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## The Visual Rhetoric in Public Awareness Print Advertising toward Malaysia Perceptive Sociolculture Design

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore and discuss the role being played by visual rhetoric in Malaysia's public announcement print advertising scene using semiotic approaches. The visual rhetoric seems to be an important element to increase the effectiveness of the process of information exchange. In fact visual rhetoric helps to get messages across to audiences in a persuasive way. The output from this study will propose the system or guideline that would be employed by visual rhetoric in print media to instill advertising awareness. This allows people from various social culture to engage themselves with the activity of comprehending the message carried by the visuals displayed to them. This study will also spread knowledge on the usefulness of visual rhetoric in print advertising beyond the fact that they are a pleasure to the eyes as their presence accounts as beautiful crafts to the eyes of human.

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### 1. Introduction

Today people live in a visually intensive society and world of spectacular and exciting images. Visual literacy has its own system of language that allows people to socially construct its meaning process. They are bombarded continuously stream of visual simulation from all manner of different media approaches in everyday. They see mediated images more often than words. Visual image may control the global cultural, technological empirical of mass media as a central medium of information may play the importance of scholar of visual communication across the world. The use of rhetorical in creative industries especially in advertising as a tool to persuade audience

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and also to help them perceive image quickly. According to Mcquarrie and Glen (2003) visual rhetoric is an artful deviation, relative to audience expectation which leads the audience more effective and favourable brand attitude toward the ads. In advertising the image is a perfect 're-presentation' of life. Hence, an analysis of visual rhetoric considers how images work alone and collaborate with other elements to create an argument designed for audience to choose to present information or argument through image. According to Barthes (1994), 'in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional, which signifies that the advertising message is formed a priority of certain attributes of products which signifies to have been transmitted as clearly as possible'. Throughout this study, it will be analysis the effective visual rhetoric on all the images in print media which include newspaper and magazines. It will also show that visual effective in advertisements carrying different types of semiotic meaning through different level of response from viewers in persuasive brand recalled towards the ads.

The purpose of this study is to propose a guideline for the effective use of visual content in general advertising in Malaysia. This knowledge base will be seen as necessary in educational environments to support collaborative learning especially for educators and students which is needed to bridge cultural gaps in our social environment. This study also will develop new typology a unique contribution first by focusing on rhetorical figures constructed from visual rather than verbal elements which may affect consumers processing and response.

## **2. Research problem**

The current problem in advertising visual creative value is because of the lack of creative standard in advertising which has all along been plugging. As a result Malaysia ads have not won any winning work at international competition in Cannes International Advertising Festival 2010. Accordingly Harmandar (2010) claims that ads visual contents are lacking of visual rhetoric compared to Indonesia which won first gold in Cannes International Advertising Festival 2010. The impact of content regulation by Advertising Standards Authority Malaysia (2008) has given an effect toward creative visual impact through imagery in advertisements. Given this the advertising practitioners are faced with the challenges of balancing their advertising objective which need to comply with and stave off further regulations. In conjunction with these impacts, Malaysia creative industry is also lacking of passion and creative talent. According to the Chairman of Kancil Award 2012, Mitchell (2012) the country is losing the potential talents who lack of passion and creativity and drive to excel within the industry. It is getting more difficult for young talents that are willing to stay long in the industry due to lower starting salary. Young talents have realised that the level thinking of design is very low and their knowledge in constructing ideas, seems lost. They also need to understand that design is not only about creating layout for print or online, the space and color, principles but also the purpose, the rationale and most importantly how the whole design process and outcome can contribute to the society and country (Rahman, 2013). Furthermore the creative content in Malaysia should learn from other global countries with regards how countries like Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines and China are turning to creative industries to reinvent its economics. Injection of strong visual identity, visual culture and visual language in built are strong visual rhetoric in communication message in advertisement. The impact of creative advertising is believed to have significant impact in influencing and shaping of national identity and culture of nation, especially through the image and message portrayed in advertisements (Pe, 2012).

## **3. Research question**

RQ1 What forms create a greater impact of audience on visual rhetoric toward the transformational approach in public service announcement (PSA) advertisements?

RQ2 What was the experiential response of visual rhetoric on persuasive function of advertisements?

RQ3 What does an effect of social culture in visual rhetoric in ads persuasion of public service announcement (PSA)?

#### 4. Significant of study

- *Academic and researcher*

Developing the framework of visual approach in advertising design element responses to identify patterns of meaning construction. A part of this study, the academician will use visual rhetoric as cultural element studies as an important role in persuasive advertisements where visual rhetoric and semiotics will act as a measurement tool to gauge the culture element evidents.

- *Advertising practitioners*

The theoretical guideline will help practitioners the power of visual imagery to persuade people to build a relationship with a brand awareness and liking for audience processing of advertisement message. Advertiser will use the visual imagery to enhance or strengthen messages about their products or services.

- *Consumers*

By applying effective visual rhetoric works in advertisements it will regain the greater influence in views attitudinal responses which will help to generate even more favourable reaction towards the product or service in advertising. Studies have stated that visual communication has the greatest impact on choice and buying decision of consumers.

- *Graphic design students*

This study also will involve students who study advertising design course which will help them to apply conceptual thinking, methodologies, and processes in the creation of an effective advertising campaign as a part of design principles. As they create varied visual messages, students will consider what make an image iconic, how visual and verbal elements contribute to meaning, and what role images play in news stories of persuasive advertisement

#### 5. Literature review

##### 5.1. Visual rhetoric

The visual rhetoric is used to draw the reader's attention and seduce the persuasion them toward the message recalled. Visual rhetoric can be described as a form of communication that uses images for creating meaning or constructing an argument. Hence, an analysis of visual rhetoric considers how images work alone and collaborate with other elements to create an argument designed for audience choice to present information or argument through image. Visual rhetoric has been used to mean anything from the use of images as argument, to the arrangement of elements on a page for rhetorical effect, to the use of typography (fonts), and analysis of existing image and visuals. Visual rhetoric is a term used to describe the study of visual imagery within the rhetorical framework discipline. According to (Foss, 2012), to qualify image as visual rhetoric terms, he defined that the visual imagery must be able to serve as a sign, be symbolic, involved human intervention and the message must be communicated to the audience. Furthermore, throughout the rhetoric elements it may influence the people way of thinking and belief by using strategic symbol systems. The application of rhetorical perspective on visual imagery is to investigate the features and elements of visual elements on generating the theory of rhetoric by taking into account the distinct characteristic of visual symbols. Rhetoric perspective that was used in the inductive approach was focused on the qualities and functions of images and how visual symbols were operated. Visual rhetoric must persuade the audience through the message either verbal or visual communication which it does to discover the communicative dimensions of images through attention to their nature, the function or to evaluate the subjects.

A scholar by Mick and Glen (2003a) and Mick and Glen (2003b) stated that visual rhetoric is related to the framing of message and method of effective persuasion. A detail definition of visual rhetoric may be defined as a theoretical and practical investigation of the effects of image-based signifying systems on human subjects in a

particular situation. The interpretation of visual message may involve in the processes of talking, listening, reading and writing about seeing with the above considerations in mind.

Visual rhetoric involves how the audience choose to present information or argument through image. Therefore, used visual rhetoric figures as a way of expression to aestheticize the visuality and in this way they increase the effectiveness of the process of meaning exchange and reinforce their communication process (Köksal, 2013). To support the ideas of visual rhetoric is just note about the superior design and aesthetic but also how cultures represent and meanings are reflected, communicated and altered by visual imagery. The exploration of visual rhetoric is a powerful role that visuality plays in shaping the public symbolic actions which involve range of social life: how we perform, how we see (both literacy or metaphorically), how we remember, memorialize, confront the issues it shows how the visual is foundational to communication.

### *5.2. Visual rhetoric and persuasive advertising*

In advertising the image is a perfect 're-presentation' of life. Hence, an analysis of visual rhetoric considers how images work alone and collaborate with other elements to create an argument designed for audience to choose to present information or argument through image. Therefore advertisers use visual rhetoric figures as a way of expression to aestheticize the visuality and in this way they increase the effectiveness of the process of meaning exchanged and reinforced their communication process process (Köksal, 2013). In other words, initial attention is more likely to turn to interest with strong visual. The research of visual literacy in advertising concluded that ads with visual imagery will tend to pull more readers into the body copy. In other words, attention of advertisements is more likely to turn to interest with strong visual image. Besides, the advertisers start to add additional value to themselves and they mask their unique selling message.

A rhetorical figure is an artful deviation, in the form that adheres to an identifiable template (Mick and Glen (2003a; 2003b). The use of art deviations was added as an interest to advertisements. Besides, typology of visual rhetoric figures in advertising was given a positive impact on consumer response as well as verbal rhetorical figures. Additionally, the consumers are expected to respond the visual image that artfully deviates from expectations. The pleasures arise with the successfully elaboration of picture by supporting with verbal rhetorical and direct processing to solve the puzzle it presents (Mick and Glen, 2003a; 2003b) .

In advertising functions it may view as the construction of semiotic language for the works of rhetoric in grabbing consumers to buy the products or services that are being advertised. As Scott mentioned that advertising image as a form of rhetorical elements, the visual must have certain capabilities and characteristic. The visual elements must be capable of representing concept, abstraction, actions, metaphor and modifiers such that they can be used in the invention of complex argument. Visual elements must also carry meaningful variation in their manner of delivery, such that the selection of style can suggest an intended evaluation. As a result, the advertising image should accommodate with the easily read visual message and act to consumers response (Scott, 1994).

Hawgee and Messaris (2009) had highlighted that visual rhetoric given in theoretical about the power visual image in persuasive method is a part of the communication message. The advertising in all form had used visual arguments through juxtaposition of image as means of persuasion. In this research of visual rhetoric which is directly related that the main purpose of visual persuasion was to make the audiences or viewers to take action on the basis of emotional identification with what was depicted. In addition, by adapting the aspect of emotional element of visual imagery in advertisement, the advertiser was efficiently or guaranteed and eliciting the emotion impact which words literally and physically cannot possibly be replicated. Visual image may influence people belief of photographic truth which can be shaped by changing the circumstances. A visual image produced by advertising concluded that the effectiveness of rhetorical devices in advertising communication may be considered with either semantic or syntactic properties.

## 6. Research methodology

The method of collecting data that will be implemented is:

### Stage I : Research Approach

- *Qualitative*  
The major research approach in this study will be a qualitative data. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual description of how people experience a given research issue of visual advertising. The qualitative methods are also most effective and appropriate for this study in indentifying intangible factors of social cultural context and contemporary phenomena in Malaysia toward print ads of public awareness. Ideally the use of qualitative method in this study method of choice will involve archival data, visual research, observations (non-participant and participant observation) and survey interview in order get the data from sampling population [14].
- *Quantitative*  
To support the qualitative method, the researcher will also use the quantitative method alongside this study. In the early stage of preliminary investigation of research question or testing of pilot study, quantitative method was used in order to help interpret or explain the quantitative findings. In this study, primary data was collected through distribution of questionnaires. Primary data collection method included survey questionnaires. A questionnaire can be fact- or opinion-based and may be answered by choosing from a list of options or writing out responses by hand. The goal of the questionnaires in this research is to demonstrate the understanding of visual rhetoric how the piece communicates its messages and meanings of print advertisements in Malaysia. Basically, the aspect of questions will be knowledge, understanding visual elements (iconic, symbolic and indexical) aesthetic values, culture based and content and interpretation of message. In this research, the questionnaires were based from Purdue University (2013). This resources covers how to study visual rhetorical element of analysis questions with a focus on demonstrating the respondents understanding of the rhetorical situation and design principles. The questions will base on *informational, inspirational, motivational* and *functional* elements of this study.

### Stage II: Content Analysis

- Findings of each category inside dimensions are systematically counted. The validate findings are analyzed toward the opinion of interviewees and survey questionnaires.

### Stage III: Recommendations or Propose Framework

- From the validate findings, this study will propose the essential elements framework for successful visual rhetoric of visual advertising in Malaysia.

### *Sample*

The sample for this research will be the academicians, creative directors from advertising agencies and graphic designer. These were core persons that were responsible to present information in a way that were both accessible and memorable.

## 7. Conclusion

According to the previous studies and literature review, it can be concluded that visual rhetoric aspects should be considered act as a measurement tool to gauge the culture element evident. A part of visual rhetoric is to provide a more uniform of message content since audience can 'read' the pictures expression. Visual rhetoric creates the ability of communication knowledge role that visuality plays in shaping our public symbolic actions in interpreting image depicting independent and interdependent social culture interaction in print ads. This study is

also to ensure that the powerful of visual rhetoric in advertisements will help to bridge the cultural gaps in our social environment through visual semiotics language.

This study will also extend knowledge of the usefulness of rhetorical in print advertising beyond the view that enjoyment of execution is solely responsible for audience processing the message of an advertisement and thereby increasing brand awareness and persuasion through semiotic imagery language. The important used of visual rhetoric and semiotic language help in building powerful brand positioning in global industries with injection of strong visual identity, visual culture and visual language in communication message of persuasive advertisement.

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