineffability” – the difficulty or impossibility of putting certain experiences into words [Levinson, Majid 2014, p. 408]. This is particularly true for complex sensory experiences like “luxury” or “comfort.” Gáb (2020) distinguishes between weak ineffability (lack of a specific word) and strong ineffability (impossibility of expression) [Gáb 2020, p. 1829]. Finally, sensory vocabulary is inherently multisensory. Words rarely stay in one lane.

The perception of driving is multimodal and multisensory. Determining the knowledge repositories that are activated when sensory descriptors are used could aid in defining the semantic representation of sensory language and improving our comprehension of how perception is conceptualised.

It is also necessary to classify the word list based on some perceptual dimension, such as the sensory modality to which each word corresponds. The previously noted fact that certain sensory phrases are highly multisensory makes this last step more difficult. For instance, how adjectives such as “smooth” and “responsive” can be classified – whether they belong to tactile, visual, or both sensory modalities.

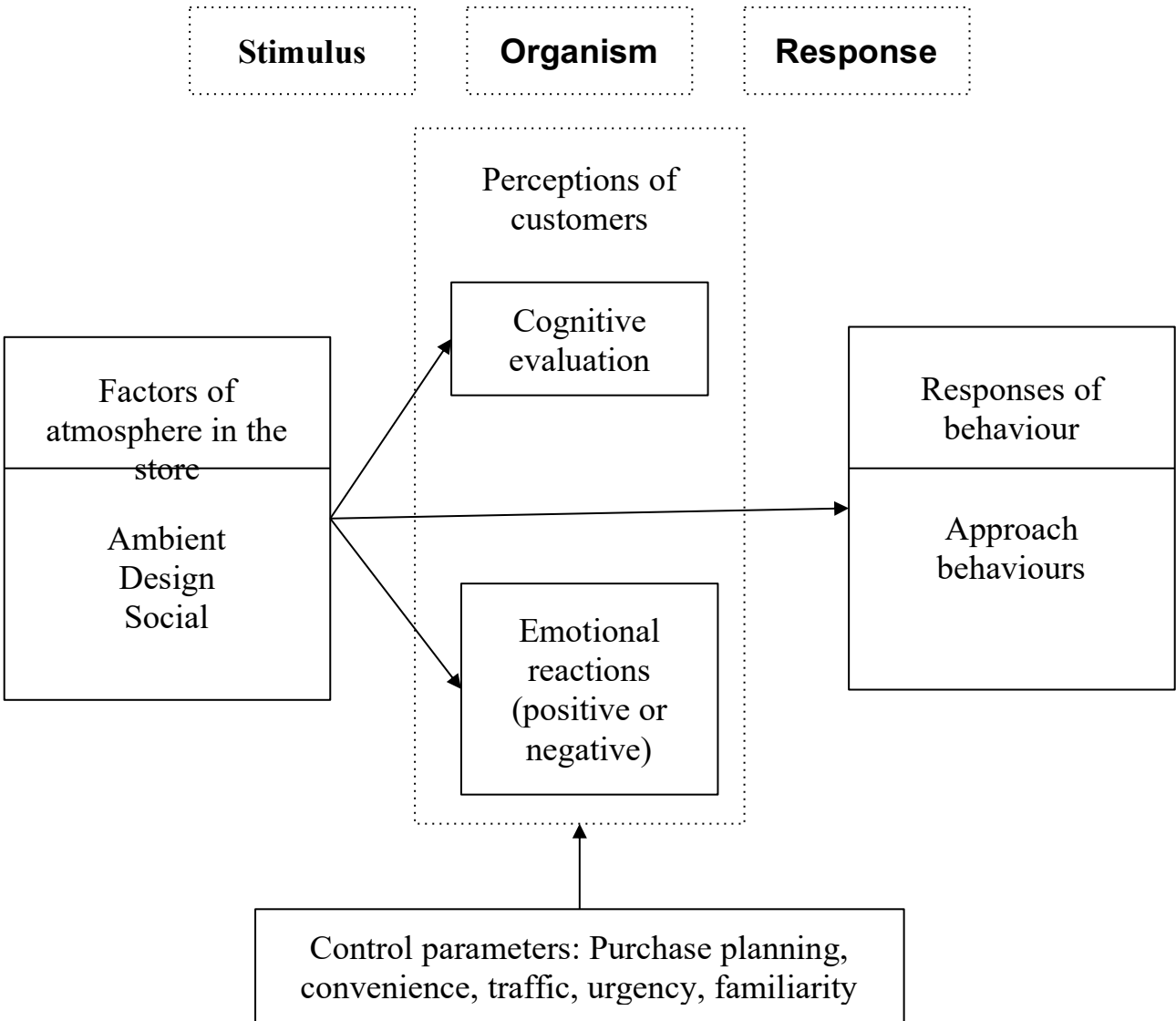
1.3. Sensory perception and its role in advertising discourse

Advertising discourse acts as a sophisticated mechanism for modifying the cognitive environment of the consumer. It does not merely inform; it persuades by triggering physiological and psychological responses through sensory stimuli. The

theoretical framework often applied here is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, which posits that environmental stimuli (S) trigger an internal emotional or cognitive state in the organism (O), which then leads to a behavioural response (R), [Zaman et al. 2024, p. 93].

Originally developed by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm serves as a foundational framework in environmental psychology, successfully transitioning from consumer behaviour research into the realms of organisational behaviour and leadership (see Scheme 1.3).

Scheme 1.3 – Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model



Source: compiled by the author based on [Mehrabian, Russell 1974].

The model posits that external environmental factors (stimuli) trigger internal cognitive or affective states within an individual (organism), which subsequently

dictate their outward actions (response). This internal mediation – whether conscious or subconscious – involves the perception and interpretation of the environment, which in turn shapes emotional states and governs decision-making processes. Given its versatility, the S-O-R paradigm remains a dominant conceptual tool across diverse global management theories and multi-disciplinary research fields

In automotive advertising, the “Stimulus” is a carefully orchestrated multimodal package. This package operates on three distinct levels of sensory modality realisation. At the primary level of **material representation**, the physical or digital medium determines the sensory bandwidth available; for example, the immersive surround sound and high-definition visual fidelity of a cinema advertisement provide a vastly different sensory experience than the static, haptic textures of a premium glossy magazine spread. Beyond the physical medium, the **representational system** employs specific linguistic and semiotic strategies to prime the consumer’s perception. This is achieved through the use of sensory-based predicates, such as inviting the audience to feel the power or listen to the silence, combined with a visual grammar that utilises colour grading and composition to prioritise specific representational systems like the visual or auditory domains. Finally, the use of **pragmatonyms** – product names that inherently carry sensory information – leverages phonosemantics to communicate brand attributes. Names such as *Velar* utilise soft consonants to evoke a sense of fluidity and smoothness, whereas names like *Raptor* or *Supra* employ sharp vowels and plosives to signify dominance and aggression.

The role of Multisensory Congruence is paramount in this discourse. Research demonstrates that when multiple sensory inputs align – for example, when the visual pacing of a car speeding up matches the increasing tempo of the background music, the emotional impact is amplified. This phenomenon, known as “super-additivity,” means the combined effect of the senses is greater than the sum of their parts. Conversely, “sensory dissonance” (e.g., calm music with chaotic visuals) can be used to create tension or irony, but it risks increasing cognitive load and confusing the brand message [Xancó-Grau et al. 2025, p. 628].

Furthermore, sensory perception in advertising is deeply linked to Experiential Marketing. Modern consumers do not just buy a product; they buy an experience. Advertising narratives must therefore simulate this experience [Onyeke et al. 2024, p. 5]. By engaging the senses, ads create a pre-experience of ownership. This is particularly effective in the pre-ownership stage of the customer journey, where digital sensory cues (visuals of leather, sounds of doors closing) substitute for the physical test drive.

Recent updates to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) reflect a broadening of the sensory palette, often borrowing from other languages to fill lexical gaps. For example, the inclusion of the Tagalog loanword *gigil* describes a specific tactile-emotional urge – the desire to pinch or squeeze something cute – which encapsulates a complex kinaesthetic reaction often sought in the design of “cute” compact cars (e.g., the Mini Cooper or Fiat 500). Similarly, the South African term *gatvol* expresses a visceral sensation of being “filled to the brim” or “fed up,” offering a metaphorical weightiness that English previously lacked [Salazar].

In the specific context of advertising, copywriters are moving beyond generic descriptors (e.g., “fast,” “smooth”) to use a highly specialised sensory vocabulary. This vocabulary is categorised by the sensory modality it stimulates **visual lexicon** – words like “effulgent,” “luminous,” and “dazzling” are used to describe paint finishes and lighting signatures, triggering visual cortex activation; **auditory lexicon** – terms such as “sonorous,” “thrumming,” and “guttural” are employed to describe engine notes, moving beyond the cliché of “roar” to capture specific frequencies and timbres; and **tactile lexicon** – adjectives like “gritty,” “silky,” and “undulating” describe interior materials and ride quality, attempting to convey the “feel” of the road or the upholstery through text [Kiriakova 2025, P. 40–41].

This expansion is driven by the need for “Sensory Simulation” in digital environments. A 2025 study on digital brand storytelling found that the effective integration of sensory vocabulary – particularly tactile descriptions in web copy – significantly enhances brand perception [Kiriakova 2025, p. 42]. When a website describes “*heated, ventilated, massaging, electrically-adjustable-in-every-which-*

way” seats as being made of leather “*softer than a cashmere pillow*,” and the dashboard materials as “*chosen to evoke royalty*,” it invites the user to mentally simulate the act of touching it [Baker, Nichol]. This simulation creates a “sensory trace” in memory, making the digital experience stickier and more emotionally resonant than purely informational copy. The study highlighted that multisensory learning strategies increase retention rates by up to 65% compared to single-modality presentations, confirming that rich sensory vocabulary is not merely a poetic flourish but a cognitive retention tool.

1.4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis and the specifics of multimodal advertising in the automobile industry

Traditionally, Western academic paradigms leaned heavily toward a logocentric model, prioritising the written word as the primary carrier of truth. While specific disciplines – notably the natural sciences and medicine – produced a rich heritage of multimodal works, the broader prestige genres of official and intellectual discourse remained largely monomodal [van Leeuwen 2017, p. 4]. In these contexts, text was often viewed as the sole medium for rigorous abstract reasoning, while visual elements were frequently relegated to a secondary, merely illustrative role.

The specialised theoretical and critical disciplines that developed to analyse human expression became equally monomodal and siloed [Wang 2013, p. 138].

However, the late twentieth century catalysed a profound reversal of this monomodal dominance. This shift was largely propelled by rapid advancements in media technologies, the mass commercialisation of the internet, and the semiotically exuberant performances of the entertainment industry. It became evident that not only mass media properties, such as magazines and cinema, but also formal documents produced by universities and corporations had begun to acquire sophisticated layouts, typography, and high-fidelity colour illustrations. The avant-gardes of high culture arts similarly began to cross the rigid boundaries separating design, performance, and text, moving toward multimedia events and multimodal Gesamtkunstwerke [Kress, van Leeuwen 2001, p. 2].

This paradigm shift necessitated the development of a theoretical framework capable of transcending isolated disciplines, leading to the establishment of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). The analytical architecture of MDA is heavily indebted to the theoretical frameworks of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Social Semiotics. SFL, pioneered by Michael A.K. Halliday, revolutionised the study of language by conceptualising it as a **social semiotic** network where meaning is context-dependent and driven by social function. Halliday proposed the metafunctional principle, asserting that all semiotic resources fulfil three simultaneous functions: the ideational (construing experience), the interpersonal (enacting social relations), and the textual (organising discourse into a coherent whole) [O’Halloran 2008, p. 444].

Building upon these principles, scholars Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen achieved a theoretical breakthrough by extending the social semiotic approach to visual images in their seminal work, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. They challenged traditional boundaries by exploring how visual structures can be “read” like a grammar [Kress, van Leeuwen 2006]. To analyse automotive media, researchers map Halliday’s linguistic metafunctions directly to this visual grammar framework (see Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 – Theoretical Framework for the Multimodal Analysis of Car Advertisements

Linguistic Metafunction	Visual Grammar Equivalent	Function and Application in Automotive Advertising
Ideational Meaning	Representational Meaning	Construes experience and depicts the physical world. In car advertisements, this involves identifying narrative actions (e.g., a vehicle navigating a mountain road) and conceptual symbolism.
Interpersonal Meaning	Interactive Meaning	Enacts social relations between the sign-maker, the car, and the viewer through gaze, camera angle, and social distance.

Textual Meaning	Compositional Meaning	Organises meanings into a coherent whole via spatial layout, framing, and salience to guide the viewer's reading path.
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Source: compiled by the author based on [Kress, van Leeuwen 2006, p. 176], [Gebhard, Accurso 2020, p. 1031].

MDA is an emerging and rapidly expanding paradigm in discourse studies that fundamentally extends the study of language to encompass its combination with other semiotic resources, including images, spatial architecture, mathematical symbolism, gesture, action, music, and sound [Constantinou 2005, p. 602]. Multimodal discourse analysis operates on the premise that in contemporary communication, various channels work together synergistically to create a unified message. Jewitt outlines three distinct approaches within the discipline: the social semiotic approach (emphasising sign-maker agency), the standard MDA approach (focusing on structural analysis of the text), and multimodal interactional analysis (addressing real-time social interactions) [Kuswandini 2018, p. 349].

Within this theoretical construct, a “mode” is defined as a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning, encompassing visual, auditory, and gestural domains. Semiotic resources refer to the specific, granular tools available within these modes – such as colour saturation, typography, lighting, pitch, and facial expressions – that are deployed to convey layered, highly nuanced messages [Oja 2023, p. 606]. When multiple modes are combined within a single communicative event, they form a multimodal ensemble.

A critical process within this interplay is transduction, which refers to the act of transferring or transforming meaning across different modes [Volkwyn et al. 2019, p. 16]. Through transduction, an abstract concept such as *power* can be shifted from the linguistic mode (the word *performance*) into the visual mode (a blurring landscape) and further into the aural mode (the low-frequency rumble of an engine), maintaining the core message while adapting to the unique affordances

of each semiotic channel. A prime example is the neologism *Fasterpiece*, which blends *faster* (speed/performance) with *masterpiece* (art/luxury), linguistically transducing dual promises of visceral speed and refined status into a single lexical item [Kuswandini 2018, p. 351].

Nowhere is the application of MDA more relevant, complex, and revealing than in commercial advertising [Hu, Luo 2016, p. 156], particularly within the highly competitive, capital-intensive automotive industry. Automobile advertisements are not merely informational broadcasts; they are meticulously designed works of art and strategic communication that reflect and shape evolving consumer preferences, technological advancements, and deep-seated socio-cultural ideologies (Wasif Hussain, Panggabean 2024, p. 73). They function as complex semiotic systems that construct identities, negotiate cultural values, and attempt to resolve societal contradictions regarding status, freedom, and environmental responsibility [Yi 2024, p. 31]. Through the sophisticated lens of MDA, the automobile commercial emerges as a remarkably rich site for critical inquiry.

The automobile industry presents a unique set of semiotic and sensory challenges. The product is a high-value machine traditionally evaluated through the test drive, yet advertising must sell this through non-physical media. The operationalisation of spatial layout represents the most fundamental level of sense-making in these ads. The placement of a vehicle or logo is an ideological decision that establishes information values.

The horizontal polarisation (**the horizontal axis**) of an advertisement governs the flow of information. Based on the experience that language users in most Western cultures read and write from left to right, elements positioned on the left side of a composition are taken as the “Given”. The Given represents information that the viewer is assumed to already know; it is the established baseline, the recognised problem, or the point of departure for the narrative. Conversely, elements placed on the right side of the visual space are presented as the “New”. The New constitutes the crucial message, the resolution to the problem, or the primary product being introduced to the market. In the context of car advertising, the visual vector of a vehicle is almost

always oriented to face or move toward the right side of the page. This spatial orientation aligns the product with the concept of forward momentum, progress, and the attainment of a desirable, “New” future, firmly grounding the commercial message in an optimistic trajectory [van Leeuwen, Kress 1995, p. 27].

The vertical axis governs the philosophical and practical division of the advertising message. If a visual composition is vertically polarised, the elements placed in the upper section represent the “Ideal”. To present something as Ideal means to offer it as the generalised, romanticised essence of the information. The top half of an advertisement is the realm of emotion, fantasy, and aspirational promise [Kress, van Leeuwen 2006, p. 186].

The bottom section of the spatial plane is put forward as the “Real”. The Real contains the factual, empirical, and highly practical information required to ground the fantasy in commercial reality [Kress, van Leeuwen 2006, p. 187]. A prototypical automotive layout rigidly adheres to this structure. The upper section will typically feature a stunning, high-modality photograph of the automobile situated in a majestic natural landscape or an idealised, glowing urban environment [Bortoluzzi 2010, p. 167]. This appeals to the consumer’s emotional desire for status and beauty. The bottom section of the advertisement, however, will contain the dense, monomodal text outlining financing terms, engine specifications, safety disclaimers, and the brand logo, providing the empirical justification for the emotional purchase.

In addition to linear and polarised layouts, automotive advertising frequently employs centred configurations. **A centred layout** positions the primary subject – the automobile – directly in the middle of the visual field. By intentionally leaving the peripheral, marginal areas of the advertisement empty or blurred through shallow depth of field, this pattern creates maximum focal impact. The marginal elements are completely subordinated to the central focus, ensuring that the product is perceived as the absolute nucleus of the narrative [Stöckl, Pflaeging 2022, p. 7].

Furthermore, interactive meanings are generated through camera techniques. Low angles (looking up at the car) indicate dominance and unassailable prestige. Gaze

also plays a role: a “demand” image (model looking at the lens) requires engagement, while an “offer” image (model looking away) allows the viewer to be a passive voyeur of a desirable lifestyle [Tan et al. 2020].

Historically, automotive advertising was dominated by “visceral cues”: the symphonic roar of a V8 engine, the gear shifts, and the rugged sound of gravel [Yang]. In modern MDA, sound design is recognised as a powerful semiotic resource that constructs the “audibility of the world”. In the automotive sector, these sounds are scientifically engineered using psychoacoustic metrics to ensure an engine note is perceived as powerful rather than an annoyance [Nykänen 2008, p. 16].

“The classic engine roars, metallic gear changes and the exhaust rattle” were central to the sensory lexicon of automotive ads. Sound branding served as a secret weapon, signalling power and independence. However, with the transition to EVs, the acoustic signature has fundamentally changed. “Instead, futuristic sounds of a spaceship, music and deep hums that mimic internal combustion engines fill the urban space.” Torque is instantaneous but silent, requiring brands to rewrite their advertising playbook [Dreehsen]. Modern EV campaigns have shifted from horsepower to heartstrings. Engine noise is replaced by near-silent hums or hypnotic soundscapes that evoke serenity and high-tech sophistication. Electric Vehicles (EVs), being naturally silent, create a sensory void.

Another specific shift is the re-framing of the car interior. As autonomous driving technologies (ADAS) advance, the driver’s role shifts from operator to occupant. Consequently, advertising focus has migrated from the exterior styling (how the car looks to the world) to the interior experience (how the car feels to the user). The car is marketed as a third space (distinct from home and office), a sanctuary of wellness and connectivity [Möller, Haas 2019, p. 515].

This construction of identity also extends to gender representation. Recent decades have seen the rise of “femvertising,” where brands challenge outdated stereotypes. Modern car ads often feature female protagonists in “demand” images (direct gaze) to construct relationships of equality and agency. This was particularly evident in ads surrounding the lifting of the women's driving ban in Saudi Arabia,

where the visual of a woman behind the wheel functioned as a semiotic marker of national power shifts [Sibai 2022, p. 202].

This requires a haptic-centric advertising strategy. Visuals must work harder to convey the tactile comfort of the seats, the air quality (olfactory purity), and the ambient lighting (visual mood). The narrative often employs “Event Structure Metaphors,” framing the drive not as a commute but as a journey of self-discovery or family bonding, using the sensory environment of the car as the “container” for these emotional events [Duan et al. 2025, p. 44].

Finally, the automotive sales model is becoming increasingly hybrid. “Digital showrooms” and VR configurators allow users to customise their vehicles in immersive 3D environments. This adds a layer of interactive modality to advertising, where the user’s agency (clicking, rotating, zooming) becomes part of the sensory loop, providing a sense of control and “pseudo-tactility” that static ads cannot offer [Winter 2019, p. 91].

Conclusions to Chapter 1

Summarising all the above, in the 2020s, sensory linguistics has established itself as an interdisciplinary field investigating how human language encodes and reflects sensory experience. Drawing from cognitive science, neurophysiology, and anthropology, researchers have demonstrated that the structure of the English lexicon is not arbitrary but is deeply grounded in the nature of our perceptual systems.

Sensory perception is established as the primary cognitive interface through which reality is filtered and categorised. Although the traditional Aristotelian model remains the cultural standard, contemporary research in Sensory Linguistics and Neurophysiology emphasises a more complex, multimodal framework. Linguistic data, notably the “Vision Dominance” hypothesis, confirms a cross-cultural hierarchy that prioritises visual stimuli. This is reflected in the English sensory lexicon, where the visual domain exhibits the highest degree of lexical differentiation and frequency. For the automotive sector, this hierarchical structure provides a theoretical justification for

the prioritisation of “visual grammar” – such as light energy and geometry – as the primary vehicle for brand engagement.

Moreover, the English sensory verb system functions as a sophisticated, hierarchical macro-system. While the core consists of high-frequency, general perception verbs of Old English origin, the main part and periphery provide the necessary semantic specificity to describe nuanced experiences. This lexical richness is vital for overcoming the ineffability of complex sensations. In advertising, these descriptors serve as cognitive triggers for sensory simulation, allowing the consumer to mentally bridge the gap between a distal, digital representation and the physical, haptic reality of the product.

Furthermore, the integration of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model demonstrates that automotive advertising acts as a multimodal stimulus designed to modify the consumer’s internal state. The efficacy of this discourse relies on Multisensory Congruence, where the alignment of auditory, visual, and tactile cues creates a “super-additive” effect, enhancing emotional resonance and memory retention.

This cognitive architecture is further expanded through the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which is heavily indebted to Systemic Functional Linguistics and the social semiotic approach. By applying the metafunctional principle, researchers can deconstruct how advertisements simultaneously fulfill ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. This is achieved by mapping linguistic metafunctions directly onto visual grammar equivalents: representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Under this lens, the spatial layout of an advertisement is revealed as a deliberate ideological decision. The horizontal axis governs the flow of information from the “Given” to the “New,” aligning the product with forward momentum and progress, while the vertical axis separates the aspirational “Ideal” at the top from the empirical “Real” at the bottom. Such interactive meanings are further manipulated through camera angles and gaze, establishing power dynamics that dictate whether the car is perceived as an object of dominance or a relatable tool for personal agency.

Finally, the industry is currently experiencing a “sensory paradigm shift” necessitated by the transition to Electric Vehicles (EVs). The traditional reliance on “visceral” auditory cues, such as engine displacement, is being replaced by “hypnotic soundscapes” and an increased focus on the interior as a “third space.” As the driver transitions from operator to occupant, the advertising lexicon must adapt, shifting from exterior power to interior wellness and haptic luxury. This evolution underscores the dynamic nature of sensory vocabulary as it continues to map new technological realities onto the human embodied experience.

2. SENSORY MODALITIES IN CAR ADVERTISEMENT

The automotive industry has gone through a transformative decade, shifting from a mechanical-centric paradigm to an era dominated by electrification, digital connectivity, and autonomous intelligence. This evolution is mirrored in the advertising strategies of prestige brands such as BMW, Volvo, and Mercedes-Benz, where the focus has migrated from technical specifications to immersive lifestyle narratives and identity-driven messaging. Within this context, advertising discourse functions as a complex multimodal text, integrating linguistic, visual, auditory, and tactile resources to construct meaning and evoke emotional resonance [Hu et al. 2025, p. 405]. By leveraging multiple sensory modalities, these brands move beyond simple information dissemination to create semiotic worlds where the vehicle serves as a symbol of personal achievement, safety, or progressive innovation. We are going to conduct an exhaustive multimodal analysis of sensory modalities in car advertisements from 2020 to 2026, examining the systematic application of sensory cues and their interaction through multimodal metaphors and synesthetic effects.

The theoretical framework for this analysis is grounded in the principles of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) and cognitive linguistics. MDA posits that communication is not limited to language but involves a variety of different semiotic modes – such as image, sound, and gesture – which work synergistically to convey a unified message [Kuswandini 2018, p. 349]. In the context of car commercials, the visual grammar framework provides a methodology for analysing how composition, colour, and gaze influence the viewer's perception of the product [Hu et al. 2025, p. 405]. Furthermore, cognitive linguistics, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), offers a lens through which the mapping of abstract values onto concrete products can be understood [Duan et al. 2025, p. 43]. Sensory modalities are categorised into visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic/tactile channels, each contributing uniquely to the consumer's mental representation of the vehicle.

2.1. Visual Modality

Visual modality remains the primary driver of automotive advertising, evolving from a focus on the exterior's mechanical beauty to the interior's digital sophistication. In the 2020s, BMW, Volvo, and Mercedes-Benz have utilised visual cues to distinguish their brand identities through distinct aesthetic choices. Visual information in these advertisements is not merely decorative; it serves a persuasive function by highlighting specific product features and aligning them with sociocultural patterns.

BMW's visual strategy in the 2020s emphasises a futuristic, sharp, and dominant presence. The brand frequently relies on lexical cues that evoke structural integrity and modern architecture. A pivotal shift occurred in March 2020, when BMW introduced a new corporate identity for online and offline communication. After more than 20 years since the last change to the BMW Logo had been introduced, the iconic BMW roundel was reworked into a two-dimensional, transparent version [Paul]. This visual change was not merely aesthetic but semiotic; the transparency symbolises “openness and clarity,” inviting customers to become part of the world of BMW in a digital age. This transition reflects BMW's shift from being a pure automotive manufacturer to becoming a “relationship brand” focused on technology and connections [Introducing BMW's new brand design for online and offline communication].

By 2025-2026, the visual modality matured into the Neue Klasse era. This design language emphasises “reduction to the essentials,” where the physical dashboard is largely replaced by the BMW *Curved Display* and immersive digital graphics. Advertisements for the Neue Klasse utilise a social-first approach, incorporating Augmented Reality (AR) filters on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat to allow users to visualise the vehicle in their own environment, thereby blurring the line between the physical and digital visual space [The Neue Klasse: The BMW Group Enters a New Era].

BMW advertisements highlight a *bold stance*, *cutting-edge design*, and a *sculptural BMW curved display*. The language points to aggressive and precise geometry with terms like *sharp lines*, *frameless*, and *sharp outer edges frame* (see Appendix 1).

The brand utilises words like *sleek*, *slim* (rear taillights), and *clean* (design) alongside concepts like *invisible armour* (see Appendix 1). This positions BMWs not just as vehicles, but as highly advanced, protective, and visually striking technological monoliths. The concept of the *SKYTOP* further introduces an expansive visual element, blending the car's interior and exterior with the outside world (see Picture 2.1.1).



Picture 2.1.1 – The BMW Skytop [128].

Mercedes-Benz has consistently utilised a design philosophy known as “Sensual Purity,” which balances emotion and intelligence. Later, this philosophy evolved to address the “X-Factor” – the redefinition of the extraordinary to spark desire. The visual modality of Mercedes ads often creates a bipolarity between *Hot* (organic, emotional curves) and *Cool* (geometric clarity and technical mastery) [Sensual Purity].

In the previous decade, Mercedes-Benz visuals focused on the “Destination anywhere” concept, showing luxury vehicles on rocky beaches and mountains to challenge the perception that the brand was restricted to urban environments (see Picture 2.1.2). However, with the launch of the EQS in 2021, the visual narrative shifted to the MBUX Hyperscreen, a concave screen that stretches across the entire width of the cabin like an *ocean wave* [208].



Destination anywhere. Because your heart is the road map.
 The new Mercedes-Benz GLC Celebration Edition. Make the best of every ground.

Follow your heart, unfollow the tracks. The Mercedes-Benz GLC drives you to the challenges you seek.
 Visit your nearest dealership and you will realize that destinations lie in the heart, and not on a map.

Mercedes-Benz
 The best or nothing.



DELHI NCR: Silver Arrows: Delhi, Noida and Ghaziabad: Tel: 0-9999200503, www.silverarrows.in,
T & T Motors Ltd.: Gurgaon, South Delhi, West Delhi: Tel: 0-8447618031, 0-9899042143, www.tandtmotors.co.in
KARNAL: Berkeley Motors Ltd.: 117 Km Stone, G.T. Road, Nh-1, Village Kutail, Karnal - 132001 (HARYANA). Tel: 0184-3300000, 0-8607390606, 0-8607378606, www.berkeley-motors.in
DEHRADUN: Berkeley Motors Ltd.: Mohabewala Industrial Area, Subhash Nagar Chowk, Sahranpur Road, Dehradun. Tel: 0135-3054000, 0-7088078606, 0-7088378606, www.berkeley-motors-dehradun.in

*Terms and conditions apply. Accessories, colours and fittings shown may not be part of standard specification. Limited period offer. All offers from dealers. Finance at the sole discretion from financier. Scheme and offers applicable on select models. Mercedes-Benz cars: GLC meets Bharat Stage IV emission norms.

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Picture 2.1.2 – Destination anywhere. Mercedes-Benz. (Mercedes Car Destination Anywhere Because Your Heart Is the Road Map Ad - Advert Gallery, 2017).

The 2023–2026 “Defining Class” campaign featuring actor Matthew Macfadyen and Roger Federer represents the pinnacle of this visual evolution (Mercedes-Benz - A New Chapter of the Defining Class since 1886 Campaign, 2024). The campaign uses unusual images and stunning visuals to tell a story that spans 140 years of innovation, moving from the 1886 Benz Patent-Motorwagen to the electric CLA Class (Mercedes-Benz, From 1886 to 2026 – 140 years of innovation, 2026). The visual modalities here are *gorgeous*, *athletic* and a *timeless icon*. The vehicles are isolated against infinite, seamless studio backdrops that shift between clinical whites and deep shadow gradients. By removing real-world environmental context, this visual isolation elevates the cars from functional transport to real, *timeless icons*. The lighting is highly controlled to emphasise visual material properties, from the raw, exposed mechanics

of the 1886 Benz Patent-Motorwagen to the glossy aerodynamics of modern electric models (see Picture 2.1.3).



Picture 2.1.3 – From 1886 to 2026 – 140 years of innovation [165].

Mercedes-Benz separates itself by leaning heavily into the aesthetics of high fashion, art, and elemental beauty, referring to a raw, fundamental, or untamed form of beauty that resonates with the core forces of nature (earth, air, fire, water). It is a stark, simplistic, and powerful aesthetic that often emphasises natural materials and organic textures, often evoking a sense of primal awe. The brand's visual vocabulary is highly expressive, focusing on contrast, light, and artistry.

Mercedes employs fashion-forward and artistic terminology such as *absolute beauty*, *haute*, *expressive*, and *jaw-dropping*. The brand paints a picture of visual opulence using phrases like *cosmos of creation*, *deep dark*, *blooming*, and *vibrancy* (see Appendix 3).

The visual cues point to a cinematic and almost magical presentation. Phrases like *blurring the lane*, *digital light*, *chrome*, and *magical* suggest advertisements that rely on dynamic lighting, reflective surfaces, and surreal, dream-like visual environments (see Appendix 3).

Volvo has consistently utilised Scandinavian *minimalism* as a visual shorthand for safety and human-centric design. This aesthetic is characterised by *clean* lines, the absence of clutter, and a focus on natural materials. In the introduction of the new Volvo C40 Recharge (2021), Volvo emphasises that sustainability is now of the same importance as safety. Through close-up shots of a completely *leather-free* interior made of “*high-quality, sustainable materials made from bio-based and recycled sources*”, they “*set a new standard for premium and sustainable materials, in line with [their] ambition of becoming a circular company by 2040*”, while creating a visual texture that implies warmth and reliability [219].

Later Scandinavian charm (2022), Scandinavian design (2022) and Scandinavian simplicity (2022) evolved to Scandinavian luxury (2025) (see Appendix 2). The visual strategy in more recent commercials, such as those for the EX30 and EX90 (2024–2026), focuses on the *little things* that contribute to a larger sense of security: “*Compact in size but big in impact, it’s designed around the details that make everyday life feel easier, more personal, and more intuitive.*” [241]. The visual framing often centres on the driver’s internal experience, using a sanctuary-like interior to represent psychological safety (see Picture 2.1.4).



Picture 2.1.4 – Volvo EX30: It’s the little things that mean a lot [241].

This minimalism extends to the interface design shown on screens, where the reduction of visual noise is equated with reduced cognitive burden for the driver, reinforcing the brand's safety-first philosophy.

Volvo's visual modality is deeply rooted in its heritage, prioritising minimalism, nature-inspired palettes, and protective dimensions over aggressive styling. Volvo emphasises *Scandinavian simplicity*, *Scandinavian design*, and *functional beauty* (see Appendix 2). The colour palette is explicitly grounded in nature and raw materials, using descriptors like *crystal white pearl*, *denim blue*, *sage green*, *black stone* and *thunder grey* [249].

The visual language communicates safety, space, and understated elegance. Ads feature *modern proportions*, a *confident* (front end), and *dramatic surface area*, while framing the interior visually as a *living room* with *lots of room* and *generous load volume* (see Appendix 2).

Another important aspect of visual modalities in advertising discourse is **spatial arrangement** and **environmental framing** surrounding the vehicle. These are not merely decorative background elements; they act as vital non-verbal communicative tools. By carefully selecting where and how a car is placed within a given space, brands visually reinforce their core values, target demographics, and overarching corporate philosophies.

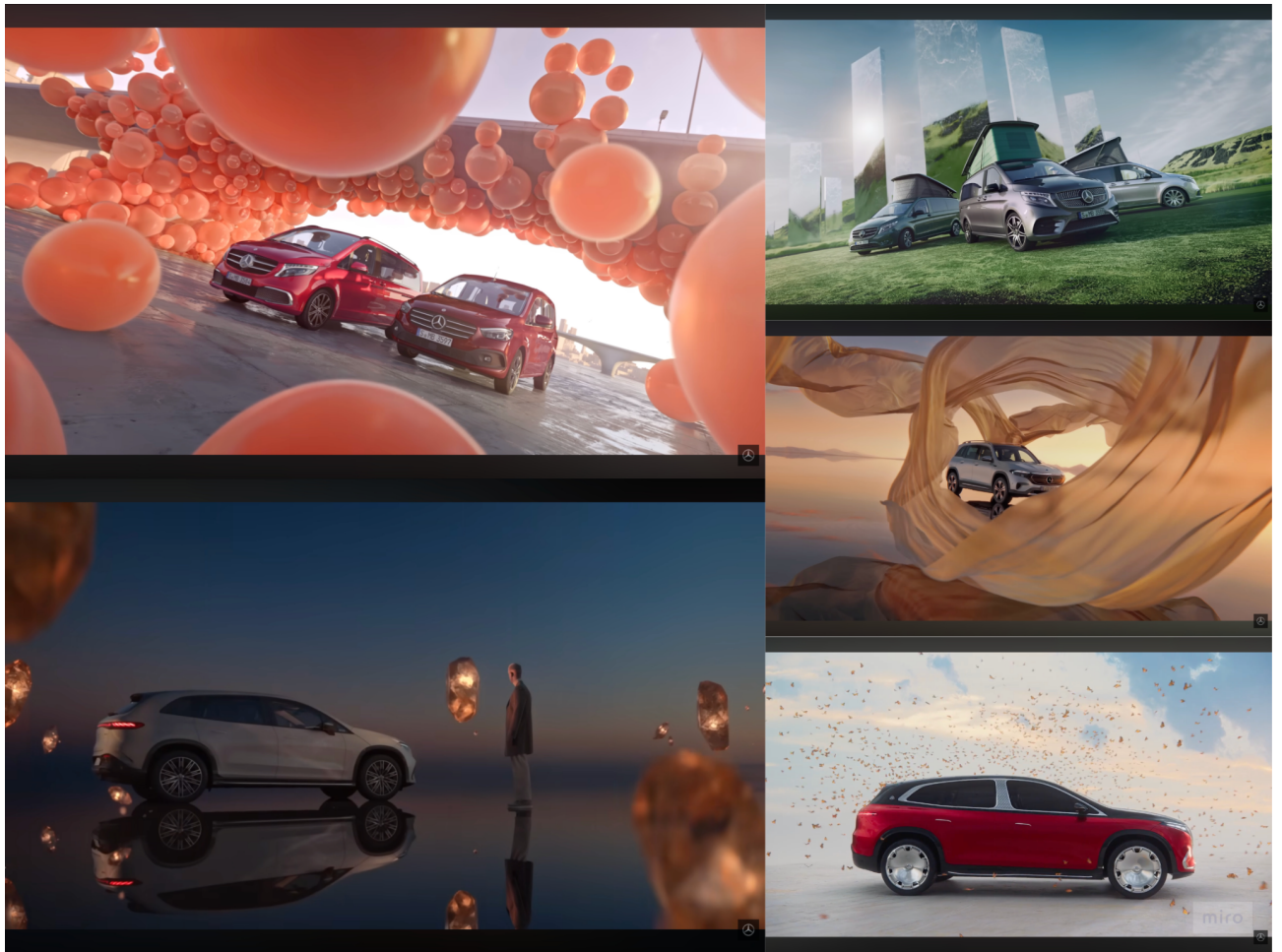
Volvo's spatial strategy heavily favours organic realism, deliberately placing vehicles within expansive, natural environments. The brand frequently situates its cars on forest-lined roads, amidst open fields, and within serene outdoor landscapes. This deliberate framing functions as a visual anchor to the brand's foundational pillars: a close connection to nature, environmental sustainability, and passenger safety. By avoiding artificial studio spaces or aggressive urban environments, Volvo portrays its vehicles as harmonious extensions of the natural world (see Picture 2.1.5). This spatial arrangement subconsciously reassures the viewer, positioning the car as a safe, eco-conscious haven that respects and protects the environment it traverses.



Picture 2.1.5 – Volvo’s Organic Integration [218], [221], [228].

In sharp contrast to Volvo’s naturalism, **Mercedes-Benz** frequently detaches its vehicles from everyday reality, placing them within highly abstract, theatrical, and surreal spaces. Over the course of the 2020s, the brand’s scenography has evolved to treat the automobile as a piece of high art or haute couture.

During 2021 and 2022, the brand’s visual language emphasised weightless elegance and gravity-defying luxury. Vehicles were framed by delicate, ethereal motifs like massive flocks of swirling butterflies and colossal, flowing veils dancing over reflective waters. This seamlessly transitioned into a crystalline aesthetic, featuring hovering amber crystals, floating spheres, and monolithic mirrored structures emerging from natural landscapes to create an otherworldly atmosphere (see Picture 2.1.6). By deliberately detaching the vehicles from mundane, everyday environments, Mercedes-Benz effectively elevates the automobile to the status of a captivating masterpiece. These surreal spatial arrangements successfully communicate a brand identity rooted in exclusive, avant-garde prestige rather than mere functional transport.



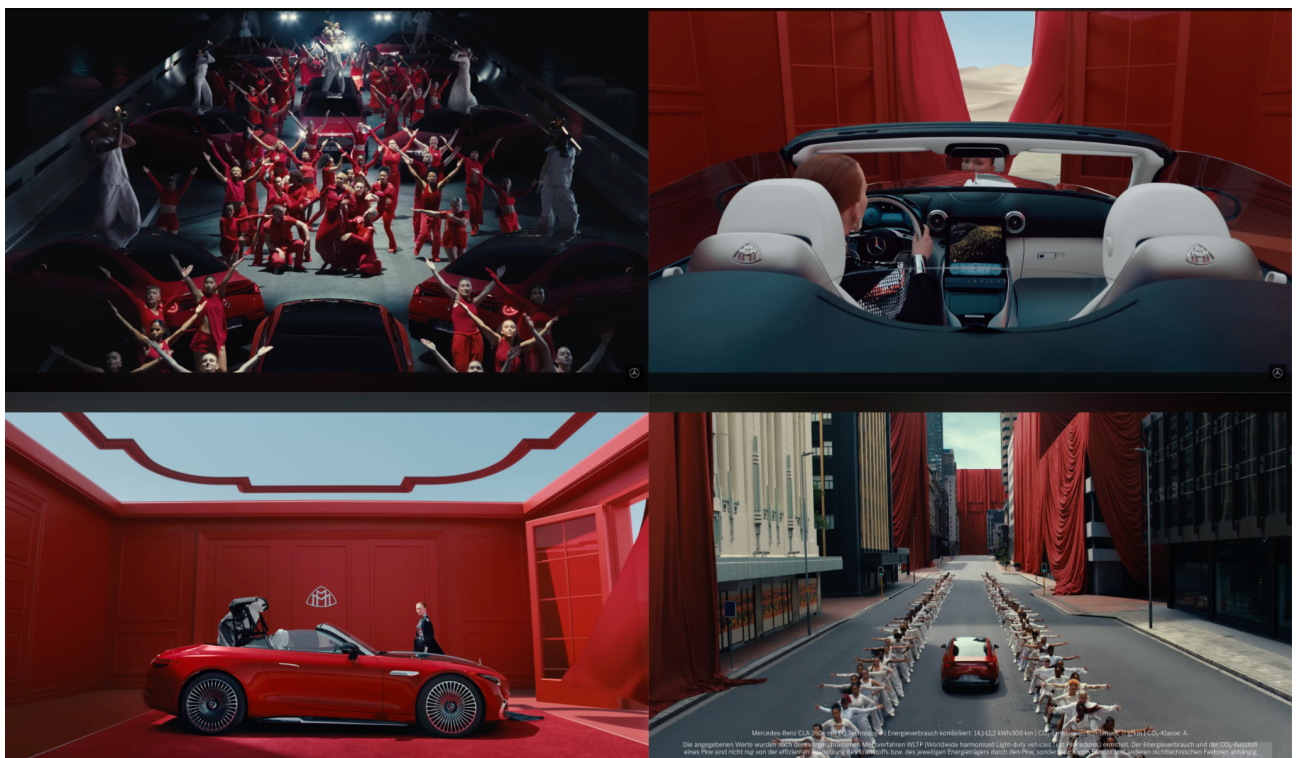
Picture 2.1.6 – Mercedes-Benz’ The Ethereal-Crystalline Phase [182], [183], [190], [193], [196].

Moving into 2023, the scenography embraced a profoundly cosmic and intellectual aesthetic. The spatial arrangements expanded into unexplored realms, positioning vehicles against deep-space blue auroras and desolate, icy lunar surfaces. This period also prominently featured intellectual motifs, placing luxury models inside pristine white architectural spaces dominated by oversized metallic chess pieces (see Picture 2.1.7). These surreal juxtapositions serve to untether the brand from ordinary terrestrial constraints, framing the automobile as a vessel for extraordinary physical and intellectual exploration. Furthermore, the strategic incorporation of the chessboard and classical architecture subtly reinforces a narrative of calculated mastery, aligning the driver with a sense of timeless dominance and ultimate control.



Picture 2.1.7 – Mercedes-Benz’ Cosmic-Intellectual Phase [178], [180], [186].

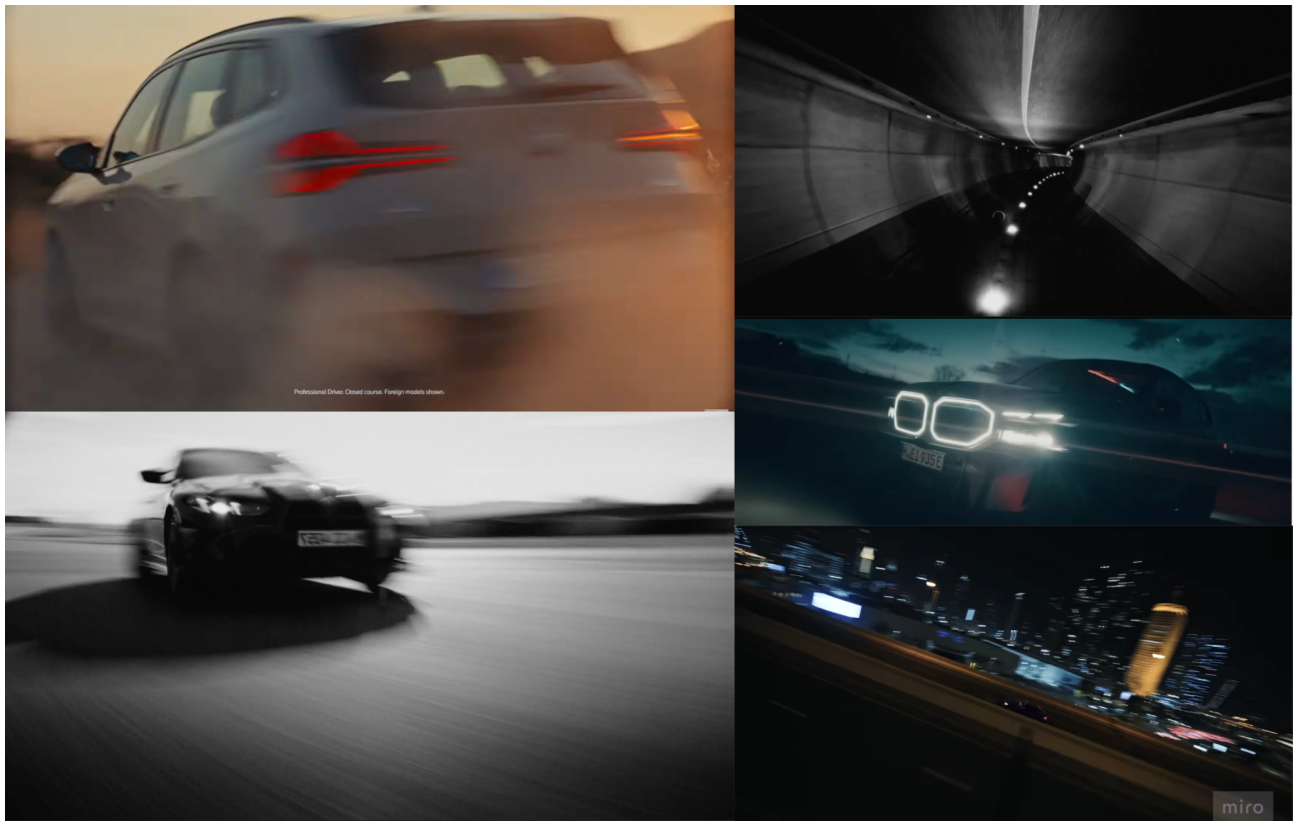
Finally, in 2024 and 2025, this surreal foundation culminated in grand theatricality. The brand transformed ordinary urban environments into dramatic, imposing stages. This involved utilising towering red curtains draped over skyscrapers and large troupes of synchronised dancers to immerse the vehicles in a dynamic, choreographed world of exclusive luxury (see Picture 2.1.8).



Picture 2.1.8 – Mercedes-Benz’ Abstract Theatricality [177], [185].

This progression of abstract spaces visually communicates an atmosphere of exclusive, otherworldly luxury. By placing the vehicle in these dreamscapes, Mercedes-Benz elevates the car above mere transportation, framing it as an avant-garde masterpiece that exists in a realm of absolute prestige.

BMW adopts a fundamentally different spatial approach, prioritising kinetic energy and relentless forward momentum. Rather than resting in peaceful forests or surreal artscares, BMW vehicles are frequently framed against rapidly changing sceneries and motion-blurred backgrounds (see Picture 2.1.9).



Picture 2.1.9 – BMW's Kinetic Dynamism [102], [106], [121], [210].

This technique compresses the spatial environment to emphasise acceleration, agility, and dynamic performance. The space around the car is not meant to be admired statically; rather, it is treated as a high-speed arena that the vehicle dominates. This fast-paced visual editing directly translates the brand's core ethos of *sheer driving pleasure*, using the blur of the surrounding environment to underscore the vehicle's unparalleled speed and technical capability.

2.2. Auditory Modality

The auditory modality in car advertising has undergone a significant transformation due to the rise of electric vehicles. While traditional advertisements relied on the visceral *roar* of the internal combustion engine (ICE) to signify power and excitement, contemporary ads must navigate the *silence* of electric motors [Graakjær 2025, p. 722]. This has led to the development of synthetic *future sounds* and a greater emphasis on atmospheric soundscapes and voice-overs to convey brand identity. The semiotic dimensions of EV sound include the emotive function, which expresses the vehicle's *emotional tone*, and the poetic function, which reinforces brand identity through aesthetic pleasure.

Auditory elements – both the sound design of the commercials and the lexical cues describing sound – play a critical role in establishing the vehicle's power or, conversely, its peaceful electrification. **BMW** bridges the gap between its internal combustion engine legacy and its electric future through a dual auditory approach. For its performance models, BMW retains the auditory markers of traditional power with words like *rumble*, *bullet*, and *sportiness* (see Appendix 1). The term *rumble* [123]. continues to be used for M-series models to anchor the brand in its performance roots, while *bullet* conveys the piercing, aerodynamic sound of speed, comparing it with the *thrust of 1 million horsepower* [115]. To communicate modern luxury, BMW highlights refined, intentional sounds, such as *soft closed* doors and positioning the driving experience as *a powerful piece of music*, linking the auditory pleasure of high-fidelity soundscapes with the physical sensation of acceleration. This is encapsulated in the slogan “*A symphony of sheer driving pleasure*” [134].

As electric engines replace ICEs, the sonic environment of the vehicle becomes a blank canvas for brand designers. Federal regulations in many regions now require the Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System (AVAS) for safety at low speeds, but manufacturers go beyond these requirements to create *emotional* sound profiles [Bavtar et al. 2023, p. 2373]. BMW's approach to EV sound involves creating a powerful auditory experience that reflects the car's “Heart of Joy” [101].

BMW's IconicSounds Electric program, developed in collaboration with Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer and acoustic engineer Renzo Vitale, represents a move away from fake engine noise toward a sonically refined future [Kleinjohann 2020, p. 45]. The societal adoption of electric vehicles is severely hampered by consumers' ongoing resistance to adopting new technology, which is one of the main causes of the implementation of fake noises [Herzig 2026, p. 1]. Zimmer views the electric car as a space with "*unlimited potential*" where sound can be used to make the world more beautiful [Lekach].

The auditory modality in BMW's 2022–2026 advertisements is built on *orchestral casting*. For the Expressive Mode, Zimmer utilised real strings and horns to create a *performative* experience. A key technical element is the Shepard Tone – a series of rising tones that create a psychoacoustic illusion of constant acceleration and tension [Bleakney]. This auditory cue is designed to give the driver goosebumps similar to a traditional M engine, but in a way that feels futuristic and *emotional* rather than mechanical, for instance, like in the all-new BMW M3 CS Touring [121].

Mercedes-Benz treats the auditory modality as a vibrant, rhythmic experience, often aligning the brand with modern music culture, youthfulness, and energy. The brand relies heavily on musical metaphors and energetic sounds: *click of the tape*, *jamming through the night*, *kick of a beat*, *living to the sound*, *riff*, and *sounds like fun* (see Appendix 3). By stating the car is *everything but quiet* or referencing a *roar*, or a *rallying cry*, Mercedes aligns its vehicles – especially AMG models – with a visceral, adrenaline-fueled auditory experience. This is contrasted in newer models by a "*sigh*" [203], representing the gentle release of air suspension or the quiet powering down of a system.

The use of sensory speech predicates in auditory voice-overs serves to build an unconscious bond with the audience [Карпенко et al. 2024, p. 314]. Mercedes-Benz ads for the EQS (2021) and Neon Dreams (2023) utilise *future sounds* and AI-driven auditory feedback to represent a shift from mechanical to digital luxury [182], [180].

The auditory environment of the 2026 S-Class is designed to be *actually felt every day*, combining superior NVH (Noise, Vibration, Harshness) insulation with

synthetic engine noise that provides a *soothing* or *performance-oriented* character depending on the driving mode. Shift towards silence is also emphasised in this model: “*But the real magic happens once that door shuts, the whole world is put on mute*” [205]. This auditory gestalt allows the consumer to form a holistic mental image of a possible experience, such as being a successful executive in a quiet, high-tech sanctuary.

Mercedes-Benz treats the auditory modality as part of a holistic sound production. In ads for the EQS, the acoustic experience ranges from *comfortable silence* to *interactive soundscapes* such as Silver Waves and Vivid Flux [202]. Silver Waves is marketed as “*sensuous and clean,*” while Vivid Flux is described as “*crystalline and synthetic yet humanly warm*” [Orensten].

By 2024-2026, Mercedes integrated ENERGIZING NATURE programs into its ads. These programs utilise soothing sounds like Forest Glade, Sounds of the Sea, and Summer Rain, recorded by nature acoustician Gordon Hempton [156]. The auditory strategy here is to position the car as a sanctuary from the noise of modern life. Furthermore, the 2026 S-Class ads highlight *near-ear loudspeakers* in the front seats, which allow navigation instructions or telephone calls to be directed specifically at the driver, preserving the *oasis of silence* for other passengers [205].

In contrast to Mercedes-Benz, **Volvo** weaponizes silence as the ultimate luxury and safety feature, perfectly aligning with its push toward an all-electric lineup. Volvo’s vocabulary is overwhelmingly focused on quietness: *peaceful, quiet, silence mute*, and a *whisper-quiet (cabin)*. When sound is mentioned, it is entirely focused on high-end, internal audio systems rather than the car’s mechanics, utilising phrases like *hear every beat, immersive sound, and spatial audio*. This auditory isolation builds the prestige of the car as a peaceful retreat from the chaotic outside world. The auditory modality also includes the *flush* sound of integrated components and the *aerodynamic* whistle-free movement of the car through air, emphasising functional beauty and technical perfection (see Appendix 2). As a brand synonymous with safety, Volvo uses auditory cues to denote protection. The lexical unit *crash* is used in advertisements like

New standards in safety to emphasise the sound-dampening and protective qualities of the vehicle's structure [245].

Volvo embraces the silence of the EV as a feature of its Scandinavian minimalism. In the 2020 “XC40 – Wherever You Go” and subsequent advertisements, the auditory modality is dominated by natural sounds – birds chirping, running water, and ocean waves – which replace the mechanical noise of the engine, which appears later, being accompanied by *a distinct and rhythmic clatter of horses' hooves* [250]. This soundscape creates a sanctuary-like atmosphere, aligning with Volvo's focus on the *little things* and emotional well-being. In the EX30 commercial, the sound of a *delete* key on a messaging interface becomes a recurring auditory cue that builds emotional tension, illustrating the brand's shift toward the *sound of life* rather than *the sound of the car* [241].

Volvo's auditory modality in the 2024–2026 period is predominantly functional and safety-oriented. The Driver Understanding System in the EX90 uses real-time sensing technology to identify if a driver is impaired or distracted. The auditory response is a *soft nudge* – a gentle, non-intrusive sound – followed by more consistent notifications if the driver does not respond [215].

In video advertisements, this auditory modality is represented through a rhythmic heartbeat or gentle wind sounds that simulate a soaring experience [237]. Unlike the high-tension cinematic sounds of BMW, Volvo's auditory palette is designed to create a *place of calm* so that users can drive safely in a complex world.

2.3. Tactile Modality

Traditionally, the tactile modality in automotive marketing was restricted to a narrow visual semiotics of luxury: close-up shots of grain-heavy leather and polished walnut veneers. However, the period of 2020–2026 has witnessed a profound expansion in how “touch” is communicated. In the transition toward electric mobility and autonomous assistance, the haptic experience has been redefined. It no longer refers merely to the physical surface of the cabin, but encompasses a triad of sensory inputs: **Materiality** (the physical touch of surfaces), **Kinaesthetic Interaction** (how

the vehicle communicates with the road), and **Internal Somatic Feelings** (the physiological and emotional feelings evoked in the driver, such as adrenaline or serenity).

BMW's sensory strategy is rooted in the concept of active engagement. While competitors may lean toward isolation, BMW utilises a haptic language that reinforces the connection between the biological driver and the mechanical machine. The brand's advertisements are centred on the concept of *Sheer Driving Pleasure* through the lens of ergonomic harmony [134]. The brand's messaging has pivoted from raw mechanical power to a more sophisticated, *seamless* interaction between human and machine.

BMW utilises a lexicon of *convenience* and *ease*. The physical interior is frequently described as *sculptural*, particularly regarding the integration of the Curved Display. By using materials like *open-pore wood*, BMW appeals to a *natural* tactile sense that suggests authenticity and *craftsmanship*. Unlike the polished, cold surfaces of the past, open-pore wood invites the hand to feel the grain, creating a grounded, organic connection within a high-tech environment. The adjectives *effortless* and *seamless* are used to describe the user interface, suggesting that the car's technology does not require tactile struggle but rather responds to the lightest, most intuitive touch (see Appendix 1).

On the road, the BMW tactile experience is characterised by *legendary dynamics* and *carved corners*. The brand uses the metaphor of a *thrust of 1 million horsepower* to describe the somatic sensation of acceleration – not as a violent jerk, but as a continuous, powerful push. This *sculpted* road feel suggests precision; the driver is meant to feel the geometry of the road without the *inconvenience* of vibration (see Appendix 1).

The ultimate goal of BMW's tactile modality is to induce a state of *relaxation* through control. By making the interface *effortless* and the dynamics *aerodynamic*, the driver is liberated from cognitive load. The resulting inner feeling is one of *freedom* – the physical sensation of being unburdened by the machine they are operating (see Appendix 1).

In contrast to BMW's ergonomic relaxation, **Mercedes-Benz** employs a tactile vocabulary of high-intensity arousal and *couture* sophistication. The brand positions the car not just as a tool, but as a visceral extension of the driver's ambition. Mercedes-Benz elevates the cabin to the level of high fashion. The use of terms like *hand-carved* and *couture* transforms the interior into a bespoke garment. The tactile experience is described as a *bond* between the driver and the materials. This is not merely about comfort; it is about the *thrill* of being encased in artisanal excellence. The surfaces are designed to feel prestigious, using *intense* adjectives to reinforce the sensory weight of the brand (see Appendix 3).

The kinaesthetic communication of a Mercedes-Benz is perhaps the most evocative in the industry. The brand describes the sensation of driving as *being on a sled on an ice track*. This metaphor conveys a paradoxical tactile state: absolute smoothness (frictionless travel) combined with absolute control (the *track*). The phrase *corner hugging* and *dynamic body control* suggest a car that physically grips the earth, providing the *strongest push forward* (see Appendix 3).

In the advertisement, such as the one featured in the 2025 campaigns "Because it's Mercedes-Benz" [166], the combination of rapidly changing scenery outside of a quickly moving car and the serene process of carving the Mercedes-Benz three-pointed star mirrors the tactile integrity. The S-Class, which combines engineering, art, and the desire for a genuinely smooth ride, has every detail crafted with the utmost care. By creating a little Mercedes Star by hand inside the S-Class, sculptor Jasenko Đorđević embodies this idea. Every component of the S-Class's peaceful nighttime glide is evidence of Mercedes' commitment to comfort. The extreme close-up shots of the sculptor's steady blade emphasise a level of microscopic precision that would be completely disrupted by even the slightest vibration. This visual metaphor successfully translates the abstract concept of advanced suspension engineering into a tangible, high-stakes display of undisturbed tranquillity. The commercial, which is intended for people who value the extraordinary, invites us to experience the art of smooth driving (see Picture 2.3.1).



Picture 2.3.1 – Hand-Carved Mercedes Star in an S-Class [166].

The Mercedes driver is not meant to *unwind*. Instead, they are meant to feel *empowered*, *desirable*, and even *restless*. The tactile inputs from the *hand-carved* details to the *visceral* road feedback keep the driver in a state of high-alert luxury, affirming their status through sensory stimulation (see Appendix 3).

Volvo's tactile modality represents a radical departure from the traditional luxury tropes of leather and chrome. Their strategy focuses on sustainability, safety, and the *protective* nature of touch.

Volvo is a pioneer in the *leather-free* movement, redefining premium touch through the use of high-quality *wool upholstery* and vegan *thick canvas-leather*. Their vocabulary is dominated by adjectives like *warm*, *smooth*, *soft*, and *softer* (seats). By emphasising the *tactile quality* of sustainable materials, Volvo shifts the definition of luxury from extravagance to conscientiousness. The physical sensation is one of *solid* and *stable* comfort, creating an environment that feels more like a Nordic living room than a mechanical cockpit (see Appendix 2).

Volvo's kinaesthetic language focuses on energy absorption. The feeling on the road is described as having *great handling*, being *energy absorbing*, and capable of taking *the first hit of inconvenience* to protect the driver. This is a unique tactile promise: the vehicle acts as a haptic filter, absorbing the harshness of the road

(potholes, vibrations, noise) so that the driver does not have to. The handling is described as *stable*, emphasising a grounded sensation that prioritises safety over adrenaline (see Appendix 2).

The somatic internal feeling for the Volvo driver is one of being *protected* and *peaceful*. The cabin is a sanctuary where one can *unwind*. The tactile modality here serves a psychological function: reducing the stress of the outside world through *soft* and *warm* sensory inputs (see Appendix 2).

While all three brands have moved away from the simple visual of leather, they have branched into three distinct sensory philosophies. BMW treats touch as a facilitator of flow; Mercedes-Benz treats touch as a trigger for status and arousal; and Volvo treats touch as a medium for safety and ethical well-being.

2.4. Interaction of sensory modalities: multimodal metaphor and synesthetic effects

According to the foundational work of Kress and Van Leeuwen, all texts are inherently multimodal, utilising paralinguistic forms of communication such as rhythm, intonation, gesture, and composition to complement linguistic elements [Kress, van Leeuwen 2006]. In the automotive sector, advertisements are not merely promotional tools but meticulously designed works of art that reflect evolving consumer preferences and the competitive dynamics of the industry [Wasif Hussain, Panggabean 2024, p. 72]. The true power of automotive advertising lies in the synergy between sensory modes, often manifested as multimodal metaphors and synesthetic effects.

A multimodal metaphor is conceptually defined as an operation where the source and target domains of a metaphor are represented through entirely different sensory channels or modes [Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009, p. 4]. Cognitive linguistic research emphasises that human beings process metaphors not merely by drawing direct semantic parallels with literal, concrete features, but through abstract associations grounded in human sensorimotor experiences [Duan et al. 2025, P. 43–44]. When identifying and interpreting purely visual or multimodal metaphors, the target domain

typically constitutes the product itself (e.g., the vehicle) or the overarching brand entity [Forceville 2017, p. 28]. This identification is guided by the cognitive principle of relevance, which dictates that commercial advertising inherently makes a positive claim about the product, thereby restricting the interpretive landscape to favourable mappings. The source domain, conversely, is often rendered implicitly through visual cues, auditory soundscapes, or tactile implications, requiring the consumer's cognitive apparatus to bridge the sensory gap and construct the metaphorical linkage [Forceville 2017, p. 29].

Synesthesia in advertising involves the phenomenon when a stimulus in one sensory modality (the inducer) involuntarily and automatically elicits a concurrent perception in another sensory modality (the concurrent), which means evocation of one sense through the stimulation of another, such as “seeing” the speed of a car through the “sound” of the wind [Nanay 2020, p. 282]. These metaphors function as cognitive tools that shape consumer perceptions and emotions by integrating conceptual metaphor theory and image schema theory [Duan et al. 2025, p. 43].

Synesthesia is widely and deliberately deployed in audiovisual advertising to create a fully immersive, cross-sensory psychological experience. The shared cultural frameworks of consumers, particularly those categorising the human sensorium into sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch, provide a traditional paradigm that advertisers manipulate [Gudkova et al. 2024, p. 645].

Advertisements routinely employ synesthetic patterns, such as mapping olfactory or gustatory concepts onto visual or auditory phenomena (e.g., smell/taste → hearing/vision → touch), to bypass rational technological evaluation and trigger immediate visceral reactions [Gudkova et al. 2024, P. 646–650].

Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) explains how these elements are integrated in the consumer's mind. Elements from different input spaces (e.g., a wild animal and a car) are combined in a blended space to form a new structure [Nong 2025, p. 36].

In the realm of automotive advertising, this cognitive blending moves significantly beyond traditional dual-domain analysis. It requires examining how visual, auditory, and linguistic modes interact across various complex network types.

These include simplex networks (which are highly prevalent), mirror networks, single-scope networks, and highly complex double-scope networks [Nong 2025, p. 37].

Between 2020 and 2026, **BMW**'s advertising narrative heavily and consistently relies on the conceptual metaphor THE CAR IS A LIVING ORGANISM (frequently manifesting as zoomorphism), alongside a strong emphasis on auditory-tactile synesthesia to replace the lost sensation of mechanical combustion (see Appendix 4).

The brand consistently utilises vocabulary and visual imagery that attribute biological characteristics, instincts, and autonomy to its machinery. Lexical units such as *a hunting predator* (2020), *light-footed nurse* (2020), *heart of the brand* (2021), and *untamed* (2024) establish a continuous conceptual thread of organic vitality (see Appendix 1). In the 2026 BMW iX walkaround commercial, the vehicle is explicitly framed as a responsive, biological entity that observes its environment. The front end is described as featuring new *snake-eye* daytime running lights: "*Slim twin headlights, new for the updated EX, feature instantly iconic snake-eye daytime running lights, framing a bold new take on the BMW kidney grill.*" It's a distinctly zoomorphic visual cue that implies predatory focus and biological alertness (see Picture 2.4.1).



Picture 2.4.1 – BMW iX: Official Walkaround [107].

Furthermore, the *bold kidney grill* is portrayed not merely as a functional aerodynamic surface or a static design element, but as an intelligent *face* that houses a

complex array of hidden cameras and radar sensors, functioning much like a biological nervous system. The metaphorical mapping is deepened by the tactile functionality of the vehicle's exterior; the grille is marketed as being *self-healing*, capable of literally erasing light scratches when exposed to ambient heat or over time. This tactile and visual characteristic directly maps the biological process of cellular regeneration onto a synthetic polyurethane surface, seamlessly blending the previously distinct domains of organic biology and industrial engineering into a single conceptual entity.

BMW's massive 2025–2026 marketing campaign, centred around the “Heart of Joy,” represents a sophisticated, textbook deployment of Conceptual Blending Theory. The “Heart of Joy” refers to a revolutionary, highly advanced central control computing unit that processes driving dynamics ten times faster than previous technological iterations, unifying motor control, chassis dynamics, and energy regeneration into a single digital brain. To communicate the abstract reality of this invisible software architecture, BMW launched the “Meet Okto the octopus” commercial (see Picture 2.4.2).



Picture 2.4.2 – BMW Heart of Joy | Meet Okto the octopus [109].

The advertisement draws a highly poetic, visually stunning parallel between the perfectly coordinated, fluid underwater waltz of a living octopus and the seamless,

dynamic driving experience calculated by the computer [Pak]. Here, a double-scope network is activated within the consumer's mind: the biological intelligence and decentralised-yet-unified nervous system of the octopus (the source domain) is mapped directly onto the invisible algorithms and data processing of the vehicle's central processing unit (the target domain). The visual modality is fluid, majestic aquatic movement that translates into a promised tactile modality – smooth, latency-free vehicle handling and cornering on the physical road.

To address the unnerving silence of electric mobility, BMW explicitly links auditory pleasure with the physical sensation of rapid acceleration, effectively manufacturing a synthetic tactile response. BMW describes its vehicle performance as *a powerful piece of music* (2025) [102] and utilises the overarching slogan “*A symphony of sheer driving pleasure*” (2023) [134] to encapsulate this brand philosophy.

This synesthetic ambition is actualised through the “BMW IconicSounds Electric” initiative, a soundscape engineered and composed by legendary Academy Award winner Hans Zimmer [Hahm 2023, p. 270]. Zimmer's artificial soundscapes completely replace the mechanical engine note with a *pulsating hum* and a *mighty whoosh* that dynamically adapt in real-time to the driver's throttle inputs. This represents a profound and highly deliberate synesthetic effect: the auditory modality is engineered specifically to trigger a tactile, visceral, and emotional response, effectively tricking the human sensorium into feeling the physical *thrust of 1 million horsepower* despite the absence of an internal combustion engine. The sound design aims to prevent the alienation of the driver by providing the crucial emotional feedback loop that electric motors naturally lack.

Additionally, the 2026 BMW commercial “The Sweets” employs a highly unique metaphorical mapping that targets the brand's after-sales service. By visually depicting an individual feeling “stuck inside” a confined space until a sudden, dramatic breakthrough occurs through the ceiling and emphasising the tactile sensation of intense heat alongside a title referencing a culinary confection, BMW executes a complex multimodal metaphor (see Picture 2.4.3). The advertisement maps the

delicate, precise, and heat-intensive artisanship of a master pastry chef (source domain) onto the rigorous, highly technical reality of high-end automotive maintenance (target domain). The abstract concept of luxury service, often associated with grease and mechanical labour, is elegantly reframed and rendered through the implied taste and tactile warmth of gourmet sweets, promising an outcome that is delightful rather than stressful.



Picture 2.4.3 – BMW The Sweets [140].

BMW's lexicon heavily privileges visual-tactile cross-mappings that reinforce biological vitality (*heart, soul, untamed, self-healing*). The vocabulary remains highly active, promising a *thrust* and *sheer driving pleasure*, reflecting the brand's ongoing commitment to performance, even as it fundamentally transitions the source of that performance from mechanical engineering to software algorithms and electric currents.

While BMW emphasises organic dynamism and the thrill of the drive, **Mercedes-Benz's** semiotic strategy for the 2020–2026 period hinges heavily on the cognitive metaphors THE CAR IS A SPA, THE CAR IS HOME, and LUXURY IS PHYSICAL EASE (see Appendix 6). Through its campaigns, Mercedes-Benz actively shifts the definition of the automobile from a functional means of spatial traversal (A

to B) to a highly personalised environment of psychological restoration and holistic well-being (A to me).

In the overarching 2024 “Defining Class” campaign and the detailed 2026 S-Class walkaround presentation, the vehicle is explicitly categorised into new architectural and functional roles: it is simultaneously a *Spa*, a productive *Office*, and an entertainment *Cinema* (see Picture 2.4.4). This radical reframing requires a multi-sensory vocabulary that emphasises extreme cocooning and environmental insulation from the outside world. The auditory modality is weaponised to create an isolated sanctuary; the S-Class features heavily insulated pillars and acoustic floors specifically designed to put the *whole world on mute* the moment the frameless doors are closed.



Picture 2.4.4 – 2024 “Defining Class” campaign [171].

The tactile modality is deeply integrated into the concept of a physical, reassuring embrace. Lexical units drawn from the brand’s advertising vocabulary include highly intimate descriptors *like feel like a hug* (2026), *feeling zenful* (2026), and *soothing* (2026) (see Appendix 3). The 2026 S-Class physically manifests this through heated seat belts calibrated to reach exactly 44 degrees Celsius, providing immediate thermal comfort across the chest, alongside headrests that are engineered to

physically envelop the occupant's head [205]. Furthermore, the rear seats recline to nearly 44 degrees, physically mimicking domestic lounge furniture and visually reinforcing THE CAR IS HOME conceptual metaphor.

Mercedes-Benz is particularly notable for introducing and mastering the olfactory modality into the multimodal metaphor of the vehicle as a high-end spa. The vehicle's Energising Comfort system actively purifies the cabin air every 90 seconds, ionising ultrafine particles, and dispenses a customised fragrance that is explicitly described in the marketing copy as *smelling like peace and quiet* [156]. Here, an abstract psychological state (*peace*) and an auditory state (*quiet*) are synesthetically mapped directly onto an olfactory stimulus. This manipulation of scent bypasses logical evaluation and triggers deep-seated emotional responses tied to relaxation and safety.

Further synesthetic interaction is evident in the brand's description of its integrated audio and massage systems. The Energising Comfort programs synchronise 3D and 4D Dolby Surround 7.1 soundscapes with *hot stone* physical massage functions embedded in the seats. In 2020, Mercedes-Benz utilised the evocative phrase "*the beat pulsing through our bodies*" to describe this sensory overlap [172]. By 2026, the technology has evolved so that the auditory modality is no longer merely heard through the ears; it is tactilely felt through physical air chambers positioned microscopically close to the seat surface, completely blurring the line between a sound wave and a physical touch.

The 2026 Mercedes-Benz "Parallels" commercial further leverages multimodal interaction by drawing metaphorical parallels between abstract human triumphs and physical engineering excellence. In the background, we hear "*when the girls win,*" "*I'm so excited,*" while the narration states, "*when it fits you,*" "*when it thrills you*" [154], directly connecting the emotional thrill of a human achievement to the physical, tactile sensation of the SUV *fitting* the driver ergonomically. The commercial explicitly notes that safety is *more than a feeling, it's a bond*, translating the tactile reality of the vehicle (how it *connects and protects* through structural integrity and airbags) into an enduring psychological relationship [154]. By framing its 140 years of

innovation as a continuous sensory experience, Mercedes-Benz turns legacy into a tangible, felt reality (see Picture 2.4.5).



Picture 2.4.5 – 2026 Mercedes-Benz “Parallels” Commercial Where everyone feels safe [154].

Mercedes-Benz operates the most sensorily diverse and layered lexicon of the three brands. By incorporating unique olfactory triggers (*aromatic, fragrant air, smells like peace and quiet*) alongside highly intimate tactile descriptors (*feel like a hug, feeling of belonging*), the brand structurally reinforces its shift toward the somatic sanctuary, positioning the vehicle as a holistic wellness device (see Appendix 2).

Volvo’s deployment of multimodal metaphors stands in stark philosophical contrast to both the aggressive, zoomorphic dynamism of BMW and the opulent, sensory saturation of Mercedes-Benz. For the 2020–2026 period, Volvo anchors its brand identity on the specific cognitive metaphors THE CAR IS A SANCTUARY / SAFE HAVEN, and LUXURY IS PHYSICAL EASE, realised not through the addition of sensory inputs, but through a profound reduction of sensory friction and cognitive load (see Appendix 5).

In Volvo's highly specific semiotic landscape, safety has evolved significantly from a purely mechanical concept (such as crash test ratings and reinforced steel cladding) to an intensely psychological one. The 2026 Volvo EX30 commercial, titled *"It's the little things that mean a lot,"* visually and auditorily frames the car interior as a private sanctuary explicitly designed for vulnerable emotional moments. The commercial depicts a character named Abby sitting in the isolated cabin, struggling with the high cognitive and emotional load of composing a text message to an estranged parent after eight years of silence [241].

The visual environment presented is distinctly minimalist, clean, and unobtrusive, stripping away extraneous technological distractions. The auditory landscape is dominated not by a roaring engine or a pulsating bass track, but by the soft, rhythmic clicking of the digital "delete message" interface on the central touchscreen, set against the backdrop of Abby's internal monologue (see Picture 2.4.6).



Picture 2.4.6 – Volvo EX30, a high-end electric compact car that values small details [241].

The vehicle serves as a surrogate home – a secure living room that provides the necessary silence, physical isolation, and psychological safety required for deep

emotional processing. This safe place helps Abby overcome her fears, and finally, she starts smiling, and the sun gets into the car through the side window. The metaphor THE CAR IS HOME is actualised not through opulent physical amenities like hot-stone massages, but through the provision of an uninterrupted, frictionless emotional space where the user feels secure enough to be vulnerable.

For Volvo, the conceptual metaphor LUXURY IS PHYSICAL EASE is interpreted radically as the complete eradication of both cognitive and physical load. The tactile interaction highlighted in the EX30 commercial – repeatedly pressing a responsive central screen to delete and rewrite a message without experiencing any systemic lag or frustrating interface complexity – highlights how seamlessly the vehicle's technology facilitates human interaction without adding to the user's stress. The vocabulary of Volvo perfectly reflects this minimalist ethos with terms like *effortless*, *calming*, *seamless*, *smooth*, and *unwind* dominating their copywriting (see Appendix 2).

This philosophy is further exemplified in the 2026 EX60 “Life on the move” commercial. The auditory environment is defined by a soulful, nostalgic musical track featuring the lyrics “*Remember me,*” deliberately evoking the emotional anchor of familiarity and returning home. Instead of requiring tactile effort to navigate complex menus, the car initiates a gentle voice prompt: “*Let’s talk, what can I do for you?*” [244]. This human-centric, conversational auditory interaction epitomises physical ease; the driver is entirely unburdened from manipulating physical controls. The technology acts as a proactive, invisible assistant, perfectly aligning with Volvo’s broader visual and textual vocabulary of *Scandinavian simplicity* and *Scandinavian charm*. The use of the descriptor *whisper-quiet* cabin explicitly positions the absence of sound, rather than the presence of engineered soundscapes, as the ultimate premium, tactile luxury (see Appendix 2).

Volvo’s vocabulary is characterised by a stark reduction in aggressive sensory inputs. The frequent recurrence of words like *calming*, *effortless*, *peaceful*, *simplicity*, and *unwind* demonstrates a calculated reliance on the metaphor of physical and mental ease. Unlike BMW’s promise of *thrust* or Mercedes-Benz’s *pulsing beat*, Volvo’s

ultimate luxury is represented by silence, environmental protection, and the absence of strain (*whisper-quiet, soft nudge, take the first hit*) (see Appendix 2).

Advertisements creatively blend the target domain (the vehicle) with diverse source domains – such as the natural world, living organisms, domestic home environments, or highly abstract concepts like liberty and freedom – through relentless cross-modal integration.

The interpretation of these blends is highly dependent on the cognitive environment of the addressee [Forceville 2013, p. 60]. As theorists note, the ultimate meaning of any commercial text is co-constructed by the consumer's pre-existing knowledge, sociocultural beliefs, and emotional state [Pérez-Sobrino 2016, p. 86]. Forceville's taxonomy of multimodal metaphor further refines this understanding by identifying specific types of conceptual operations, notably metaphonymy (a complex compound of metaphor and metonymy) [Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009, p. 7]. In a metaphonymic scenario within car advertising, a metonymic part of the vehicle (such as a sleek door handle or a glowing digital screen) might stand for the whole vehicle, which is then metaphorically mapped onto a completely different domain, such as a futuristic spaceship or a living sanctuary.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

As the automotive industry moves toward 2026 and beyond, the tactile modality will likely continue to shift toward the driver's inner feeling. With the rise of haptic feedback screens and vibration-cancelling seats, the physical material of the car becomes secondary to the somatic environment created by the manufacturer. The transition to electric vehicles – which lack the tactile vibration of an internal combustion engine – places even more importance on these designed sensations. Whether it is the adrenaline of a Mercedes or the peace of a Volvo, the cars of the future are being sold not by how they look, but by the specific physiological state they promise to induce in the human body.

BMW's semiotic strategy is heavily anchored in kinetic dynamism and active engagement. Visually, the brand utilises a sharp, futuristic design language and fast-

paced, motion-blurred spatial framing to emphasise acceleration, agility, and forward momentum. This kinetic dynamism is conceptually reinforced through the pervasive multimodal metaphor THE CAR IS A LIVING ORGANISM. By attributing biological characteristics to its vehicles – such as an “intelligent face” housing sensors, or mapping a digital brain onto the decentralised nervous system of an octopus – BMW bridges the gap between mechanical engineering and organic vitality. Furthermore, to compensate for the unnerving silence of electric mobility, BMW masterfully employs auditory-tactile synesthesia. Through orchestral soundscapes and psychoacoustic illusions developed alongside Hans Zimmer, the brand engineers auditory stimuli designed to trigger the physical, visceral sensation of rapid acceleration, successfully preserving its ethos of *sheer driving pleasure*.

In stark contrast, Mercedes-Benz crafts a sensory profile characterised by high-intensity arousal, exclusive luxury, and theatrical abstraction. The brand’s visual modality frequently isolates vehicles from everyday reality, elevating them as *timeless icons* within cosmic, crystalline, or haute couture environments. Mercedes-Benz actively redefines the automobile as an environment of psychological restoration, relying heavily on the cognitive metaphors THE CAR IS A SPA and THE CAR IS HOME (see Appendix 6). This is actualised through a deeply layered, intimate sensory lexicon that includes embracing heated seatbelts, tactile 4D soundscapes felt through the seats, and the unique integration of the olfactory modality via fragrances that explicitly *smell like peace and quiet*. By bypassing logical evaluation through these saturated, cross-sensory inputs, Mercedes-Benz elevates the vehicle into a highly personalised wellness sanctuary.

Volvo represents a radical departure from both BMW’s zoomorphic aggression and Mercedes-Benz’s opulent sensory saturation. Rooted in Scandinavian minimalism, Volvo’s strategy is defined by organic spatial realism and a deliberate connection to nature. The brand weaponises silence as the ultimate premium luxury, relying on natural soundscapes and gentle, functional auditory nudges rather than cinematic tension. Volvo interprets the conceptual metaphor LUXURY IS PHYSICAL EASE as the total eradication of cognitive and physical load. The brand utilises tactile inputs

like warm, leather-free materials to physically absorb the harshness of the outside world, drastically reducing sensory friction. Volvo frames the vehicle as a psychological safe haven, prioritising the internal, emotional security of the driver above all else.

Ultimately, the application of multimodal discourse analysis and Conceptual Blending Theory reveals that contemporary car advertisements are meticulously engineered psychological and cross-sensory experiences. Whether promising organic performance, an opulent spa environment, or a minimalist sanctuary, these brands leverage synesthetic synergy to transform the automobile from a functional machine into a profound extension of human identity and emotion.

3. COGNITIVE AND NARRATIVE MECHANISMS OF MULTIMODAL AUTOMOBILE ADVERTISING

3.1. Integration of Sensory Patterns within Advertising Storytelling

In a saturated digital marketplace where electric drivetrains increasingly standardise physical performance metrics such as acceleration and torque, premium automotive brands can no longer rely solely on the communication of functional engineering specifications to secure market share and brand loyalty. Consequently, leading luxury manufacturers – specifically BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo – executed a strategic pivot toward complex, multi-sensory brand storytelling. To comprehend the mechanisms through which these brands engineer consumer desire, it is imperative to ground the analysis in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework encompassing Narrative Transportation Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory, Archetypal Psychology, and the emerging paradigm of Sensescaping.

Narrative Transportation Theory posits that when an audience becomes deeply absorbed into a narrative, they experience a state of intense cognitive and emotional immersion, often described as a flow-like state. This absorption temporarily disconnects the consumer from their immediate physical surroundings, imaginatively transporting them into the story world. From a persuasion and marketing standpoint, narrative immersion is highly efficacious because it actively suppresses critical counter-arguing. As the consumer identifies with the characters and the plot, the evaluative and logical regions of the brain are bypassed in favour of experiential and emotional processing centres [Meng et al. 2026, p. 3].

Story-structured messaging improves brand attitude by up to thirty per cent compared to traditional, feature-based advertising [Kang et al. 2020, P. 52–53]. This neurological response explains why narrative-driven brands enjoy significantly higher recall rates; the authentic stories activate the medial prefrontal cortex, creating lasting neural imprints and durable brand associations [Kang et al. 2020, p. 49]. The science-backed advantage of narrative transportation is so profound that ISO 20671 standards now formally recognise storytelling as a measurable and critical component of brand equity valuation [Ilieva et al. 2024, p. 5]. In the context of luxury automotive

advertising, achieving this transportation relies heavily on the orchestration of vivid sensory cues – visual, auditory, and tactile representations that anchor the narrative, heighten physiological arousal, and invite the consumer to enact heroic or transformative scenarios [Sanders, van Krieken 2018, p. 1].

The structural pacing of these immersive narratives frequently relies on the Hero's Journey, a monomythic framework formalised by mythologist Joseph Campbell and subsequently adapted for business and cinematic storytelling by Christopher Vogler [Vogler 2017, P. 9–10]. In automotive advertising, the narrative rarely positions the brand as the hero; rather, the consumer is the protagonist, and the vehicle acts as the Supernatural Aid or the ultimate boon that facilitates the hero's transformation, enables the overcoming of obstacles, and ensures a victorious return to a state of heightened capability.

This narrative structure is inextricably linked to the deployment of specific Brand Archetypes based on Carl Jung's analytical psychology. Archetypes represent universal, hardwired patterns of human behaviour and motivation, providing a psychological shorthand that helps brands cultivate consistent, authentic, and emotionally resonant personalities [Majzoub et al. 2024, p. 212]. Through the rigorous application of these archetypal frameworks, automotive brands segment their market positioning, ensuring their multi-sensory storytelling accurately triggers the subconscious motivations of their target demographics. BMW frequently aligns with the Hero and Creator archetypes, emphasising mastery, performance, and innovation; Mercedes-Benz embodies the Ruler and Magician archetypes, projecting authority, prestige, and transformative luxury; and Volvo operates firmly within the Caregiver and Everyman archetypes, prioritising safety, community, ethical continuity, and profound human connection.

Complementing narrative transportation and archetypal positioning is Cognitive Metaphor Theory, initially developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which argues that human cognition is fundamentally metaphorical, allowing abstract, complex ideas to be understood through concrete, physically embodied experiences [Lakoff, Johnson 2008]. In modern digital advertising, this concept has evolved into

Multimodal Metaphor Theory, pioneered by Charles Forceville [Forceville 2017]. By cross-wiring sensory inputs – for example, mapping the visual elegance of a vehicle’s aerodynamic silhouette onto the auditory roar of a predatory animal, or translating the silent operation of an electric motor into the visual stillness of an arctic landscape – advertisers synthesise product functionality with psychological empowerment [Hu et al. 2025, p. 405]. This process accelerates the audience’s cognitive processing of complex brand values, bridging the gap between available cognitive resources and the required comprehension for highly sophisticated technological systems.

The evolution of these theories has culminated in the 2025–2026 marketing mega-trend known as Sensescaping [Rampley-Clarke]. Because consumers interacting with brands through digital channels cannot physically touch the leather upholstery, feel the weight of the steering wheel, or smell the distinct aroma of a new luxury interior, advertisers must rely on psychological translation. Sensescaping is the art of crafting multi-sensory experiences that engage consumers on a visceral level by digitally simulating sensory experiences through high-fidelity visual design, spatial audio, descriptive tactile language, and interactive augmented reality (AR) overlays [Laskaris].

This strategy is deeply rooted in the psychology of embodied cognition, which posits that our physical, bodily interactions directly influence our mental states and value perceptions. When shoppers cannot physically experience a product, the mind must simulate the experience; sensory cues like texture, sound, colour, and rhythm bypass rational thought and interact directly with emotional memory, triggering familiarity, trust, and desire [Shtompel]. As digital saturation induces screen fatigue and visual overload, Sensescaping serves as a strategic countermeasure, allowing automotive brands to transcend two-dimensional communication and create deeply immersive, memorable, and human-centric neural imprints.

Between 2020 and 2026, **BMW** systematically evolved its narrative identity from one of purely mechanical dominance to a synthesis of biological vitality and emotional integration. The brand’s historical positioning as The Ultimate Driving Machine was narratively expanded to encompass The Ultimate Feeling Machine,

representing a paradigm shift toward acknowledging the emotional architecture of the consumer in an era where electric motors standardise raw acceleration [139]. This transition relies heavily on utilising biological cognitive metaphors that map living traits onto high-performance SDV engineering.

The 2024-2025 commercial campaign titled “The Soul of BMW” stands as a definitive example of this narrative dualism. Over a highly concise, fast-paced 45-second duration, the commercial constructs an argument that separates the physical hardware of the vehicle from its metaphysical essence. The narrative systematically deconstructs the vehicle, positing that a *soul* cannot be manufactured, built, or programmed; it cannot be found within an algorithm or a silicon computer chip. Instead, the commercial establishes the *Heart* as the mechanical core, traditionally the internal combustion engine, but increasingly the BMW M Hybrid drivetrain, which provides the literal physical pulse, power, and forward momentum of the vehicle [139].

However, the storytelling explicitly states that the engine is merely muscle. The true *Soul* of the vehicle is introduced as an intangible phenomenon that exists only at the intersection of human interaction, historical heritage, and driving dynamics. The narrative claims that the soul is found in the driver, in the craftsmanship of the people who build it, and in the sensory experiences of touch, sound, scent, and sight within the cabin. By synthesising the *Heart* (machine) with the *Soul* (human emotion), BMW humanises its technology, concluding that the brand operates at the nexus where past meets future and joy meets performance. This non-verbal, fast-paced editing approach forces the viewer into a highly emotive, sensory-driven state of narrative transportation, bypassing technical scrutiny in favour of pure emotional resonance

BMW’s introduction of the “Heart of Joy” central control unit for the Neue Klasse architecture, specifically debuting in the 2026 BMW iX3, demonstrates a highly sophisticated use of multimodal metaphor theory to explain complex software engineering. The automotive industry is shifting toward Software-Defined Vehicles (SDVs), moving away from dozens of decentralised electronic control units (ECUs) toward centralised superbrains. To communicate the superiority of this unified processing, which eliminates latency between powertrain, steering, and braking

systems, allowing for millisecond precision and 98% regeneration utilisation, BMW deployed the “Meet Okto the octopus” commercial [109].

The narrative begins by examining the biological reality of the octopus, an organism possessing a decentralised nervous system where each arm acts independently. The story then poses a hypothetical scenario: if the octopus possessed a single central intelligence coordinating its limbs, it would exhibit a masterful display of precision, effortless agility, and safety. The visual and tactile description of the creature's fluid movement serves as the source domain, which is seamlessly mapped onto the target domain – the BMW “Heart of Joy” superbrain, “*The intelligent central control unit that unleashes the next level of driving pleasure*” [109]. This narrative strategy effectively translates latent software architecture into a visceral, kinetic performance, making abstract technology comprehensible and deeply desirable to the consumer through biological association.

Furthermore, the 15-second teaser commercials for the BMW iX3 rely on extreme sensory minimalism to generate anticipation. Featuring a sparse transcript that focuses purely on the repeated word *heat*, the commercial uses rhythmic, pulsing auditory cues that mimic a biological heartbeat. This auditory pattern translates the concept of electrical power into a tactile sensation of thermal energy and friction, reinforcing the premise that the electric motor is a living, radiating entity [113]. This tactile urgency is similarly utilised in service-oriented narratives, such as “The Sweets | BMW Service,” where the intense physical sensation of *heat* and being *stuck inside* through the ceiling is used to dramatise the necessity of optimal climate control maintenance, transforming a routine service reminder into a visceral, claustrophobic sensory experience [140].

In the commercial for the all-electric BMW i7, the brand elevates its narrative positioning from engineering prowess to the realm of high art. Titled “Forwardism,” the commercial traces an arc through canonical art history movements to contextualise the vehicle’s avant-garde design. The voiceover systematically associates historical periods with specific sensory and cognitive values: Mannerism is equated with

refinement, Classicism with craftsmanship, Impressionism with capturing the magic of a moment, and Surrealism with surprising, convention-defying imagery [137].

The visual and auditory cues guide the viewer through these aesthetic philosophies, culminating in the introduction of “Forwardism” – a proprietary art movement characterised by the BMW i7, positioning the vehicle as the icon of a new era. This narrative effectively forces the consumer to evaluate the vehicle not as a mode of transport, but as a meticulously curated masterpiece [137]. By aligning automotive manufacturing with fine art, BMW stimulates intellectual and visual appreciation, reinforcing its Creator archetype and demanding that the consumer recognise the vehicle's design as an artistic epoch in its own right.

If BMW's narrative is defined by kinetic energy and biological synthesis, **Mercedes-Benz's** storytelling is fundamentally aristocratic, immersive, and synesthetic. Operating firmly within the Ruler and Magician archetypes, Mercedes-Benz crafts narratives that project unyielding authority, historical dominance, and total multi-sensory immersion [Houraghan]. Between 2020 and 2026, the brand's storytelling strategy heavily emphasised its historical primacy while showcasing interior environments meticulously designed to manipulate light, sound, and touch, granting the driver absolute control over their sensory domain.

The cornerstone of Mercedes-Benz's historical narrative is the “Defining Class since 1886” campaign [171], [175]. The structural basis of this commercial is a chronological journey connecting the invention of the automobile with the distant future. The narrative begins by referencing the famous maxim regarding the public's desire for *faster horses*, positioning Mercedes-Benz not merely as a mechanical innovator, but as the creator of an entirely “*new class*” of existence and transportation [175]. The script traces the visual and mechanical evolution from the original three-wheeled Benz Patent-Motorwagen to the globally recognised three-pointed star, claiming that the brand has reinvented class across every vehicle segment and successfully bridged the icons of the past to the generations to come.

What profoundly distinguishes this narrative is its deliberate sensory transition. Roughly halfway through the visual timeline, the authoritative, confident voiceover

concludes with a polite, aristocratic “*thank you*,” and the commercial completely shifts its sensory modality [175]. The remainder of the narrative is carried entirely by an evocative, atmospheric musical score and high-end visual cinematography. This strategic silencing of the spoken word forces the audience into a state of deep sensory absorption, allowing the visual prestige and aesthetic evolution of the vehicles to speak for themselves. By abandoning verbal persuasion, Mercedes-Benz relies on the sheer weight of its visual legacy to solidify its unquestionable authority, perfectly embodying the Ruler archetype’s strategy of leading by presence rather than by argument.

The launch campaigns for the new CLE Coupé and Cabriolet exemplify how Mercedes-Benz utilises sensory overload to manifest the abstract concept of Desire [191]. The narrative is framed around a frantic meta-storyline where a director is caught off guard when the hero car arrives early for a world premiere shoot, creating an immediate sense of exclusivity, urgency, and awe.

Within this narrative framework, the commercial systematically catalogues an overwhelming array of sensory integrations. Visually, the narrative highlights the aggressive, low-positioned radiator grille adorned with the Mercedes-Benz pattern, powerful domes on the bonnet, sleek frameless doors, and advanced Digital Light technology. The interior environment is presented as a highly customizable sanctuary of light and data. The ad emphasises a 64-colour ambient lighting system that allows the driver to alter the emotional mood of the cabin, combined with massive 12.3-inch digital instrument and 11.9-inch centre displays, reflecting a sophisticated visual synesthesia where colour and technology dictate emotion [191].

Tactile and auditory luxury are granted equal narrative weight. The commercial details the inclusion of integral design seats featuring a complex seven-zone massage function, effectively serving as an onboard “masseur” that provides constant physical relaxation. Auditorily, the vehicle is equipped with a Burmester 3D surround sound system powered by seventeen speakers and Dolby Atmos spatial audio, creating an isolated, studio-quality acoustic environment. The integration of the intelligent MBUX system, which learns the driver’s personal habits and executes automated routines, reinforces the narrative that the car is a highly responsive, personalised entity shaped

entirely by the driver's desires [191]. This aligns with the principles of embodied cognition; by simulating the feeling of the massage seats and the depth of the audio through the screen, Mercedes-Benz makes the luxury feel tangible and believable to the digital consumer.

The brand's sensory exploration extends into highly targeted, niche emotional states. In the "Lose Yourself" commercial for the CLA (2020), Mercedes-Benz utilises the thumping, rhythmic cadence of techno music to bridge the gap between artistic creation and driving dynamics. The narrative follows a creator feeding cultural experiences into machines, culminating in a pulsing, hypnotic state of release [172]. The core theme is the physical flow of energy and the visceral vibration of the music, promoting a state of self-loss and transcendence that mirrors the hypnotic flow of driving the CLA.

Simultaneously, Mercedes-Benz ensures that its Ruler archetype provides a sense of absolute security. In the 2026 "Parallels" commercial for its SUV lineup, the brand integrates tactile and emotional vocabulary to forge a protective bond with the consumer. The narrative speaks to physical alignment ("*when it fits you*"), emotional arousal ("*when it thrills you,*" "*excited*"), and sanctuary ("*connects and protects*"). By claiming that the relationship with the vehicle is "*more than a feeling*" and rather a "*bond*" forged over 140 years of innovation, Mercedes-Benz leverages the concept of historical trust to validate modern emotional attachment [154]. This theme of secure sanctuary is echoed in the "Where everyone feels safe" commercial for the electric GLB, which relies on the comforting auditory lyrics "*Just call my name and I'll be there on time*" to establish the vehicle as a prompt, dependable, and deeply secure space for all occupants [200].

Furthermore, commercials like the Ewy Rosqvist "Courage" narrative utilise high-stakes historical statistics, highlighting that only forty-three out of two hundred and fifty-eight vehicles finished the gruelling 1962 Argentine Grand Prix, to align the brand with resilience, female empowerment, and indomitable spirit, proving that the Ruler archetype can also empower those who challenge the status quo [158].

Volvo's brand identity has historically been synonymous with uncompromising vehicle safety, firmly cementing its status within the Caregiver and Everyman archetypes [Houraghan]. However, the period spanning 2020 to 2026 marks a critical narrative evolution for the brand. Through highly sophisticated, emotionally resonant storytelling, Volvo has expanded the definition of safety to encompass environmental sustainability and climate protection, arguing that internal vehicle safety is rendered obsolete if the external global environment collapses.

The commercial “The Ultimate Safety Test” serves as the primary vehicle for this ideological pivot, utilising a brilliant bait-and-switch narrative structure. The narrative begins in a traditional, highly industrial setting, guided by an enthusiastic host named Bjorn. Viewers are presented with extreme, violent mechanical evaluations, including side-impact, frontal, and run-off-road crash tests. These scenes are dominated by aggressive sensory metaphors: the narrator describes the impacts as “*brutal*” and “*impressive*”, while the auditory landscape is filled with the jarring, visceral sounds of crunching metal, shattering glass, and mechanical destruction [231].

The narrative tension escalates when Bjorn introduces “*the big one*” – a test wherein a vehicle is hoisted by a crane and dropped from a height of one hundred feet. The audience anticipates another display of spectacular mechanical durability. However, at the exact moment of the drop, the commercial subverts expectations entirely. The setting violently shifts from the cramped, noisy crash laboratory to the vast, expansive white landscape of the Arctic [231].

The auditory brutality is instantly replaced by a haunting, eerie silence, broken only by the sound of a massive glacier calving and crashing into the ocean. This transition operates as a profound multimodal metaphor. The 100-foot drop of the car is visually and conceptually mirrored by the dropping of the ice sheets, suggesting that the ultimate threat to human safety is not a traffic collision, but the irreversible consequences of climate change. By contrasting the macro scale of planetary destruction against the micro scale of automotive engineering, Volvo successfully repositions itself from a mere manufacturer of safe cars to a global steward of a safe future, perfectly encapsulating the modern Caregiver archetype.

In stark contrast to the grand, planetary scale of the climate narrative, Volvo also utilises microscopic, highly intimate storytelling to emphasise emotional safety and human connection. In the 2026 commercial “Volvo EX30: It’s the little things that mean a lot,” the brand relies heavily on auditory intimacy and the psychological power of hesitation. The narrative focuses on a woman, Abby, attempting to reconnect with her estranged father after eight years of silence. The sensory storytelling is devoid of sweeping landscapes or speeding cars; instead, it centres on the vulnerability of her voice and the implied sound of typing, deleting, and revising text messages. Through her rejected drafts, the audience uncovers the pain of her history and the fact that she now has a family of her own, culminating in her decision to send a simple, raw, three-word message: *“I miss you”*. The definitive action and sound of sending the text mirrors the core philosophy of the compact EX30 – that immense value, safety, and profound emotional weight can be carried within the smallest, simplest packages [241].

Similarly, the “Life on the move” commercial for the EX60 utilises a soulful, rhythmic soundtrack featuring the repetitive lyrics *“remember me, I’m the one who had you baby”* to evoke a deep sense of nostalgia, memory, and enduring companionship. The musical loop serves as an auditory blanket, grounding the viewer in emotional warmth before transitioning seamlessly to the functional, helpful voice of the car’s virtual assistant asking, *“let’s talk, what can I do for you”* [244]. This fluidity between the abstract musical emotion of human memory and the concrete technological assistance of the vehicle reinforces the narrative that the car is an ever-present, supportive companion navigating the user through life’s transitions.

Further extending the Caregiver archetype, the “For Their Future” commercial focuses on childhood innocence and environmental legacy, set to a cover of the song “Lean On”. Using tactile and atmospheric descriptions, such as the warmth of a night and the physical sensation of the wind blowing, the narrative highlights the vulnerability of children walking innocently on sidewalks. The central plea, asserting that *“all we need is someone to lean on,”* establishes an ethos of interdependence, linking the need for personal, interpersonal support to the broader ecological goal of securing a sustainable future for the next generation [216].

In the EX90 “Designed to be the safest” commercial, Volvo shifts to a poetic, almost mystical narrative, describing the human life inside the car as an “*extraordinary magic*”. The vehicle is personified as a silent, invisible guardian whose sensors and cameras act as vigilant eyes, constantly watching over this “*magic*” even when the driver is overwhelmed, turns around, or is filled with doubt. This lyrical approach transforms complex Lidar and sensor technology into a comforting, watchful presence [215].

Recognising the limitations of short-form advertisements, Volvo expanded its narrative strategy into long-form storytelling with the release of *The Family Car: An American Love Story*, a four-episode docuseries developed in collaboration with Amazon Ads Brand Innovation Lab and streaming on Prime Video. Directed by Emmy winner Chris Wilcha, the series pairs stunning visuals with powerful human stories, featuring individuals such as actor Adam Scott, photographer Gus Powell, chef Erin French, and music producer Jahphet Landis [211].

By charting journeys driven by family dynamics (e.g., Adam Scott reflecting on the long, winding road from his first audition to his most meaningful role as a father) the series underscores Volvo’s dedication to togetherness, nostalgia, and human connection across seven decades [211]. This approach leverages deep narrative transportation, allowing the brand to embed its values into authentic, character-driven documentaries rather than overt sales pitches, perfectly illustrating the evolution of brand storytelling into branded entertainment.

One major underlying trend is the rapid rise of Sensescaping as a mandatory component of digital marketing. Because consumers interacting with brands online or via mobile platforms cannot physically engage with the product, advertisers must rely heavily on auditory and visual synesthesia to trigger tactile and olfactory memories. The heavy emphasis on ASMR-style audio, spatial sound (such as Dolby Atmos integration), tactile language in copywriting, and highly textured visual close-ups serve to bridge the physical-digital divide [Rampley-Clarke].

When BMW utilises the repeating, breathy audio of *heat*, or Mercedes-Benz highlights the precise acoustic engineering of a 17-speaker system alongside a 64-

colour ambient lighting shift, they are intentionally designing sensory triggers that bypass rational, feature-based evaluation and access the emotional memory centres of the brain.

It is believed that as storytelling fosters neuro-associations and activates the medial prefrontal cortex, brand narrative has a neurobiological viewpoint since stories, facts, and narrative all blend together in our memories [Belova 2021, p. 15].

Furthermore, there is a clear causal relationship between the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in content generation and the renewed importance of authentic, deeply human brand storytelling [Zwayyed 2025, p. 13]. As generative AI allows for the infinite scaling and personalisation of visual content, the sheer volume of synthetic media has resulted in severe consumer screen fatigue and visual overload. In response, brands that leverage genuine narrative transportation and multi-sensory engagement achieve significantly higher brand recall [Shtompel]. Consumers in 2026 actively seek out content that provides strategic friction – moments of genuine surprise, emotional vulnerability, or cultural relevance that algorithmic content inherently struggles to replicate [LaManna, Schmidt]. Volvo's "Little Things" commercial, which dwells on the messy, hesitant reality of estranged human relationships, represents a deliberate counter-movement against sterile, AI-optimised perfection [241].

Finally, the evolution of these automotive narratives reflects broader geopolitical, ecological, and societal anxieties. The era of the lone, conquering "hero" brand that solves all problems is definitely waning. Consumers are increasingly sceptical of corporations positioning themselves as singular saviours in the face of complex global challenges [LaManna, Schmidt]. This paradigm shift is most evident in Volvo's storytelling pivot. By shifting the focus from showcasing their own engineering invincibility to emphasising the terrifying, collective scale of the climate crisis in "The Ultimate Safety Test," Volvo lowers the brand's ego and elevates the global threat. This narrative strategy successfully transitions the consumer from a passive observer of a product demonstration into an active participant in a shared ecological journey [231]. It acknowledges that the brand alone cannot save the world,

but it can serve as a responsible, highly capable companion, a Caregiver, for the individuals striving to navigate it.

BMW and Mercedes-Benz have similarly adapted their Hero and Ruler archetypes. BMW's shift from the "Ultimate Driving Machine" to focusing on the "Soul" and the "Heart of Joy" acknowledges that raw mechanical dominance must be tempered with emotional intelligence and biological synergy [139]. Mercedes-Benz's integration of the user's specific habits via MBUX routines and customizable Sensescaping shifts the ultimate authority from the brand to the consumer, making the driver the true Ruler of their domain.

3.2. Emotional and cognitive responses to sensory elements in ads

Traditional marketing research methodologies, which have historically relied upon self-reported data gathered through consumer surveys and focus groups, are frequently constrained by inherent cognitive biases, social desirability effects, and the fundamental limitations of conscious self-awareness. Consumer neuroscience bypasses these limitations by directly measuring the physiological and neural signals that govern subconscious decision-making. This approach operates on the scientifically validated premise that up to ninety-five per cent of all consumer choices are initiated and processed below the threshold of conscious awareness, occurring milliseconds before the rational mind formulates a justification for the decision [Sherman]. Human beings are fundamentally emotional decision-makers who utilise logic retroactively to validate their affective responses; consequently, luxury automotive purchasing decisions are driven less by utility and more by subconscious calculations regarding identity, status, aspiration, and physiological arousal.

When consumers are exposed to contemporary advertisements from BMW, Mercedes-Benz, or Volvo, their brains perform rapid, heuristic-based calculations utilising highly complex neural networks that process visual, auditory, tactile, and conceptual information simultaneously. High-involvement purchases, such as luxury automobiles, were traditionally theorised to be governed by rational, deliberate analysis, often referred to in behavioural economics as System 2

processing [Sarkar, Sharma 2026, p. 143]. However, neuroimaging studies utilising functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG) consistently reveal that emotional processing centres – primarily the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the broader limbic system – are activated significantly earlier than the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive function and rational evaluation [Sarkar, Sharma 2026, p. 146]. By mapping these neurophysiological responses to specific visual cuts, auditory soundscapes, and narrative arcs within commercial broadcasts, analysts can decode the precise mechanisms through which automotive brands engineer consumer desire, brand loyalty, and market dominance.

A foundational premise of cognitive linguistics and modern psycholinguistics is the theory of embodied cognition. This paradigm fundamentally rejects the Cartesian dualism that separates the mind from the body, asserting instead that human cognition is deeply and inextricably dependent upon the physical body and its sensorimotor systems. From this perspective, language comprehension is not a disembodied, abstract algorithmic process. When a consumer processes a multimodal advertisement, they do not merely decode the syntactic meaning of the text or passively register the visual and auditory inputs; rather, their brain actively simulates the perceptual, motor, and introspective experiences associated with those stimuli [Giraldo Ospina et al. 2024, p. 643].

Embodied mental simulation is defined as the automatic, subconscious reenactment of perceptual and motor states acquired during previous interactions with the physical world [Stockner 2025, p. 2]. In the context of contemporary automotive advertising, this mechanism bridges the critical experiential gap between digital, two-dimensional media and the physical, three-dimensional reality of the vehicle. Because consumers engaging with digital or television campaigns cannot physically grasp the leather steering wheel, feel the gravitational force of sudden acceleration, or smell the bespoke fragrance of a luxury cabin, advertisers must rely on highly evocative sensory vocabulary and dynamic visual metaphors to trigger these simulations within the consumer's neural architecture.

Neuroscientific studies utilising functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) have repeatedly demonstrated that reading or hearing specific action verbs activates the corresponding motor cortices in the brain, just as processing sensory descriptors activates the somatosensory cortex [Sarkar, Sharma 2026, p. 146]. BMW's lexical and visual strategy during the 2020–2026 period provides a definitive example of weaponizing this phenomenon. By utilising highly active, kinaesthetic phrases such as *the thrust of 1 million horsepower, carved corners, legendary dynamics, and a hunting predator* (see Appendix 1), BMW forces the consumer's cognitive apparatus to simulate the physical sensation of rapid acceleration, precise handling, and aggressive forward momentum.

When a viewer hears the word “*thrust*” accompanied by the visual of an M-Series vehicle blurring the physical landscape, the cognitive response involves a subtle, subconscious motor activation that primes the human body for kinetic action [Giraldo Ospina et al. 2024, p. 646]. This translates an abstract engineering specification into an experienced, visceral reality within the mind. The embodied response generates an emotional state of acute physiological arousal, excitement, and anticipation, thereby reinforcing BMW's core brand promise of *sheer driving pleasure* [134] without requiring the consumer to ever set foot inside a dealership.

Conversely, Mercedes-Benz leverages embodied simulation to induce states of extreme physical comfort, physiological relaxation, and high-status arousal. The brand's advertising lexicon heavily features tactile, thermal, and textile-based descriptors such as *feel like a hug, hot stone, soothing, hand-carved, and couture* (see Appendix 3). In campaigns for the 2026 S-Class or the all-electric EQS, when the narration highlights heated seatbelts, ambient lighting, and seats that function as an onboard “*masseur*,” it relies fundamentally on the consumer's capacity to mentally simulate the sensation of warmth and targeted physical pressure [205].

This simulation capitalises on the principle that bodily states directly influence persuasion; simulating a warm, comforting environment significantly enhances positive affective evaluation and fosters a subconscious perception of the brand as protective, empathetic, and intimately connected to the user's physical well-

being [Giraldo Ospina et al. 2024, p. 650]. The neurological mapping of these haptic descriptions allows Mercedes-Benz to synthesise a multi-sensory spa experience entirely within the cognitive space of the viewer. The consumer's brain registers the feeling of the luxury before the transaction occurs, establishing a powerful emotional baseline of indulgence and opulence.

Volvo operates on an entirely different spectrum of embodied simulation, focusing primarily on the mitigation of sensory friction and the simulation of absolute physical safety. Volvo's vocabulary deliberately eschews the aggressive, high-arousal terminology of its German competitors, emphasising instead terms such as *energy absorbing*, *stable*, *whisper-quiet*, *soft nudge*, and *calming* (see Appendix 2). The cognitive response elicited here is one of profound decompression and somatic relief. When Volvo describes its vehicles as capable of *taking the first hit of inconvenience* (see Appendix 2), the consumer mentally simulates a physical barrier between themselves and the inherent hostility or unpredictability of the external environment. The embodied response is a measurable reduction in physiological tension and cognitive load, aligning perfectly with the brand's positioning as a Nordic sanctuary. Through embodied simulation, these brands do not merely inform the consumer about how the car performs; they compel the consumer's nervous system to physically feel the performance, rendering the persuasive message highly resilient to rational, feature-based counter-arguing.

A foundational theoretical framework for understanding how sensory advertising influences automotive purchasing behaviour is the Somatic Marker Hypothesis, formulated by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio in the 1990s. The hypothesis posits that emotional processes fundamentally guide and bias behaviour, particularly in complex decision-making scenarios characterised by uncertainty or an overwhelming number of variables [Bechara, Damasio 2005, p. 337]. According to this framework, previous emotional experiences create "somatic markers", e.g., physiological affective states such as an elevated heart rate, a tightening of the chest, or a subtle feeling of muscular relaxation, that are stored and processed within the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and the

amygdala [Bechara, Damasio 2005, p. 341]. When an individual is presented with a choice, these stored somatic markers are rapidly and subconsciously reactivated, effectively highlighting advantageous options and eliminating disadvantageous ones before logical reasoning even begins [Bechara, Damasio 2005, p. 351].

In the context of luxury automotive advertising from 2020 to 2026, brands actively engineer sensory stimuli to implant positive somatic markers that will later influence the consumer at the point of sale. When a consumer views a Mercedes-Benz commercial emphasising historical heritage and absolute somatic comfort, or a BMW advertisement showcasing kinetic precision, the brain is not merely processing informational data; it is actively associating the brand with specific, highly desirable physiological states.

Mercedes-Benz specifically leverages this neurobiological mechanism in extensive brand campaigns such as “Defining Class since 1886” [165]. By visually tracing the unbroken lineage of their vehicles from the original three-wheeled Benz Patent-Motorwagen to modern, aerodynamic electric models like the EQS, the brand stimulates the retrieval of long-term cultural memories and established prestige. The neurological consequence of this narrative transportation is the intense activation of the brain’s reward circuitry, including the nucleus accumbens, which anticipates the social and emotional rewards of elevated status [Sarkar, Sharma 2026, p. 144]. The somatic markers implanted by such historical narratives successfully bypass standard cost-benefit analyses.

Conversely, Volvo utilises the Somatic Marker Hypothesis by anchoring its brand identity to the alleviation of anxiety and the provision of psychological safety. The amygdala functions as the brain’s primary threat detection centre, initiating physiological cascades (such as the release of cortisol and adrenaline) in response to perceived danger [Sarkar, Sharma 2026, P. 145–147]. Volvo’s advertising historically confronts this fear directly by demonstrating extreme, violent crash tests. The visual and auditory stimuli of a high-speed collision naturally trigger a negative somatic marker – an acute stress response [Mckenzie, Mcfarland 2023, p. 50]. However, Volvo’s messaging immediately resolves this neurological tension by showcasing the

vehicle's unyielding structural integrity, advanced Lidar sensor sets, and protective interior environments like in the Volvo EX90 [222]. This rapid resolution creates a new, overriding positive somatic marker associated with profound relief, protection, and psychological safety. The consumer's brain learns to associate the Volvo brand not with the trauma of the crash, but with the immense relief of survival, establishing a deep-seated neurological trust in the manufacturer that heavily biases future purchasing decisions toward the brand.

To systematically categorise, measure, and compare the complex emotional responses elicited by these varying cognitive linguistic strategies, neuromarketing researchers frequently employ the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) emotional state model, originally developed by environmental psychologists Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell. The PAD paradigm asserts that all human emotional responses, regardless of their complexity, can be mapped along three independent dimensions: pleasure – the degree of affective valence, ranging from extreme distress, anger, or sadness to extreme joy, satisfaction, and happiness, arousal – the level of physiological and psychological activation, ranging from sleepiness, calmness, or lethargy to frantic excitement, tension, or high alertness, and dominance – the perception of control, autonomy, and influence over one's environment, ranging from feelings of submission, vulnerability, or restriction to feelings of empowerment, prestige, and absolute control [Russell, Mehrabian 1977].

By analysing the multimodal metaphors, semantic frames, and sensory lexicons identified in the advertising of BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo for the years 2020–2026, it is possible to precisely map each brand's intended emotional response architecture onto the PAD framework. This mapping reveals how distinct cognitive linguistic choices result in fundamentally different target psychological states for the consumer (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 – Sensory Modalities and Target Emotional States

Brand Identity	Pleasure Valence	Arousal Activation	Dominance Control	Cognitive Linguistic Drivers & Sensory Cues	Target Emotional State
Volvo (The Sanctuary / Caregiver)	High (Satisfaction, comfort, ethical alignment)	Very Low (Calm, relaxed, zen, absolute absence of tension)	High (Safety, protection, environmental stewardship)	Lexicon: <i>Whisper-quiet, soft nudge, unwind, stable, effortless.</i> Sensory Cues: Minimalist interiors, natural soundscapes, silence, soft woolen textures, nature integration.	Relief and Serenity The consumer feels protected from the chaotic external world, experiencing luxury as the complete eradication of cognitive and physical load.
Mercedes-Benz (The Spa / Aristocratic Ruler)	Very High (Extreme indulgence, awe, sensory reward)	Moderate to High (Thrill, arousal of status, bespoke desire)	Very High (Absolute authority, exclusivity, environmental mastery)	Lexicon: <i>Hot stone, feel like a hug, couture, absolute beauty, smells like peace and quiet.</i> 64-color ambient lighting, 4D spatial audio, olfactory fragrances, surreal theatrical spaces.	Empowered Opulence The consumer feels a visceral elevation in status, experiencing the vehicle as a highly personalised, responsive extension of their will and desires.

Continuation of Table 3.1

BMW (The Living Organism / Kinetic Creator)	Moderate to High (Joy, engagement, performative satisfaction)	Very High (Excitement, adrenaline, kinetic tension, rapid heartbeat)	Moderate to High (Partnership, agility, mastery over the road)	Lexicon: Thrust, untamed, snake-eye, carved corners, a powerful piece of music. Sensory Cues: Motion-blurred environments, Shepard tone acceleration sounds, sharp visual geometries.	Visceral Exhilaration The consumer is stimulated into a state of active engagement, feeling the adrenaline of forward momentum and the symbiotic thrill of piloting an intelligent machine
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For Volvo, a high-Pleasure state is achieved by intentionally engineering a very low-Arousal environment. They utilise semantic primes of silence, slowness, and softness to lower the viewer's heart rate. The brand maximises Dominance not by offering aggressive speed, but by offering absolute safety, structural integrity, and the moral authority of sustainability.

Conversely, BMW targets a maximum-Arousal state. Its cognitive linguistic strategy, employing zoomorphic metaphors and kinetic, aggressive verbs, is designed to elevate the heart rate and stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, translating the brand's abstract concept of "joy" into a highly active, physiological state. Mercedes-Benz attempts the difficult task of maximising all three dimensions simultaneously. The intense sensory saturation of its advertising creates overwhelming Pleasure; the surreal, cosmic visual framing stimulates Arousal; and the promise of a hyper-personalised, "defining class" environment that anticipates the user's every need confers maximum Dominance to the driver.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

Automotive manufacturers have fundamentally transitioned from communicating functional engineering specifications to engineering complex, multi-sensory brand storytelling. Faced with an increasingly saturated digital marketplace and the standardisation of electric vehicle performance metrics, brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo now rely on a synthesis of Narrative Transportation Theory, Multimodal Metaphor Theory, Archetypal Psychology, and Sensescaping to secure market share. This narrative immersion is highly effective because it bypasses rational, evaluative brain regions in favour of experiential processing centres, actively suppressing critical counter-arguing. By adopting specific Jungian archetypes, these manufacturers segment their market positioning to cultivate authentic and emotionally resonant brand personalities. Furthermore, as consumers interact with these brands primarily through digital channels, the use of Sensescaping – digitally simulating physical sensory experiences through high-fidelity visual design, spatial audio, and tactile language – has become a mandatory strategy to overcome digital saturation and screen fatigue.

The narrative trajectories of the analysed brands reveal distinct, highly targeted psychological positioning. BMW has evolved its identity to synthesise mechanical dominance with biological vitality, utilising the Hero and Creator archetypes to position its vehicles as “The Ultimate Feeling Machine” rather than merely “The Ultimate Driving Machine”. Mercedes-Benz relies on the Ruler and Magician archetypes to project historical authority and synesthetic immersion, granting the driver absolute sensory control over their environment. Conversely, Volvo has radically redefined the Caregiver archetype by expanding its traditional focus on internal vehicular safety to encompass macroscopic environmental stewardship and intimate human connection. These narrative shifts also reflect a broader societal departure from the “lone hero” corporate narrative toward authentic, cooperative brand storytelling in response to complex global anxieties and AI-generated media fatigue.

Crucially, consumer neuroscience reveals that these sensory marketing strategies operate predominantly below the threshold of conscious awareness. Based on the

theory of embodied cognition, consumers actively and subconsciously simulate the perceptual and motor experiences described in these multimodal advertisements. By employing highly specific lexicons – such as BMW’s kinetic verbs, Mercedes-Benz’s tactile descriptors, or Volvo’s calming semantics – advertisers activate corresponding sensory and motor cortices in the brain, successfully bridging the gap between two-dimensional digital media and physical reality. This neurobiological activation implants positive “somatic markers” that subconsciously guide future decision-making, making the persuasion highly resilient to rational, feature-based scrutiny.

Ultimately, the efficacy of these diverse cognitive linguistic strategies can be systematically mapped using the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) emotional state model. The analysis confirms that distinct sensory lexicons result in fundamentally different emotional architectures. Volvo achieves a High-Pleasure and High-Dominance state through Very Low-Arousal environments, emphasising somatic relief and serenity. BMW targets maximum Arousal to elicit visceral exhilaration and kinetic tension. Mercedes-Benz strives to maximise all three dimensions simultaneously, delivering empowered opulence through intense sensory saturation and hyper-personalisation. In conclusion, modern automotive advertising leverages neurobiology and sensory linguistics not merely to inform consumers about a vehicle, but to physically and emotionally immerse them in the brand’s targeted psychological state.

CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive investigation into the multimodal advertising discourse of premium automobile brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo) from 2020 to 2026 has successfully resolved the set research objectives, revealing a profound paradigm shift in modern marketing communications. The industry's transition toward Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Software-Defined Vehicles (SDVs) has forced manufacturers to abandon traditional, mechanical-feature-based advertising in favour of complex, synesthetic brand storytelling. This thesis systematises the mechanisms through which automotive brands engineer specific cognitive-emotional states by manipulating visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory modalities.

The systematisation of sensory linguistics confirmed the Vision Dominance hypothesis within English advertising discourse, reflecting a cross-cultural hierarchy that prioritises visual stimuli. However, the qualitative analysis of sensory lexicons demonstrated that to overcome the ineffability of complex luxury sensations, copywriters deploy a highly stratified vocabulary. While core Old English verbs establish foundational perception, peripheral French and Latin borrowings provide the crucial semantic specificity needed to simulate haptic and olfactory luxury in a digital space. The research establishes that sensory vocabulary in the 2020s functions not merely as passive description, but as an active cognitive trigger for embodied mental simulation.

The multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) of the three premium brands revealed distinct, highly targeted semiotic strategies where sensory modalities are synergistically integrated into a cohesive sensescape. BMW relies on kinetic dynamism and active engagement. It compensates for the silence of electric motors by employing psychoacoustic auditory cues (such as Shepard tones) and a highly active lexicon (*thrust, carved corners*) to manufacture a synthetic tactile response of acceleration. Mercedes-Benz constructs an environment of intense sensory saturation. By placing vehicles in surreal, cosmic landscapes and utilising deeply intimate descriptors (*feel like a hug, hot stone*), the brand transforms the vehicle into a personalised wellness device. Volvo weaponises minimalism and silence as the ultimate premium luxury,

utilising organic spatial realism and a vocabulary of decompression (*whisper-quiet, calming, effortless*) to drastically reduce the consumer's cognitive load.

The identification of cross-sensory interactions highlighted the critical role of multimodal metaphors and synesthesia in bypassing rational consumer evaluation. BMW predominantly utilises the metaphor THE CAR IS A LIVING ORGANISM (zoomorphism), mapping biological vitality onto software architectures (e.g., the “Heart of Joy” and octopus conceptual blend). Mercedes-Benz heavily deploys THE CAR IS A SPA and THE CAR IS HOME, notably pioneering olfactory synesthesia (*smells like peace and quiet*) to merge physical ease with psychological restoration. Volvo operates under the metaphor THE CAR IS A SANCTUARY, reframing safety from mere structural crash resistance to profound environmental stewardship and emotional security.

The evaluation of audience perception through neurobiological frameworks confirmed that these multimodal strategies successfully implant positive somatic markers that guide subconscious purchasing decisions. The application of the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) emotional state model quantitatively and qualitatively differentiated the brands' psychological targeting. Volvo engineers a High-Pleasure, High-Dominance, but intentionally Very Low-Arousal state to provide somatic relief. BMW targets maximum Arousal to elicit visceral exhilaration. Mercedes-Benz attempts to maximise all three dimensions, delivering empowered opulence. The alignment of these states with Jungian archetypes (Caregiver, Hero/Creator, Ruler) proves that automotive sales are increasingly reliant on matching the vehicle's sensory profile to the consumer's desired physiological state.

Based on the results obtained, several recommendations for practical use can be formulated. The integration of digital sensescaping is essential for marketing professionals and copywriters. Because consumers cannot physically test-drive vehicles through screens, campaigns must deliberately cross-wire sensory inputs (e.g., describing the texture of a sound or the temperature of a visual) to stimulate embodied cognition and overcome digital fatigue.

Moreover, concerning automotive brand strategists in the EV era, manufacturers should focus less on raw performance metrics (which are increasingly standardised) and more on designing congruent auditory-tactile feedback loops. Synthetic soundscapes must be carefully mapped to physical acceleration to prevent driver alienation and maintain brand identity.

Finally, the theoretical frameworks synthesised in this thesis, specifically the integration of Multimodal Discourse Analysis with the PAD emotional model and the Somatic Marker Hypothesis, offer a robust, interdisciplinary methodology for academic implications. This framework is highly recommended for future research in psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and the semiotics of artificial intelligence in mass communication.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Sensory Modalities Vocabulary – BMW

№	Vocabulary unit	Year	Sensory modality	Multimodal/Cognitive metaphor and synesthetic effects (if present)
1.	a bold stance	2026	visual	The car is a living organism
2.	a hunting predator	2020	visual, auditory	The car is a living organism
3.	a powerful piece of music	2025	auditory	Synesthesia: Auditory pleasure = Physical acceleration
4.	aerodynamic	2026	tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
5.	beauty	2025	visual	
6.	blur the lines	2020	visual	
7.	bold kidney grill	2026	visual, auditory	The car is a living organism
8.	bullet	2020	auditory	
9.	capturing the magic	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
10.	carved (corners)	2026	visual, tactile	
11.	classy open pour wood	2021	visual, tactile	
12.	clean (design)	2025	visual	
13.	cold (design)	2020	visual, tactile	Synesthetic Effect: Visual -> Tactile Synesthesia (a visual aesthetic (sharp lines, clinical colours) expressed through a tactile temperature metric)

14.	comfort	2026	tactile	Luxury is physical ease
15.	convenient	2021	tactile	Luxury is physical ease
16.	craftsmanship	2022	visual, tactile	
17.	creating a feeling	2025	tactile	
18.	creative spirit	2025	visual	The car is a living organism
19.	cuttingedge design	2026	visual	
20.	(display) feels like it's floating in front of you	2026	visual, tactile	
21.	driving pleasure	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	
22.	dynamic	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
23.	effortless	2026	tactile	Luxury is physical ease
24.	elegance	2025	visual	
25.	enjoy (v)	2020	visual, tactile, auditory	
26.	ergonomic condition	2021	tactile	
27.	emotional tone	2025	auditory	The car is a living organism
28.	fasterpiece	2023	visual, auditory	
29.	frameless	2026	visual	
30.	freedom	2020	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is freedom/independence

31.	good proportions	2025	visual	
32.	grand (coupe design)	2021	visual	
33.	heart (of the brand)	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism
34.	hot stone	2023	tactile	
35.	iconic	2026, 2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
36.	integrated flush (door handles)	2026	visual	
37.	integrity	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	
38.	intelligent	2025	visual	
39.	intelligent face	2026	visual	The car is a living organism
40.	invisible armour	2020	visual	The car is a sanctuary / safe haven
41.	journey	2024, 2020	visual, tactile, auditory	
42.	legendary dynamics	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
43.	let's play	2024	visual, tactile, auditory	Driving is a game
44.	light-footed nurse	2020	visual, auditory	The car is a living organism
45.	mannerism	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
46.	mighty whoosh	2025	auditory	
47.	not overly complicated (design)	2025	visual	
48.	power	2025	visual, tactile,	The car is a power.

			auditory	
49.	precise	2025	visual	
50.	pulsating hum	2025	auditory	
51.	push boundaries forward	2023	tactile	
52.	real	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	
53.	relax	2026	tactile	The car is a sanctuary / safe haven or Luxury is physical ease
54.	rumble	2020	auditory	
55.	safety	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a sanctuary / safe haven
56.	sculptural BMW curved display	2021	visual	The car is a masterpiece
57.	seamless	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
58.	self-healing	2026	visual	The car is a living organism
59.	sharp lines	2021	visual, tactile	Synesthetic Effect: Visual -> Tactile Synesthesia (a visual aesthetic (sharp lines, clinical colours) expressed through a tactile metric)
60.	sharp outer edges frame	2021	visual, tactile	
61.	sheer driving pleasure	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	
62.	simplicity	2020	visual	
63.	skytop	2024	visual	
64.	sleek	2026	visual	Luxury is physical

				ease
65.	slim (rear tail lights)	2026, 2021	visual	
66.	snake-eye daytime running light	2026	visual	The car is a living organism
67.	soft closed (doors)	2026	auditory	
68.	sportier (front bumper)	2026	visual	
69.	sportiness	2025	visual, auditory	
70.	stay in	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
71.	sterile (design)	2020	visual	The car is a clinical environment
72.	style	2024	visual	
73.	the soul of BMW	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism
74.	thrust of 1 million horsepower	2020	tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)
75.	unique (package)	2026, 2025	visual	
76.	untamed	2024	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)

Appendix 2. Sensory Modalities Vocabulary – Volvo

No	Vocabulary unit	Year	Sensory modality	Multimodal/Cognitive metaphor and synesthetic effects (if present)
1.	a new breed	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)
2.	a stay of perfect flow	2021	visual, tactile	Luxury is physical ease
3.	a Swedish rock	2023	visual, tactile	The car is a force of nature
4.	aerodynamic	2020	tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
5.	aesthetical	2022	visual	
6.	birds-eye view	2021	visual	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)
7.	black stone	2021	visual	
8.	bold	2025	visual, auditory	
9.	breathe easy	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism & Luxury is physical ease
10.	calming (room offering)	2022	visual, tactile	The car is a sanctuary / safe haven.
11.	comfortable	2025	tactile	
12.	compact	2020	visual	
13.	confident (front end)	2022	visual	The car is a living organism
14.	connecting	2022	tactile	

15.	courageous	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism
16.	craftsmanship	2025	visual, tactile	
17.	crash	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
18.	crystal white pearl	2021	visual	
19.	denim blue	2021	visual	
20.	diamond cut design	2021, 2020	visual	
21.	dimensions	2025	visual	
22.	dramatic surface area	2020	visual	
23.	effortless (motoring)	2026, 2021	tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
24.	elegant	2025	visual	
25.	energy absorbing (materials)	2025	tactile	The car is a protector
26.	enhanced (features)	2025	tactile, visual, auditory	
27.	experience (v)	2025, 2023	tactile, visual, auditory	
28.	feeling of the outside	2023	tactile	
29.	flush	2022	visual, auditory	
30.	freedom	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is freedom/independence
31.	functional beauty	2025	visual, tactile	

32.	fusion red	2021	visual	
33.	future sounds	2025	auditory	
34.	generous load volume	2020	visual	
35.	glacier silver	2021	visual	
36.	glossy	2020	visual	
37.	good looks	2022	visual	
38.	great handling	2020	tactile	
39.	hear every beat	2026	auditory	
40.	high-quality wool upholstery	2025	visual, tactile	
41.	iconic	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	
42.	idyllic	2023	visual, auditory	
43.	immersive sound	2026, 2023	auditory	
44.	innovative	2026	visual	
45.	intact	2026	visual	
46.	leather-free	2021	visual, tactile	
47.	little things	2025, 2026	visual	
48.	living room	2023	visual	The car is home
49.	lots of room	2026	visual	
50.	modern proportions	2022	visual	
51.	modularity	2022	visual	

52.	mood lighting	2023	visual	
53.	multi-adaptive	2026	visual, tactile	
54.	mute	2023	auditory	
55.	never miss a beat	2022	auditory	
56.	off-road (experiences)	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
57.	peaceful	2020	auditory, tactile	
58.	power	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
59.	powerful stance	2020	visual	
60.	premium (interior design)	2021	visual	
61.	progressive	2026	visual, auditory	
62.	protective	2026	visual, tactile	
63.	proud (front end)	2022	visual	The car is a living organism
64.	pure (standard)	2026, 2022, 2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
65.	quiet	2020	auditory	
66.	reinforced cladding	2025	visual	
67.	remarkable versatility (of the design)	2025	visual	
68.	revolutionary in spirit	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism

69.	robust	2025	visual, tactile, auditory	
70.	room for living	2025	visual	The car is home
71.	round (front end)	2022	visual	
72.	safety	2026, 2025, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a protector
73.	sage green	2021	visual	
74.	Scandinavian charm	2022	visual, tactile	
75.	Scandinavian design	2022	visual, tactile	
76.	Scandinavian luxury	2025	visual, tactile	
77.	Scandinavian simplicity	2022	visual, tactile	
78.	seamless	2025, 2022	visual, tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
79.	side glazing	2022	visual	
80.	silence	2025	auditory	
81.	simplicity	2025	visual	
82.	sleek	2025, 2022	visual	Luxury is physical ease
83.	slow	2025	visual, auditory	
84.	small	2026, 2023	visual	
85.	smooth	2026, 2025	tactile, visual	Luxury is physical ease
86.	soft nudge	2024	tactile, auditory	
87.	softer (seats)	2023	tactile	Luxury is physical ease

88.	solid	2023	tactile, visual	
89.	sophisticated	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
90.	spaciousness	2025	visual, tactile	
91.	spatial audio	2026	auditory	
92.	sporty expression	2020	visual	
93.	stable	2020	tactile	
94.	strong sculptured profile	2020	visual	
95.	sustainable	2026, 2025, 2024, 2023, 2021, 2020	visual, tactile, auditory	
96.	tactile	2022	tactile	
97.	take the first hit of inconvenience	2026	tactile	The car is a protector
98.	technical	2022	visual	
99.	thick canvas-leather seats	2025	visual, tactile	
100.	thunder grey	2021	visual	
101.	unwind (v)	2023	tactile	
102.	vertical (tail lights)	2024	visual	
103.	warm	2022	tactile	
104.	whisper-quiet (cabin)	2026	auditory	Luxury is physical ease

Appendix 3. Sensory Modalities Vocabulary – Mercedes-Benz

№	Vocabulary unit	Year	Sensory modality	Multimodal/Cognitive metaphor and synesthetic effects (if present)
1.	a beautiful beast	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)
2.	a new kind of power	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
3.	absolute beauty	2020	visual	
4.	actually felt every day	2026	tactile, auditory	
5.	adjustable (damping)	2023	tactile	
6.	adrenaline rushing	2025	tactile	
7.	advanced	2024	visual	
8.	aerodynamic	2022	tactile, auditory	Luxury is physical ease
9.	ambient lighting	2023	visual	
10.	an intimate journey	2026	tactile	Driving is a journey / belonging (every drive turns into an intimate journey and evokes a feeling of belonging)
11.	aromatic (adaptive suspension)	2025	olfactory	The car is a spa
12.	atmospheric	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	
13.	athletic	2025, 2026	visual	The car is a living organism

14.	being on a sled on an ice track	2025	tactile	
15.	blooming	2023	visual	
16.	blurring the lane	2021	visual	
17.	bold	2025	visual, auditory	
18.	bond	2026	tactile	Driving is belonging
19.	bright	2025	visual	
20.	business	2024	visual	
21.	chrome	2024	visual	
22.	circularity	2025	visual	
23.	class	2023	visual, tactile	
24.	classic	2024	visual	
25.	click of the tape	2023	auditory	
26.	colourful	2020	visual	
27.	comfort	2025, 2023	tactile	
28.	composure	2025	tactile	
29.	connect (v)	2026	tactile	Driving is belonging
30.	corner hugging	2025	visual, tactile	
31.	cosmos of creation	2023	visual	
32.	couture	2023	visual, tactile	
33.	craftsmanship	2023, 2021	visual, tactile	
34.	deep dark	2025	visual	
35.	desirable	2025, 2024, 2021	visual	
36.	digital light	2023	visual	

37.	distinctive (features)	2023	visual	
38.	dream	2025	visual, tactile	
39.	dynamic body control	2023	tactile	
40.	emotional	2023	tactile, visual	The car is a living organism
41.	energising comfort	2023	tactile	The car is a spa / Luxury is physical ease
42.	everything but quiet	2021	auditory	
43.	experience (v)	2026, 2025	tactile, visual, auditory	
44.	explore (v)	2023	tactile	
45.	expressive	2020	visual, tactile, auditory	
46.	faster horses	2023	visual, auditory	The car is a living organism (zoomorphism)
47.	feel at home	2026	tactile	The car is home / sanctuary
48.	feel empowered	2023	tactile	
49.	feel like a hug	2026	tactile	The car is home / sanctuary
50.	feeling better	2023	tactile	
51.	feeling of belonging	2026	tactile	Driving is belonging
52.	feeling zenful	2026	tactile	Luxury is physical ease/ The car is a spa
53.	flowing (through me)	2020	visual, tactile	Luxury is physical ease

54.	focus	2023	tactile, visual	
55.	fragrant air	2026	olfactory	The car is a spa
56.	frameless doors	2023	visual	
57.	freedom	2026, 2024, 2023, 2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is freedom/independence
58.	fueled by spirit	2026	visual, tactile	The car is a living organism
59.	full of taste	2020	visual	
60.	game changer	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism
61.	glory	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	
62.	gorgeous	2025, 2026	visual	
63.	grand	2025	visual	
64.	greatest	2025	visual	
65.	hand-carved	2025	visual, tactile	
66.	haute	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
67.	hypnotic	2020	visual, auditory	
68.	icon	2025, 2021	visual	
69.	iconic	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	
70.	imagine (v)	2025, 2021	visual, tactile	
71.	in full swing	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
72.	incredible	2023	visual	

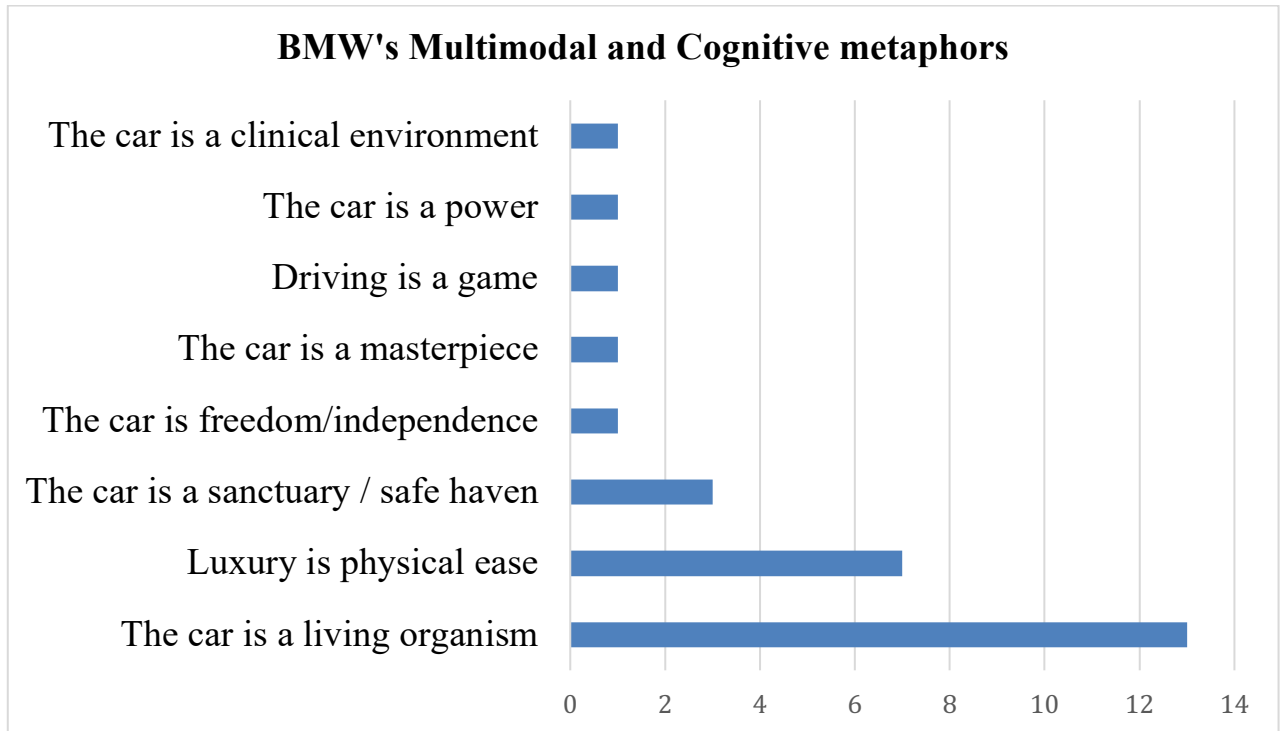
73.	independent	2023	tactile	The car is freedom/independence
74.	innovative	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
75.	integral (design)	2023	visual	
76.	intelligent	2025	visual	The car is a living organism
77.	interactive	2022	visual, tactile, auditory	
78.	it fits you	2026	tactile	
79.	it thrills you	2026	tactile	
80.	jamming through the night	2023	auditory	
81.	jaw-dropping	2025	visual	
82.	kick of a beat	2023	auditory	
83.	legendary	2024	visual, tactile	
84.	let it roll	2026	tactile	
85.	like nothing you've seen before	2021	visual	
86.	living to the sound	2023	auditory	
87.	low-positioned radiator grille with Mercedes-Benz pattern	2023	visual	
88.	luxurious	2023	visual	
89.	magical	2023	visual	
90.	more than a feeling	2026	tactile	
91.	moving freely	2023	tactile	The car is freedom/independence

92.	mythical	2023	visual	
93.	near-ear loudspeakers	2026	auditory	
94.	new dimensions	2021	visual	
95.	openness	2023	tactile	
96.	outstanding	2023	visual, tactile, auditory	
97.	perfect	2025	visual	
98.	performance- oriented	2026	visual, tactile, auditory	
99.	power	2024	tactile, visual, auditory	
100.	powerful (performance)	2025	tactile, visual, auditory	
101.	precision	2025	tactile, visual	
102.	prestigious	2023	visual	
103.	rallying cry	2023	auditory	
104.	range-optimised (design)	2024	visual	
105.	record breaker	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a living organism
106.	refined (luxury)	2025	visual	
107.	relax	2023	tactile	Luxury is physical ease
108.	reshaped	2021	visual	
109.	restless	2025	tactile	
110.	riff	2023	auditory	
111.	roar	2021	auditory	
112.	safety	2025, 2024	tactile, visual	

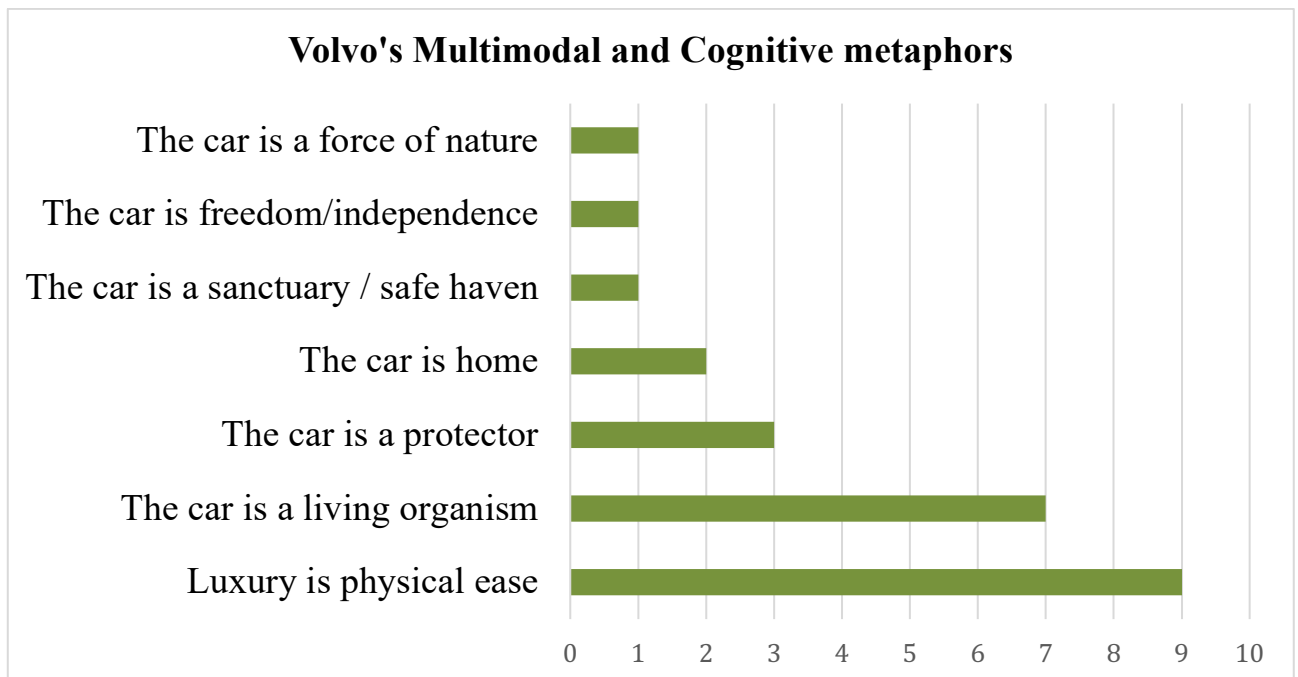
113.	sigh	2023	auditory	The car is a living organism
114.	seamless (technology)	2025	tactile, visual	Luxury is physical ease
115.	shaped by desire	2024	visual	
116.	simple	2025	visual	
117.	smart	2024	visual	
118.	smells like peace and quiet	2026	olfactory	Synesthesia: Abstract/Auditory concept mapped to Olfaction
119.	smooth	2026, 2025	tactile, visual	Luxury is physical ease
120.	some kind of godly being	2026	visual	
121.	soothing	2026	tactile, auditory	
122.	sounds like fun	2023	auditory	
123.	spectacular	2022	visual	
124.	sportiness	2025	visual, tactile	
125.	stunning (design)	2023	visual	
126.	style	2025	visual	
127.	sustainable	2026, 2025, 2024, 2023, 2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
128.	tame (v)	2021		The car is a living organism (zoomorphism) (<i>"I'm the original mix that no one can tame"</i>).
129.	timeless icon	2026	visual	

130.	that first Mercedes feeling	2025	tactile	
131.	the beat pulsing through our bodies	2020	tactile, auditory	Synesthesia: Auditory data becomes physical touch
132.	the result of pure artistry	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	The car is a masterpiece./The car is art.
133.	the strongest push forward	2025	tactile	
134.	timeless	2020	visual, tactile, auditory	
135.	true greatness	2022	visual	
136.	turned round	2025	visual	
137.	unique	2021	visual, tactile, auditory	
138.	unstoppable	2023	tactile	
139.	vibrancy	2023	visual	The car is a living organism (<i>“where vibrancy vibrates via ventricles veins and electricity forever”</i>)
140.	vibrate (v)	2023	tactile, visual	

Appendix 4. BMW – Multimodal and Cognitive metaphors



Appendix 5. Volvo – Multimodal and Cognitive metaphors



Appendix 6. Mercedes-Benz – Multimodal and Cognitive metaphors

