

# The Study of Metaphoric Advertisements in Some Iranian Family Journals Based on Conceptual Blending

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### **Abstract**

Over the last years, some studies have been done about the role of metaphor in advertisements. But a few of them have studied it based on Conceptual Blending (CB). Accordingly, the present study is an attempt, first, to study metaphor from the standpoint of conceptual blending theory and second, to divide the metaphoric advertisements according to the network divisions: simplex networks, mirror networks, single-scope networks, and double-scope networks, as presented in this theory. To accomplish this purpose, 5 metaphoric advertisements were chosen from some Iranian family journals. The research results show that previous theories of metaphor, namely Interaction Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), cannot explain metaphoric advertisements completely. They also indicate that different networks are used in metaphoric advertisements, thus conceptual blending is the best theory that can provide a more complete explanation for metaphoric advertisements.

**Keywords:** Conceptual blending, Metaphor, Advertisements, Network divisions

## 1. Introduction

As Fauconnier and Turner (1994) maintain, "conceptual blending is a general and basic cognitive process that operates in a wide variety of conceptual activities, including categorization, counterfactual reasoning, analogy, metonymy and metaphor. This means that blending processes are more basic than, and, in fact, form a prerequisite for other type of conceptual projection, including metaphor" (pp. 3-4). Meanwhile, "It occurs in verbal and visual domains, such as advertising, as well as in metaphoric and non-metaphoric contexts such as everyday language" (Joy, Sherry, & Deschenes, 2009: p. 39).

In this paper, the theory of conceptual blending is applied to study the metaphoric advertisements of some Iranian family journals.

Most of the previous researchers have examined the metaphoric adverts, by applying the conceptual metaphor theory (cf. Anderson, 1998; Czerpa, 2006; Martin, 2009; Agnes, 2009). The research about the metaphor in advertisements from the standpoint of conceptual blending is scarce.

Lundmark (2005) has studied metaphor in British magazine advertising. For analyzing these advertisings, she uses both conceptual blending and conceptual metaphor theory. She believes that "advertisements centered around entrenched cases of metaphor often rely on puns and ambiguity for their creative effect. Apart from the effect of humor, or wit, the underlying conventional metaphor is also reactivated and exploited in order to build an argument about the product. The creativity in advertisements, where the metaphor is reflected in the combination of text and image, or throughout the text as opposed to an individual word or phrase, typically involves a reconceptualisation of the product. This is achieved by making the product from the target of novel metaphor, but crucially, this novel metaphor still relies on a conventional metaphor for its construction and interpretation." (p. ii) After analyzing the data, she results that these two theories "are the best available analytical tools for describing the complex creative processes that take place in these ads" (p. 190).

Ruiz (2006) has done a research about the role of metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending in the proper understanding of a set of drug-prevention adverts. He has drawn a corpus of sixteen drug-prevention advertisements, which include slogans and images. The selected adverts "contain expressions such as «keep your eyes open», «there is a long life ahead», or «turn away from drugs» (p. 196). After examining the ads, he shows that "the interpretation of such examples ultimately exploits metaphor (e.g. FUTURE TIME IS IN FRONT OF EGO, KNOWING IS SEEING) and metonymy (e.g. EFFECT FOR CAUSE), either independently or interaction, and conceptual blending" (p. 196).

Joy, Sherry, and Deschenes (2009) are among those researchers who have chosen the blending theory to analyze the metaphoric advertising. In their research, they recognize subtle similarities and differences between metaphor and blending, and examine their occurrences in three types of blending networks, namely, simplex network, mirror network, and double-scope network, in adverts.

## 2. Research method

The data of the present study comprise of 4 metaphoric advertisements, namely, Famila foodstuffs, Saipa car, Dove shampoo, and Sapor breakfast set, extracted from some Iranian family journals. With regard to the kind of metaphoric advertisements, those adverts containing combinations of pictorial and verbal metaphors were chosen. Then, to avoid subjectivity, 30 college students, ranging from the age 18 to 28 years, were randomly selected for interview. The interviews, 120 to 180 minutes long, were taped and written down. The purpose for interviews was to explore how the addressees understand metaphoric adverts. In order to find out how the addressees make sense of metaphoric advertisements, the adverts were shown to them. During the interviews, they were asked to describe each advert and to tell what they know about it. They were also asked, "what is the metaphor used in the adverts" and "why does the advertiser use such a metaphor." Then, data analysis was carried out via SPSS software.

## 3. Data description and analysis

### 3.1 Simplex network: Famila foodstuffs

As Descamp (2007) describes it,

In a simplex network, the elements from one input are projected as values of another input that contains a frame with its projected values. Frames are provided by human culture and biology: these organizing frames delineate a mental space where a particular activity with its members and procedures occurs. An organizing frame could be the biological frame of family, with roles for a father, mother, daughter or son and so on; ... In a simplex blend, each element in one input corresponds to a role in the frame of the other input. When the two are blended, the structure from one input is integrated with the constituent values of the other input to present an incorporated whole. (pp. 28-29)

The first advert under investigation contains a simplex network. It is for a group of foodstuffs: Famila. Famila is a known word in the spoken form of Persian; it's the plural form of the word 'fāmil' which means relative (Note 1). As figure (1) shows, in the middle of the advert, there is a picture of some Famila foodstuffs gathered around the globe. In the upper part of the advert, the brand of the production (Famila) has been written, and below the 'globe' the sentence: "Welcome to Famila's World" has been inserted. CMT cannot explain this advert, since there is no similarity between the relatives and these foodstuffs; in other words, there is not a concept to be transferred from the source domain of relatives to the target domain of the foodstuffs. Instead, we confront with a blend or an integration network in this advert.



Figure 1. Famila advert

In the Famila advert, a general human kinship applies to the entire network. In this blend, the relative relations (like aunt, uncle ...) constitute the frame input (input space 1) and the Famila productions are the values (input space 2). The blended space compresses roles and values from the two input spaces. As a result in this space Famila foodstuffs become relatives, and so they form a world, as presented in figure (1):

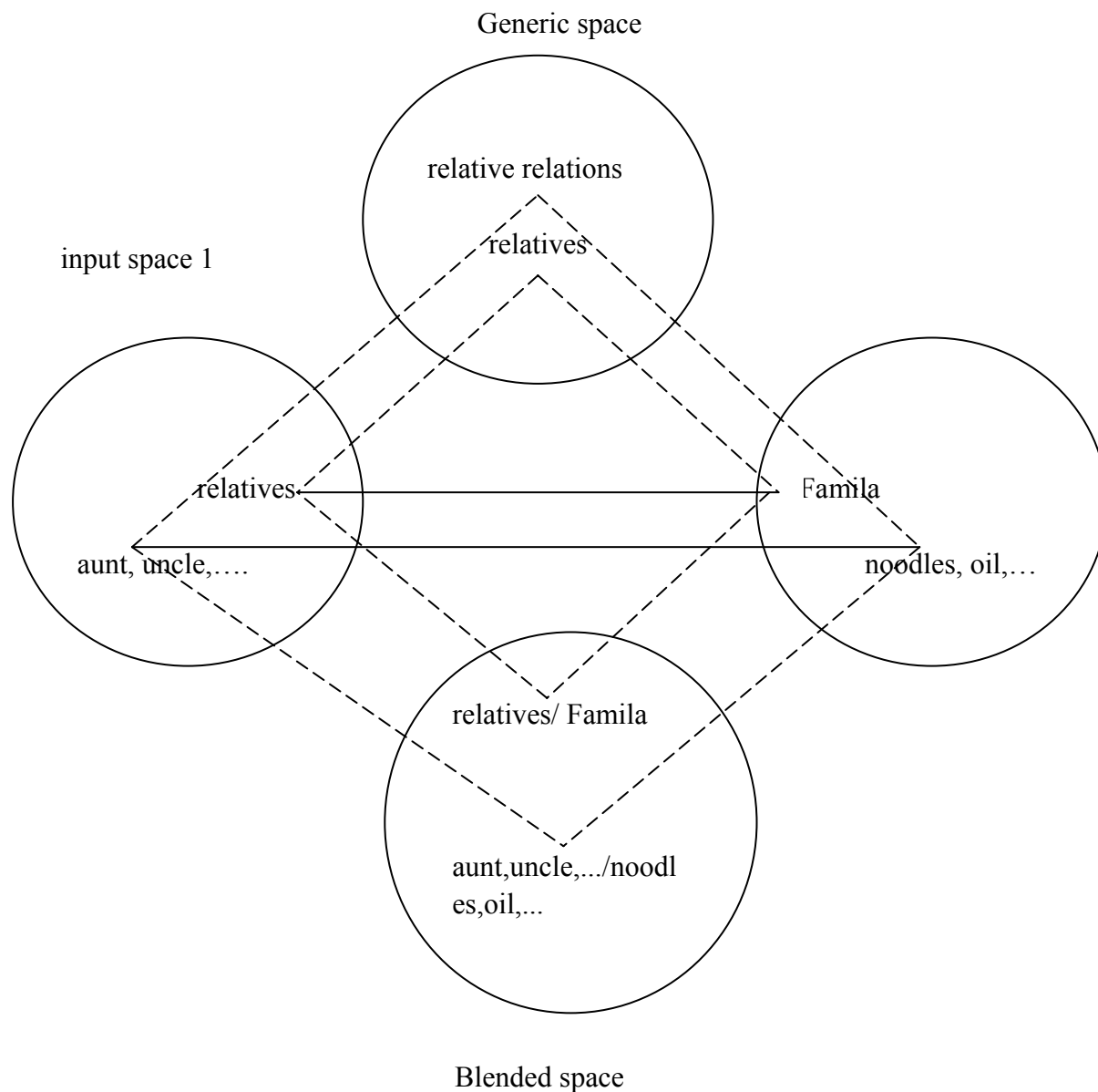


Figure 2. Simplex network (Famila advert)

**Samples of addressees' answers:**

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

**Sample 1:** "These productions, like human beings, are relatives with each other, so Famila name is chosen for this production."

**Sample 2:** "These productions, like relatives, gather around each other and unite with each other."

Table 1 and chart 1 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Famila advert:

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Famila advert

Famila					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

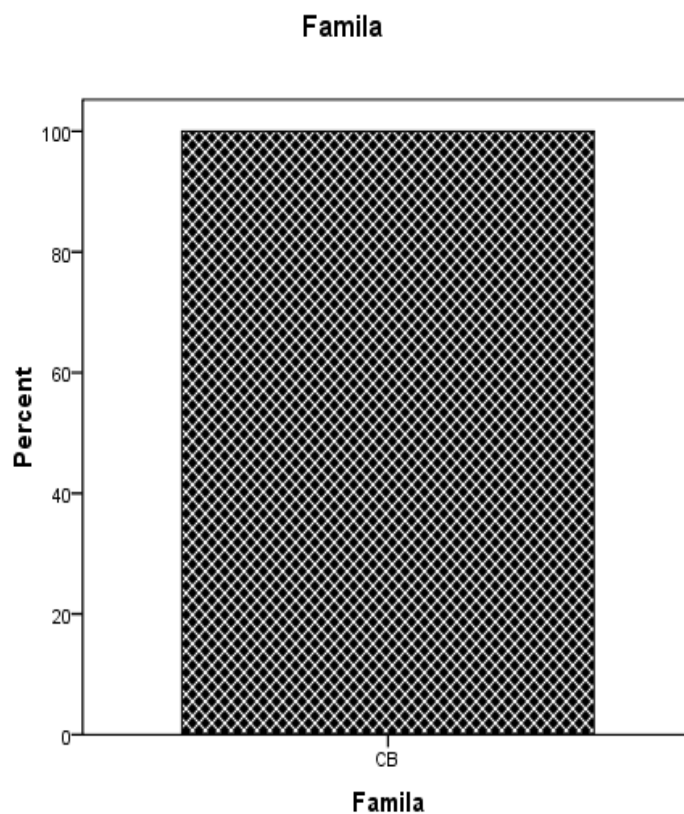


Chart 1. Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Famila advert

### 3.2 Mirror network: Saipa car

The next advert to be discussed is for Saipa. At the upper half of the advert, there is a picture of someone's hand drawing a map by a ruler with precise measurement. At the bottom of the picture, these phrases are written: "For you who are careful", "Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday's (Saipa)." Against these phrases, the features of Today's Saipa, which makes it different from yesterday's Saipa, are written:

- The maximal increase in engine power to 10.8 percent and its upgrade to 69.3 horse power

- The reduction of fuel consumption from 8.4 percent to 6.31 liters

At the top of these features, Saipa's picture is inserted; in this picture, today's Saipa has anticipated yesterday's Saipa and passed it. And, finally, the lower half of the advert has been occupied by two charts. In these charts, the engine power and the fuel consumption of these two Saipa cars have been compared. As it is clear from the charts, with the improvement of car engine and increase in its power, its fuel consumption has reduced.



Figure 3. Saipa advert

In order to understand this advert and to compare the two Saipa cars, we need to create a mirror network. "Mirror networks have a single organizing frame connecting all the mental spaces—the generic space, input Space 1, input space 2 and the blended space. This frame specifies the nature of the activity, events, and participants. It is called a mirror network because all the



spaces mirror each other although the blend may become a more complex frame as a result. Cross space mapping in such networks is simple." (Joy et al., 2009, p .44)

In the present advert, we have Saipa cars in both inputs; the difference is that they belong to different periods of time, one belongs to today (present) and the other one belongs to yesterday (past). When they integrate with each other, we can compare them: "Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday's (Saipa)":

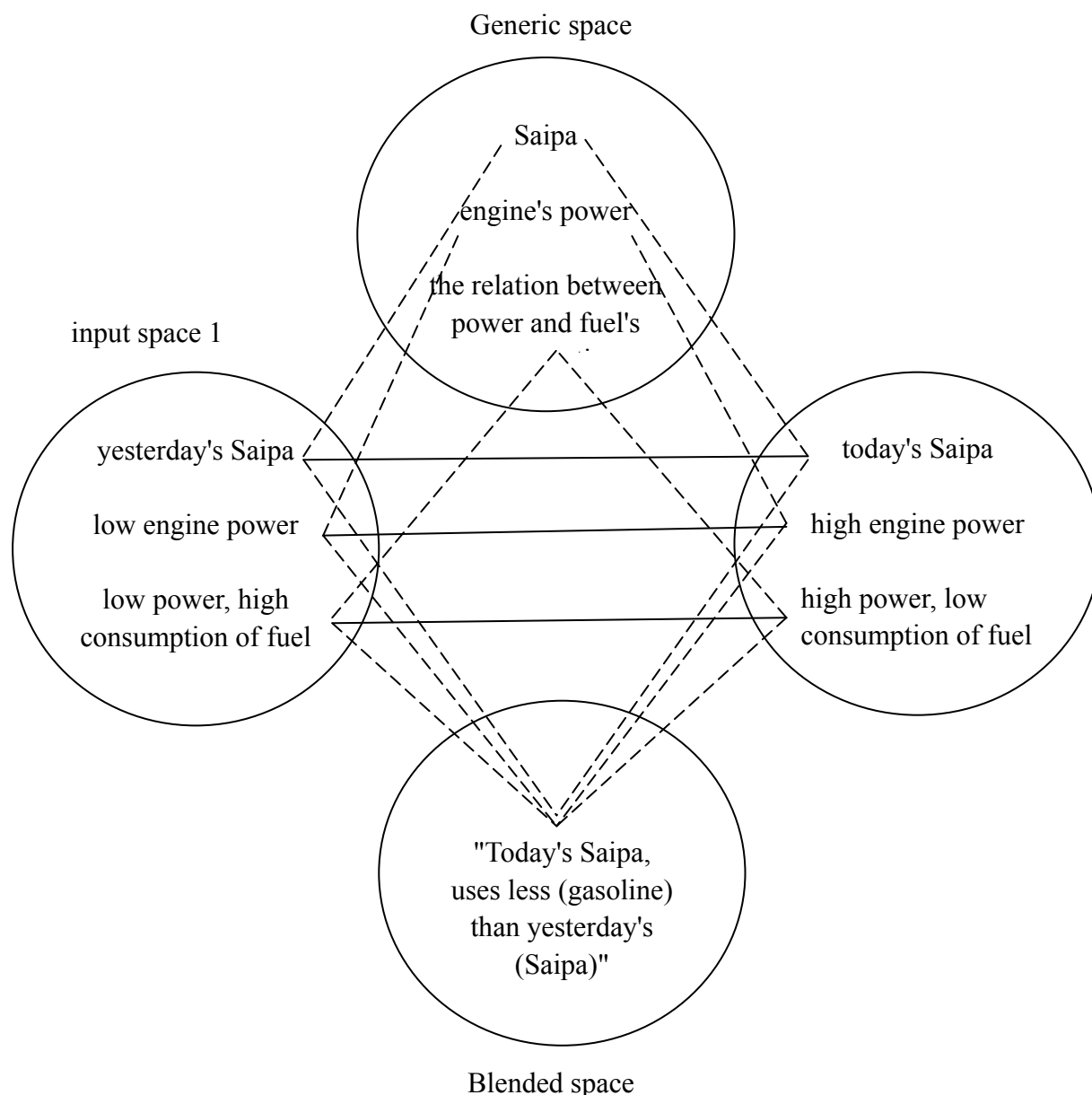


Figure 4. Mirror network (Saipa advert)

**Samples of addressees' answers:**

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

**Sample 1:** " 'Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday's (Saipa)' means that the car engine manufactured today, becomes better than before and it uses less gasoline."

**Sample 2:** " 'Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday's (Saipa)' means that today's Saipa has lower fuel consumption than yesterday's Saipa."

Table 2 and chart 2 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Saipa advert:

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Saipa advert

<b>Saipa</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

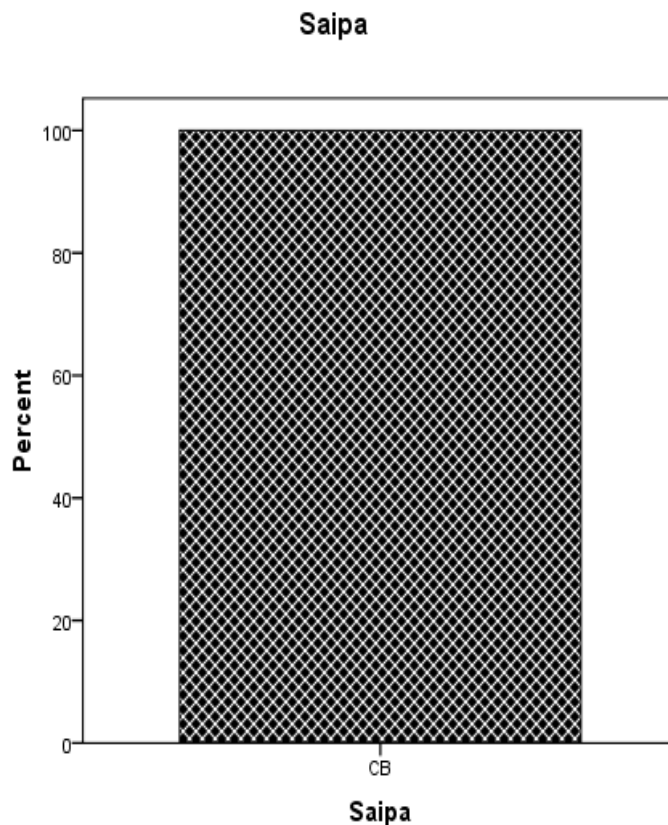


Chart 2. Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Saipa advert

### 3.3 Single-scope network: Dove shampoo

An advert for Dove shampoo, constitute our third example. It contains a single-scope network. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) define a single-scope network as the one that "has two input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other. Single-scope networks are the prototype of highly conventional source-target metaphors. The input that provides the organizing frame to the blend, the framing input, is often called the "source." The input that is the focus of understanding, the focus input, is often called the "target". (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp. 126-7)

Dove therapy shampoos are utilized for the healing of weak and fragile hairs. In the advert, we see the picture of two single hairs tied to two weights. The first single hair, as written below it, is weak and fragile; consequently, it cannot bear the heaviness of the weight. But the second single hair has been healed by Dove and it is strong (the hair healed by Dove remains strong); as the result, it can bear the heaviness of the weight.



Figure 5. Dove advert

The word 'heal' is used for medicine, thus, here Dove shampoo is compared to a medicine for the hair. Medicine is used for the healing of sick people; Dove, for the therapy of the weak and fragile hairs. The duty of medicine is curing sick people, Dove's task is strengthening hair root and creating strong hairs. In this single-scope network, as shown in figure (6), input space 1 comprises of medicine and the input space 2 contains Dove. The source input that provides the organizing frame to the blend, the framing input, is medicine input; the target input that is the focus of understanding, the focus input, is Dove input:

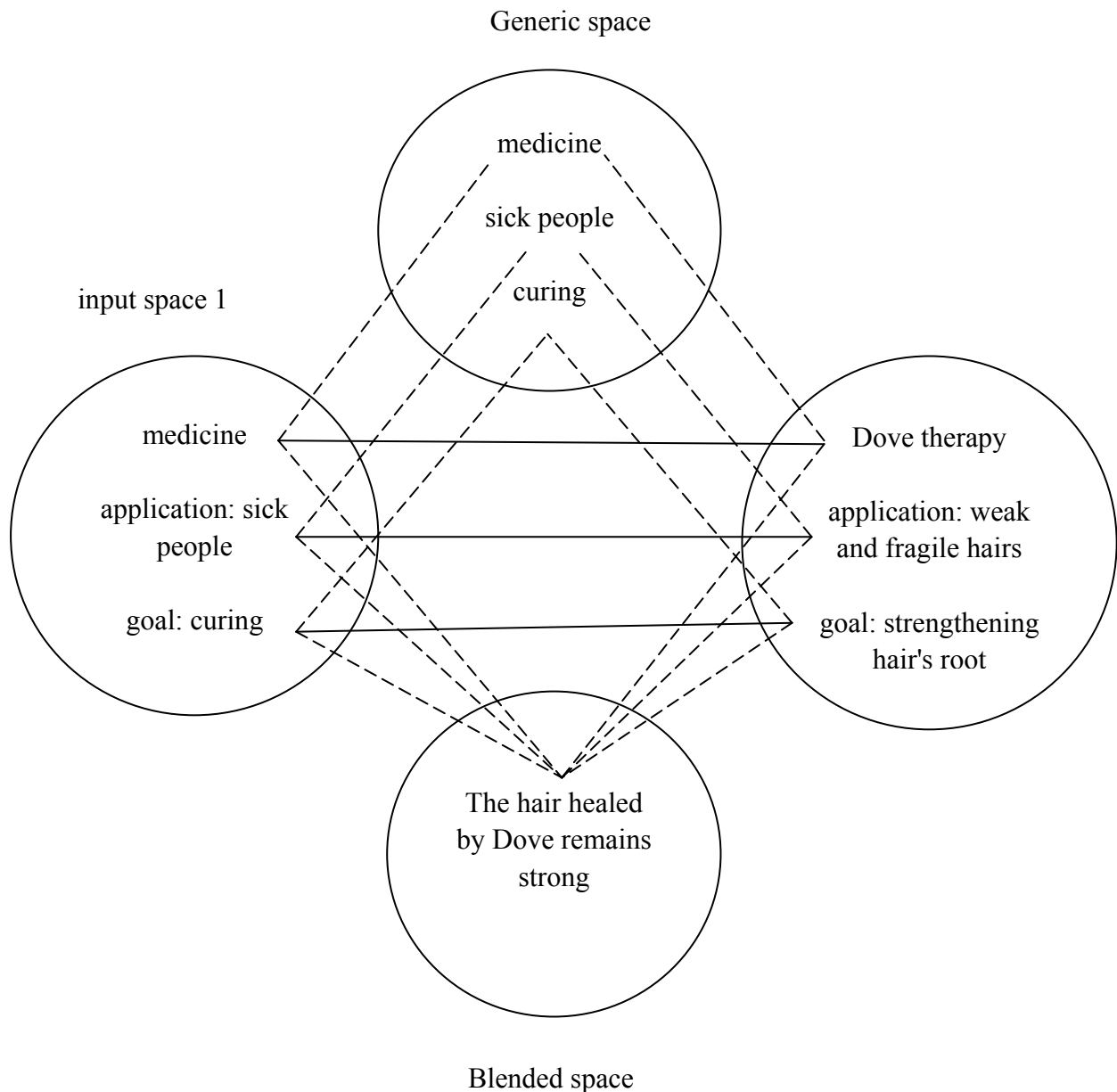


Figure 6. Single-scope network (Dove shampoo)

**Samples of addressees' answers:**

To explain this advert, all of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory:

**Sample 1:** " 'The hair healed by Dove remains strong' means that Dove heals fragile hair and strengthens its root."

**Sample 2:** "Like medicine which cures people and makes them strong, this shampoo heals fragile hair and strengthens it."

Table 3 and chart 3 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who used conceptual blending for explaining Dove advert:

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Dove advert

<b>Dove</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CB	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

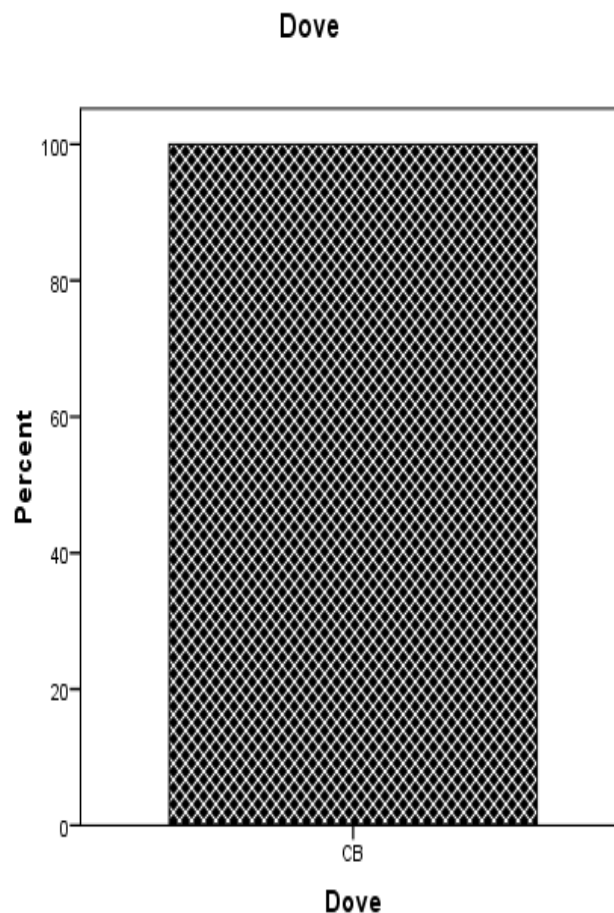


Chart 3. Percentage of the addressees who used CB in explaining Dove advert

### 3.4 Double-scope network: Sapor breakfast set

Since mathematics is exact, we use it, when we want to be precise. On the other hand, when it is applied in everything, we are sure that a good result can be achieved. With regards to the importance of mathematics, the advertiser has used it in this advert.

Since breakfast is the most important meal, most of the people try to have a complete breakfast. Sapor breakfast set gives all the things needed for preparing a complete breakfast. Here all these things are collected all together to achieve a desirable result: a satisfied house wife, a complete kitchen, a perfect housewife.

The advertisement for the Sapor Breakfast Set is presented as a collage. At the top left is the Sapor logo with the website [www.sapor-co.com](http://www.sapor-co.com). To the right, Persian text reads "آشپزخانه تکمیل، کدبانوی کامل" (Complete kitchen, complete housewife). Below this, a kitchen counter scene shows a coffee maker, a kettle, and a toaster with a plus sign between them, suggesting they are part of a set. A white arrow points from this scene to a list of items. The list includes: "ست صبحانه Breakfast Set", "Coffee Maker قهوه ساز", "Bread Toaster توستر نان", "Electric Kettle کتری برقی", and "Citrus Juicer آبمیوه گیری". At the bottom right, there is a contact number: "تلفن خدمات مشتریان: ۸-۵۵۱۸۳۹۷۶".

Figure 7. Sapor advert

How we come to such a result? By creating a double-scope network. "Double scope networks integrate two conflicting notions to produce a blend with a new organizing structure and an emergent meaning of its own. Both organizing frames contribute equally to the blend even though they may clash. We have no difficulty integrating different identities and different frames to generate novel identities and frames." (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, p. 46) In this advert, mathematics is in input space 1 and Sapor things (each one as a separate thing) are in input space 2. In the blended space, Sapor breakfast set is created by the integration of Sapor things with mathematics:

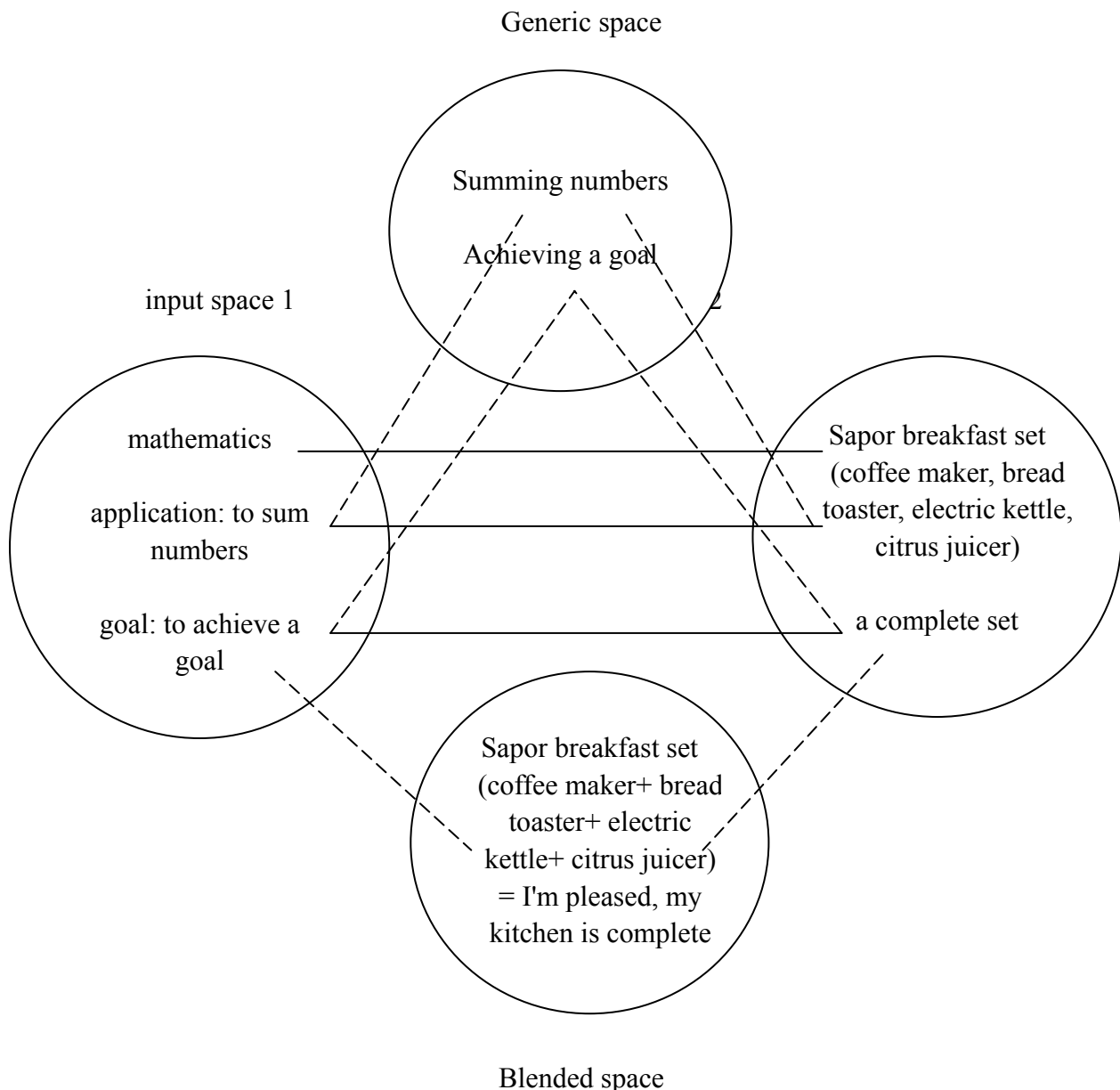


Figure 8. double-scope network

**Samples of addressees' answers:**

To explain this advert, %83.3 of the addressees used the conceptual blending theory and %16.7 of them could not explain it:

**Sample 1:** "These things are summed because their set, beside each other give us a complete breakfast."

**Sample 2:** "Each one of these things does a special work and is not complete alone. So they are summed with each other, since their set gives us a complete breakfast."

Table 4 and chart 4 show frequency and percentage of the number of persons who could not explain the ad and those who used CB in explaining Sapor advert:

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of the addressees who could not explain the ad and those who used CB in explaining Sapor advert

<b>Sapor</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CB	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
	None	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	



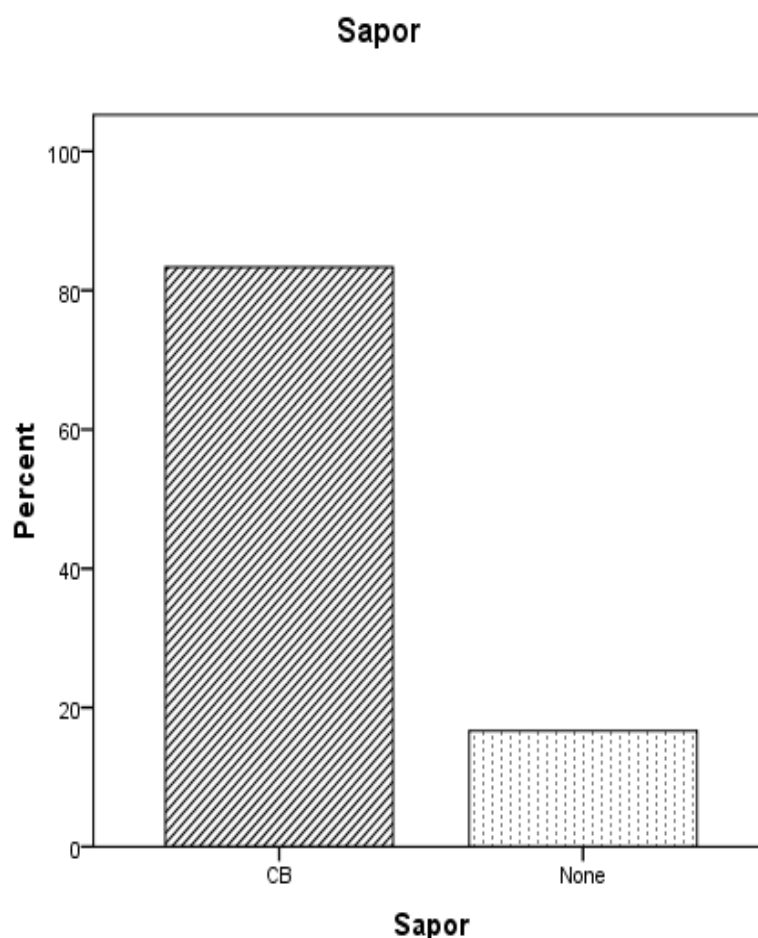


Chart 4. Percentage of the addressees who could not explain the ad and those who used CB in explaining Sapor advert

#### 4. Results and Discussion

"The theory of conceptual blending or integration was originally devised by Fauconnier and Turner (1994) and then developed through numerous articles (Fauconnier & Turner 1996, 1998, 1999, 2003 etc., Turner & Fauconnier 1995, 1999, 2000), with the most comprehensive account to data given in *"The Way We Think (2002)"* (as cited in Lundmark, 2005, p. 23).

Fuconnier and Turner (1994) give evidence for blending process from a wide range of data that includes everyday language, idioms, literary metaphor, non-verbal conceptualization of action, creative thought in mathematics, evolution of sociocultural models, jokes and advertising. They believe the process of blending is in general invisible to consciousness and detectable only on analysis.

In the theory of conceptual blending four main types of integration networks have been distinguished: simplex networks, mirror networks, single-scope networks, and double-scope networks. All of these networks are applicable to the adverts under investigation in this paper.

The kinds of networks applied are chosen according to the message that the advertisers want to convey.

"In simplexes, one input consists of a frame and the other consists of specific elements. A frame is a conventional and schematic organization of knowledge such as 'buying gasoline' " (Fauconnier, 2001, p. 2497). Familia advert comprises of a simplex network, since in this network, input space 1 consists of the frame of relatives and input space 2 consists of Familia productions. In the blended space relatives frame applies to Familia productions and they become relatives there.

"In mirrors, a common organizing frame is shared by all spaces in the network" (ibid). Because both inputs in Saipa advert comprise of Saipa cars, it includes a mirror network. The frames of both inputs are the same, that of Saipa, but they are different, because of the two Saipas' different features. In the blended space with the comparison of these two Saipas, we achieve to a result: "Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday's (Saipa)"

"In single- scopes, the organizing frames of the inputs are different, and the blend inherits only one of those frames" (ibid). The integration network in Dove advert is a single-scope network, in which medicine and Dove, with their different frames, are in the two inputs. The blended space, in this network, inherits medicine's frame. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) assert "Single-scope networks are the prototype of highly conventional source- target metaphors" (p. 127). Accordingly, in this advert, medicine is the 'source' and Dove is the 'target'.

"Double-scopes blending can resolve clashes between inputs that differ fundamentally in content and typology. This is a powerful source of human creativity (Fauconnier, 2001, p. 2497). As Fauconnier and Turner (2002) claim double-scope networks are the most complex kind of networks. As we saw in Sapor advert, the advertiser has applied mathematics which made the advert a complex one. In this advert, mathematics and Sapor breakfast set, with their different frames, are in the two inputs, and the blended space inherits the frames of both inputs.

As Joy et al. (2009) consider both text and visual elements play important roles in advert understanding. The interview results of the present study show that the addressees use both text and image for analyzing the adverts. They also indicate that the addressees apply the theory of conceptual blending in explaining the adverts. The observation- "These productions, like human beings, are relatives with each other, so Familia name is chosen for this production."- represent a simplex network. The expression -"Today's Saipa, uses less (gasoline) than yesterday ('s Saipa), means that the car engine manufactured today, becomes better than before and it uses less gasoline"- shows a mirror network. Similarly, the two observations- "The hair healed by Dove remains strong, means that Dove heals fragile hair and strengthens its root."- and -"these things are summed because their set, beside each other gives us a complete breakfast. "- represent a single-scope and a double-scope, respectively.

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