Happy is Up: How Deep-Rooted Metaphors Influence the Effectiveness of Tourism-Related Print Ads?

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Abstract: *Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed that metaphors are not, as most people might think, a matter of words. They suggest that the way we think, what we experience, how we act, or even how we relate to other people is to a great extent a matter of metaphor - our conceptual system is essentially metaphorical in nature. However, we are not normally aware of our conceptual system or of the way this system is being structured. Many of the individual expressions we use in our everyday communication are rooted in metaphorical concepts. Orientational metaphor is such a type of conceptual metaphor. Orientational metaphor gives a spatial orientation to a concept, for example, "happy is up". The present research demonstrates that when the position of an advertising headline is in accordance with its corresponding orientational metaphor, it has a positive impact on such important consumer responses as liking and comprehension.*
Keywords: *Orientational metaphor, print advertising, ad liking, comprehension, hospitality and tourism industry*

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are usually thought of as single expressions that invite us to understand one thing in terms of another in order to place emphasis, persuade, or amuse. It was Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who suggested that metaphor is not a mere rhetorical embellishment. Metaphors are pervasive devices that structure our conceptual system and govern our thoughts. Orientational metaphor is a type of such a metaphorical device that gives concepts a spatial orientation - for example: up-down, in-our, or front-back. Within this article, we build on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor to show that orientational metaphors are used by consumers to understand and appreciate advertisements. The findings of the present study suggest that presenting ad information in a way consistent with orientational metaphor can positively influence comprehension and attitude towards a print ad. We first begin by offering an example of an "ordinary" metaphor; and then we introduce Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) account of structural and orientational metaphor. Finally, we discuss research that helped us shape the hypotheses of the present study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Typically, a metaphor has two terms. For example, in the metaphor "my job is a jail" (Glucksberg and Keysar 1993), the first term (job) is often called the topic and the second term (jail) is called the vehicle. Metaphor has been traditionally viewed as an implicit comparison that lacks the explicit comparative phrasing (i.e., the word "like") of a literal comparison. Thus, the phrase "my job is a jail" is seen as being interpreted as "my job is like a jail" (Glucksberg and Keysar 1993). Although many accounts have been developed to explain how metaphor works (e.g., Black 1962, 1979; Ortony 1979, Searle 1979), the traditional view holds that metaphor invites readers to view the topic in terms of the vehicle. The reader has to assume a resemblance between the two terms - based on which he searches for features of the vehicle that can be applied to the topic of the metaphor (Tversky 1977). For example, readers might select "lack of freedom", "being oppressive", or "boring" from the concept of "jail" as features that can be applied to the concept of "job" in order to understand the metaphor "my job is a jail".

They were Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who suggested that metaphors do not only exist as single expressions, to be found at the surface level of language, but metaphor is well rooted in our conceptual system to the extent that it structures the way we perceive things. An example of a concept that is being shaped by structural metaphor is "argument". Lakoff and Johnson (1980) insightfully provide many examples in our everyday language which reveal that we understand arguments in terms of war. Some of the English expressions that suggest the existence of the structural metaphor "argument is war" are: "he *attacked every weak* point in my argument", "his criticisms were *right on target*", "I've never *won* an argument", and "he *shot down* all of my arguments". Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stress that it is not only that we talk about arguments in terms of war, but we actually act according to this conceptual metaphor when arguing. We plan our strategies, we see the person we are arguing as an opponent, and we attack his position while defending our own.

Orientational metaphor, another type of conceptual metaphor identified by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), received less research attention as compared to structural metaphor. Whereas structural metaphors like "argument is war" are structuring *one concept* in terms of another, orientational metaphors organise *a whole system of concepts* with respect to one another. Orientational metaphors give concepts a spatial orientation such as an up-down, in-out, or front-back orientation. For example, we think of happiness as being "up" and sadness as being "down". This is evident from the use of such expressions as "I'm feeling up", "my spirits rose", or "I'm feeling down". The orientation we give on concepts is based in

our physical and cultural experience. The metaphors "happy is up" and "sad is down" might have arisen out of an erect posture when we are in a positive emotional state and a drooping posture when we feel sad.

Within psycholinguistics, orientational metaphor has not received much research attention as compared to structural metaphor (Langston 2002). This lack of research attention is even more evident in advertising and consumer research. With few exceptions (e.g., Phillips and McQuarrie 2009), the claims made by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) about metaphor have not been empirically tested. Working within the realm of print advertising, Phillips and McQuarrie (2009) failed to find evidence for the hypothesis that exposing consumers to metaphoric statements can strengthen consumers' belief to the corresponding structural metaphor. Only metaphorical statements that were artful (e.g., "exercise: flame for life") increased beliefs to the corresponding structural metaphor (e.g., "exercise is heat"). Psycholinguistic experiments have also been mixed in their findings. While there seems to be agreement that structural metaphors are stored in long-term memory, there is much less agreement that structural metaphor can be used for comprehension or production or under which circumstances this might happen (Langston 2002).

Psycholinguistic research, indicating the existence of structural metaphor, suggests that mental imagery for idioms with a common underlying structural metaphor is internally consistent (Gibbs and O'Brien 1990); and generally participants can correctly match an individual idiom with its corresponding structural metaphor (Nayak and Gibbs 1990). In particular, Nayak and Gibbs' (1990) findings suggest that generally individuals construct schematic frameworks when reading a text. Incoming information that fits with the schema facilitates comprehension and is found to be more appropriate than information that does not fit the schema expectations. This also seems to be true for schemata that are based on structural metaphors. Nayak and Gibbs' (1990) findings suggest that when people read text that primes a structural metaphor (e.g., "anger is heat in a pressurised container"), they subsequently rate idioms consistent (e.g., "blew her top") with the primed metaphor as more appropriate than inconsistent idioms (e.g., "bit his head off").

A critic expressed to the findings of Nayak and Gibbs (1990) is that they are might be anything more than the result of lexical priming (Kreuz and Graesser 1991). This critic questions the ability of structural metaphors to be automatically accessible to individuals for the comprehension and appreciation of incoming information in the absence of priming text. In a series of experiments, Glucksberg, Brown, and McGlone (1993) failed to find the same positive effects for metaphorically consistent idioms as Nayak and Gibbs (1990) - without, however, excluding such a possibility in certain circumstances. Similarly, structural metaphors do not seem to guide language production (Shen and Balaban 1999). In an interesting study, Keysar and Bly (1995) tested idioms that were not familiar to participants, for example, "the goose hangs high". Keysar and Bly (1995) speculated that if people are able to use the conceptual metaphor "good is up", they should judge the unknown idiom as a good thing. However, participants' rating of the transparency of the meaning of the unfamiliar idiom was based on what they learned (by means of the experiment) rather than on conceptual metaphor.

In a rare attempt to test orientational metaphor, Langston (2002) found that sentences inconsistent with the orientational metaphor "more is up" were more difficult to understand than consistent sentences. Langston (2002) attributed his findings to the fact that orientational metaphors, as compared to structural metaphors, are more constrained. Whereas conceptual metaphors are rich in content and structure, orientational metaphors might offer simple schematic frameworks. For example, the metaphor "more is up" might invoke an image schema that can be fairly easily applied to a new domain. Langston (2002) explains, that this can make less difficult for either a qualitative or a quantitative increase of an object or entity (e.g., a hotter potato, a deeper shade of blue, etc.) to be mapped via the orientational metaphor "more is up". Image schema can explain the gains in comprehension noticed by Langston (2002). In particular, when readers encounter sentences that suggest an orientational metaphor, they form an image schema. If the next sentence is consistent with the metaphor (and the schema evoked), comprehension is facilitated. If the sentence is not consistent with the schema evoked, a shift to new schema might be needed. This will result in an interruption of the mental model (or image) and thus in a deterioration in comprehension.

The objective of the present study is to investigate the significance of orientational metaphors for consumers' responses to ads in order to establish that they are firstly, psychologically meaningful and secondly practically important within the context of hospitality advertising. In particular, the study presented here empirically tests the proposition that consumers use orientational metaphor to map ad information onto a spatial dimension via orientational metaphor and that this can increase comprehension and ad liking for a hotel print ad. We hypothesise that ad information that suggests an orientational metaphor evokes a mental image that is used by consumers to process the ad information. We expect that information positioned in the ad in a way consistent with the evoked orientational metaphor will facilitate ad comprehension, and it will result in increased attitudes towards the advertisement.

The present empirical study differs from psycholinguistic studies in many respects. Most importantly, we do not test the claim that orientational metaphor can have an impact on comprehension and attitudes towards *incoming* information after an orientational metaphor has been already suggested by preceding information. The present study tests whether orientational metaphor can have a direct impact on the information that is actually suggesting an orientational metaphor – not information that is coming after the establishment of an orientational metaphor. This means that a stringent hypothesis is made about the automatic accessibility of orientational metaphor. Second, the information used to establish structural and orientational metaphor in past studies consisted of small paragraphs and sentences. We want to test whether an orientational metaphor can be evoked by the mere appearance of a single word. This means that we explore whether no extensive and

systematic priming (e.g., establishing an hierarchy, Langston 2002) is required for a mental image to be formed via an orientational metaphor. Third, we apply orientation metaphor to a new competitive domain (see Kapiki 2012) – that of tourism and hospitality print advertising. We argue that experimental ads form a more pragmatic context for the testing of orientational metaphor as compared to formulaic sentences and paragraphs used in psycholinguistic research. In sum, the present study addresses a theoretical and methodological gap in the psycholinguistic literature and by that means it also offers a systematic analysis of tourism- and hospitality-related advertising (Quain and Render 1991).

The findings reported here are based on an initial analysis of part of an experiment. This part of the experiment was designed to test whether ad copy that is strongly perceived via an orientational metaphor would increase ad liking and facilitate ad comprehension when the copy's axial placement in the ad (top or bottom of the page) is consistent with the position it has in the corresponding orientational metaphor image schema (up or down). For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that "high status is up" and "low status is down". Does placing a headline referring to the high status of the brand (e.g., "leader") at the top of the ad page (rather than at the bottom) make the ad easier to understand and increase attitudes towards the ad? The answer to this question seems to be interesting in both theoretical and practical terms.

3. METHOD

To identify the concepts people more strongly associate, via an orientational metaphor, with "up" or "down", we undertook an assessment of the majority of the orientational metaphors discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). A total of 20 concepts were examined. The concepts (e.g., more, less, happiness, sadness) were part of 10 pairs of antonyms structured by an "up-down" orientational metaphor (e.g., "more is up"/"less is down"). A 7-point bipolar scale anchored by "down/up" (down=1; up=7) was used to assess the degree to which participants associated, in their minds, each of the 20 concepts with "up" or "down". The cover story of the pre-test introduced the idea of orientational mertaphor and offered an example. Twenty four university students participated in the pre-test. Based on the results, the concept of "happiness" was chosen for inclusion in the main study. Happiness received the highest score ($M = 6.42$, SD = 1.32) among the rest of the concepts. In addition, the antonym of happiness (sadness), received the lowest score ($M = 1.75$, SD = 1.42) among all the concepts tested. This difference indicates a high degree of polar opposition. The score of sadness was only shared by other 2 concepts ("last" and "unimportant"). Happiness and sadness significantly differed to each other ($t(23) = 8.85$, $p < .001$). In addition, happiness ($t(23) = 9.00$, $p < .001$) and sadness ($t(23) = 7.75$, $p < .001$) differed significantly with the midpoint of the scale (4).

We choose to present the concept of happiness in the context of hospitality industry. Happiness seems to be a valid and appropriate claim for hospitality- and tourism-related advertising (for the characteristics of magazine advertisements on hotel service, see Luk, Tam, and Wong 1996). For example, wellness (i.e., a state of harmony between mind, body, and soul) invited growing attention in the tourism and hospitality industry as a marketing concept (Bertsch and Ostermann 2011; Didaskalou, Lagos, and Nastos 2009). On the empirical side, research findings suggest that positive emotional responses, induced by advertising, influence perceived brand values and ultimately behavioural intentions in the chain restaurant industry (Sunghyup, Wansoo, and Myong 2011). Another reason for applying orientational metaphor in the tourism context is that tourism-related ads very often depict images of beautiful scenes with little or no copy (see for example Figure 1). The fact that a scene could be naturally accommodated in the ad helped us in establishing a clear up-down orientation within the ad page while the practice of using brief headlines with little copy helped us develop experimental ad stimuli that realistically focused on the single concept of happiness.
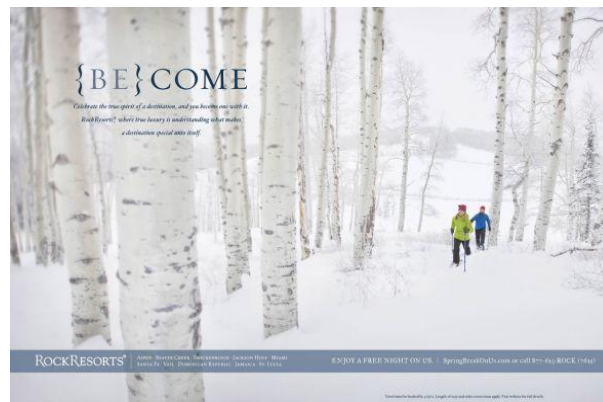

Figure 1: An example of a tourism ad showing a beautiful scene with a brief headline.

Four versions (two sets) of a print ad for a hotel were used as stimuli in the present study (Figure 2). The word "happiness" was used in the headline of the first set of ads. The sentence "experience it in Hampton Inn Hotel" was included below the headline. The name of the hotel (Hampton Inn) was used in the headline of the second set of ads while the word "hotels" appeared in the copy below the headline. This second set of ads were used as controls based on which to

evaluate any differences in comprehension and ad liking induced by the ads having the word "happiness" in their headlines. Metaphor-spatial arrangement consistency was manipulated by placing the headline either at the top of the ad (consistent condition) or at the bottom of the ad (inconsistent condition). A graphic representation of a scene with a tree was purposefully placed in all experimental stimuli to emphasize the up-down dimension. One hundred fifty eight university students took part in the experiment. The main dependent variables of interest were comprehension and ad liking. Comprehension was measured by two seven-point items anchored by "easy/difficult to understand" and "simple/confusing" (Cronbach's α = .79). Attitude towards the ad was measured by the sum of three items anchored by "disliked/liked", "bad/good", and "unpleasant/pleasant" (Cronbach's α = .87). Finally, the degree to which participants associated happiness and sadness with "up" and "down" was measured in a fashion similar to the pre-test.
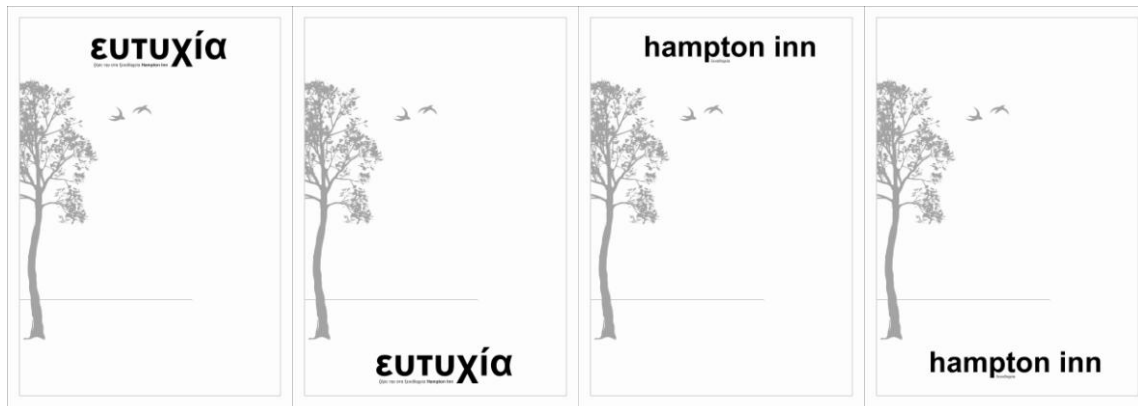

Figure 2. Experimental ads for main study.

4. RESULTS

The data were analyzed based on 2×2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with two between-participants factors. The first factor (consistency) distinguishes between the spatial arrangements of the ad headlines - that is, whether the headline appeared at the top or at the bottom of the ad. The second factor (semantic relatedness) distinguishes whether the word "happiness" (suggesting the orientational metaphor "happy is up") or the name of the advertised hotel (Happton Inn) appeared at headline of the ad.

Our hypotheses are that the difference between the consistent semantic headlines (i.e., with "happiness" at the top of the ad page) and the consistent non-semantic headline (with "Hampton Inn" at the top of the ad page) will be more advantageous (in terms of comprehension and ad liking) as compared to the difference between the inconsistent semantic headline and the inconsistent non-semantic headline. Our hypotheses can be tested by means of the interaction terms between consistency and semantic relatedness. Before examining the dependent variables of interest, we examined whether participants in the main study could map happiness and sadness onto the up-down dimension as it would be suggested by the existence of the orientational metaphor "happiness is up". An independent-samples t-test showed that happiness ($M = 6.05$, SD = 1.07) scored significantly higher from sadness ($M = 1.99$, SD = 1.15) in the "down-up" scale ($t (156) = 26.60$, $p < .001$). As an additional check, scores for happiness and sadness were submitted to one sample t-tests, with the midpoint of the scale (4) as the comparison value. Happiness ($t (156) = 23.88$, $p < .001$) and sadness ($t (156) = 21.76$, $p < .001$) both significantly differed from the midpoint value of the scale. This last test indicates that readers perceive sadness and happiness as being significantly different from the centre on the metaphorical "vertical axis".

We then examined the measure of ad liking. The interaction between consistency and semantic relatedness (see Figure 3) was significant for ad liking ($F (1, 153) = 3.96$, $p < .05$). The main effects of consistency ($F (1, 153) = 0.79$, $p < .NS$) and semantic relatedness ($F (1, 153) = 1.66$, $p < .NS$) were not significant. Within the consistent condition (i.e., headline appearing at the top of the page) the semantic headline ($M = 4.78$, SD = 1.43) was better liked ($p < .05$) than the non-semantic headline ($M = 3.97$, SD = 1.55) whereas no significant difference emerged between the inconsistent semantic ($M = 4.07$, SD = 1.53) and the inconsistent non-semantic headline ($M = 4.25$, SD = 1.53, $p < .NS$). In addition, the "happiness" headline received a greater score for ad liking when its position at the ad space was consistent with the symbolic position of happiness in participants' mind (i.e., at the top of the page) rather than when it was inconsistent with it (i.e., at the bottom of the page). This simple effects test within the semantic-related condition was significant ($p < .05$). The mean difference between consistent and inconsistent ads within the semantic-unrelated condition (i.e., with the name of the hotel in the headlines) was in the opposite direction as compared to the semantically related headline ($p < .NS$).
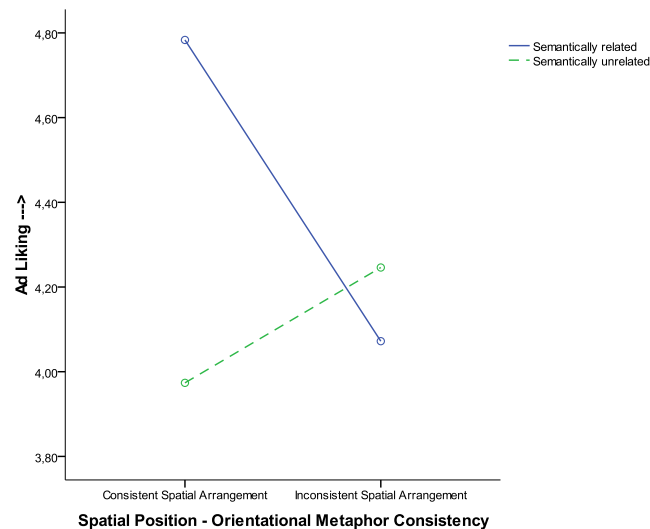
Figure 3. Consistency x semantic relatedness interaction for ad liking

Finally, we examined the two-item scale measuring comprehension. The interaction between consistency and semantic relatedness for comprehension was significant (F (1, 153) = 3.48, $p < .06$). Again, the main effects of consistency (F (1, 153) = 0.76, $p < .NS$) and semantic relatedness (F (1, 153) = 2.52, $p < .NS$) were not significant. The interaction term, however, revealed that within the consistent condition (i.e., where headlines were placed at the top of the page), the ad with the semantically related headline of "happiness" ($M = 2.35$, SD = 1.40) was easier to understand than the ad with the semantically non-related headline ($M = 3.22$, SD = 1.62). The difference between the inconsistent semantic ($M = 2.90$, SD = 1.70) and the inconsistent non-semantically related ad layout ($M = 2.82$, SD = 1.60) was not significant ($p < .NS$). The pairwise comparison between consistent and inconsistent ad layouts within the semantic-related condition was not significant ($p < .NS$). The mean difference between consistent and inconsistent ads within the semantic-unrelated condition (i.e., ads having the name of the hotel in the headline) was in the opposite direction as compared to the semantic-related condition ($p < .NS$).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that participants' conceptual system might be structured by such orientational metaphors as "happy is up" (Lakoff and Johson 1980). Participants not only could perceive the concept of happiness as being "up", but it seems that they used the mental image induced by this orientational metaphor to appreciate and comprehend an advertisement for a hotel. It seems that orientational metaphor model images create certain expectations as to where text that semantically relates to the corresponding orientational metaphor should appear in a two-dimensional space. "Semantic" information that was consistent with the orientational metaphor mental image provoked a positive attitude towards the ad to a greater extent than information that was inconsistent with the mental image as compared to "non-semantic" headlines. The mental image formed by orientational metaphor also had an impact on the comprehension of the ad. In particular, positioning information that relates to an orientational metaphor in accordance to the metaphorical position of the same information in consumers' minds seems to facilitate comprehension.

The present findings not only suggest that orientational metaphor is available but also that consumers can access the corresponding mental image and use it to process information. Our experimental results differ from research in psycholinguistics (Glucksberg et al. 1993, Keyser and Bly 1995) showing that structural metaphors do not preferentially shape our conceptual system or are not accessible. The present seemingly contrasting findings might be the result of the difference between structural and orientational metaphor (Langston 2002). That is, structural metaphors (e.g., "argument is war") are richer and less constraining because the possible mappings between the metaphorical terms are not limited to dimensional arrangements in space as the case might be with orientational metaphor (e.g., "happy is up").

However, the present experimental results suggest an even more automatic access of orientational metaphor on the part of the participants as compared to the studies of Langston (2002) and others (Gibbs and O'Brien 1990; Nayak and Gibbs 1990). The higher accessibility of orientational metaphor in the present study is suggested by the fact that in past studies a more systematic and extended effort was made to establish a metaphor image model. For example, Langston (2002) applied two sentences to establish the orientational metaphor "more is up", based on which participants judged a third sentence. The first sentence (e.g., David wants a lot of caffeine in his drink) introduced the dimension arrangement while the second sentence described an items position on the dimension (e.g., He place Jolt first because Jolt is most caffeinated) before introducing the third target sentence (e.g., Under Jolt David placed Sprite). We believe that this operationalisation of orientational metaphor contrasts with the way a metaphorical mental image was established in the present study. The present experimental stimuli depicted a visual scene – a common practice in marketing communications

– with no explicit reference to any order, hierarchy, or any technically imposed spatial arrangement. This might suggests that orientational metaphor better exposes itself in the visual domain as compared to the linguistic domain, within which conceptual metaphor was studied till now.

Apart from the theoretical contribution of the present study in the understanding of orientational metaphor, it also has some important managerial implications. It appears that marketing communications should be consistent with orientational metaphor mental images – especially when opportunity to process the ad information is limited - for example, in billboards. In addition, when advertising content is structured via an orientational metaphor then spatially arranging the content in a manner consistent with the structure dictated by the metaphor can result in better attitudes towards the ad. The present research extended the theoretical importance of orientational metaphor by empirically testing it in the hospitality industry context. Advertising seems to be a particularly important communication tool for the hospitality industry that can have a measurable and direct impact on business performance (Almeida et al. 2012)

In conclusion, we strongly believe that orientational metaphor deserves the attention of communication theorists and practitioners alike. Metaphor, so far, has been approached and studied mainly as a matter of individual idioms. The present study shows that metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggested, might influence us at a deeper level. We hope that the present study will invite more research on metaphor as a mechanism that structures the way we understand and experience the world around us.

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