

Development of a Visual Rhetorical Framework Model as Advertising Guidelines in Malaysia

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Visual rhetoric consists of its language system and is built through the process of creating meaning based on the social environment. This has resulted in a society where every visual is seen as an incentive. They see and understand the image that is shown faster and easier compared to reading. In this research, the researcher will find out how far visual rhetoric and persuasive messages can influence society's social culture through the usage of the manipulation of digital photographic images which can be found in 21st-century advertising in Malaysia. The research is done by combining a few theories from former research and that have proved successful in research studies of visual strategy thinking. Some of the theories are the theories of: rhetoric functions, thinking strategy based on visual communication, persuasive technique and theory of three modes of psychology. The purpose of this study is to develop a framework model by giving attention to the rhetoric value which has been created from the photo imaging as a main visual in an advertisement. In conclusion, this research shows that the usage of the framework model, that focuses on using visual rhetoric for advertising which uses digital photo imaging as the main element, can improve the understanding of the message that is being conveyed. This research also helps in expanding the knowledge on the specialty of using visual rhetoric in advertisement production and it will help in improving the awareness of the importance of the branding and persuasive value from the semiotic image as a whole.

Key words: *Visual rhetoric, Advertising, Digital photography, persuasive message, semiotic value.*

Introduction

Robert Dubin stated in his book, *The World of Work: Industry Society and Human Relations* (2017), that nowadays lifestyle and the use of technology in creating every visual has become more interesting and mesmerizing. Hence, society sees every visual as an incentive. Visual rhetoric consists of its language system and is built through the process of creating meaning based on the social environment. It is implemented with a visual simulation flow that is organized and has continuous flow from different media approaches every day. People see and understand visuals faster and easier compared to reading. Culture can be adapted globally by using visual images through mass media technology (Crick, 2017). In this research, the researcher will study how visual literacy and persuasive messages play an important role in social culture by using digital photographic images which are included in advertising printing in Malaysia. Crick (2017) also added, visual literacy and persuasive messages are used to attract, beg and persuade the readers to understand the message that is being conveyed and it also repeatedly delivers the message according to the reader's desires.

Digital Photo imaging is a form of visual literacy and is one of the communication tools that can be found in various media; newspapers, magazines, story books, textbooks, advertisement boards, televisions, computers, and other print media. Emerling (2013) believed that every picture has a strong effect in explaining something, and that they also show someone's behaviour. Throughout this research, the researcher will analyze every visual rhetoric and semiotic aspect that applies in digital photo imaging using a manipulation technique concept in the outcome of the advertisement. Ihlen & Heath (2018) in their book, *The Handbook of Organizational Rhetoric and Communication*, stated that the use of images in all shapes and sizes in an advertisement will attract more attention and will be more entertaining.

There is a lack of theory, or typology, which helps creative media practitioners or academic researchers, to differentiate and organize the visual elements in advertisements where social knowledge is considered as the main judgment. The content rule enforced by the Malaysia Advertising Standards Authority affects the creative visuals that can be used in digital imaging in an advertisement. Most of Malaysia's practitioners, or designers, are limited in expression, as the ads must comply with the advertising guidelines that have been made by the authority. Hence, every advertisement that is on display did not reach the international levels of advertising. Thus, there is a need to create a guideline, or work framework, that can be used by the advertisers in Malaysia to produce a good advertisement through rhetoric visual by using photographic images.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to suggest a guideline model for the use of effective visual literacy in visual advertising which emphasizes the use of digital photo imaging as the

main input in Malaysia. The guideline model will be applied, along with a regular psychology experiment, and it is expected to be used by advertising practitioners as well as the academic researchers in Malaysia. This research also will help to create a new education platform for the creation of advertisement. Such a platform will contain visual literacy and creative elements and will lead to the production of impactful advertisements that can relate to Malaysian society.

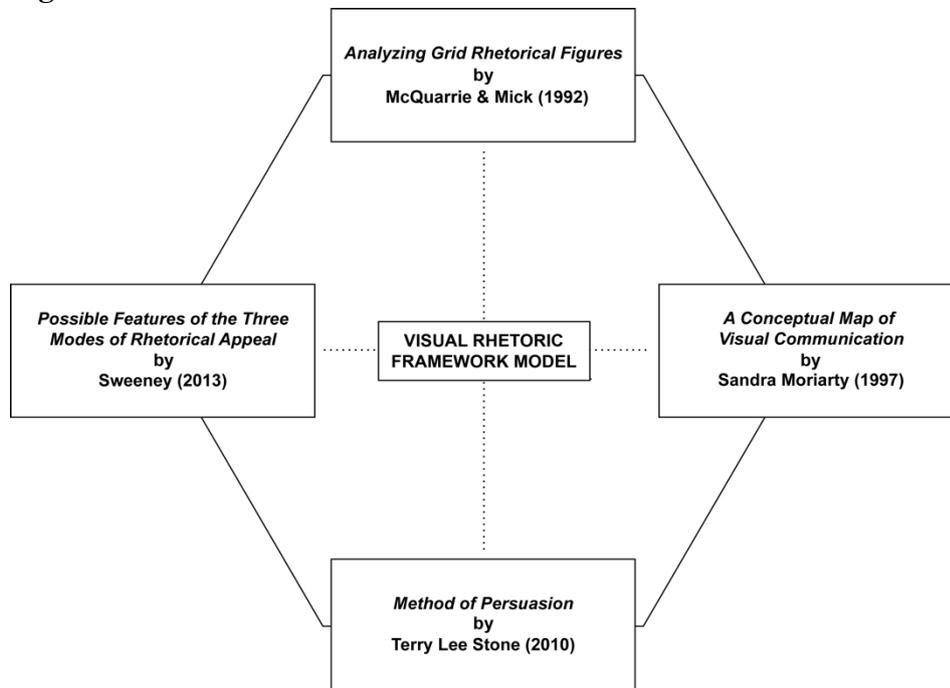
Methodology

Throughout this research, researchers will use qualitative and quantitative research methods to build the research model framework. The qualitative research method involves different assumptions on how research has to be done and the role played by a researcher. The qualitative research consists of data that comes from a variety of situations that have been changed to word form. Qualitative data is usually less structured, longer and more flexibly related to the respondents, the outcome of this data is deeper content with a richer context, meaning that the potential of the new opinion and perspective is better (Gibbs, 2018).

The integration between quantitative and qualitative paradigms can lead to a deeper and clearer result in the main research project. By combining both of these approaches it can, and will, give data that varies and is needed to build visual semiotic communication. This will affect the society's awareness on media prints and advertisement, and it can influence the practice of socio-culture in Malaysia.

The Use of Theory

Figure 1. Research Theoretical Framework

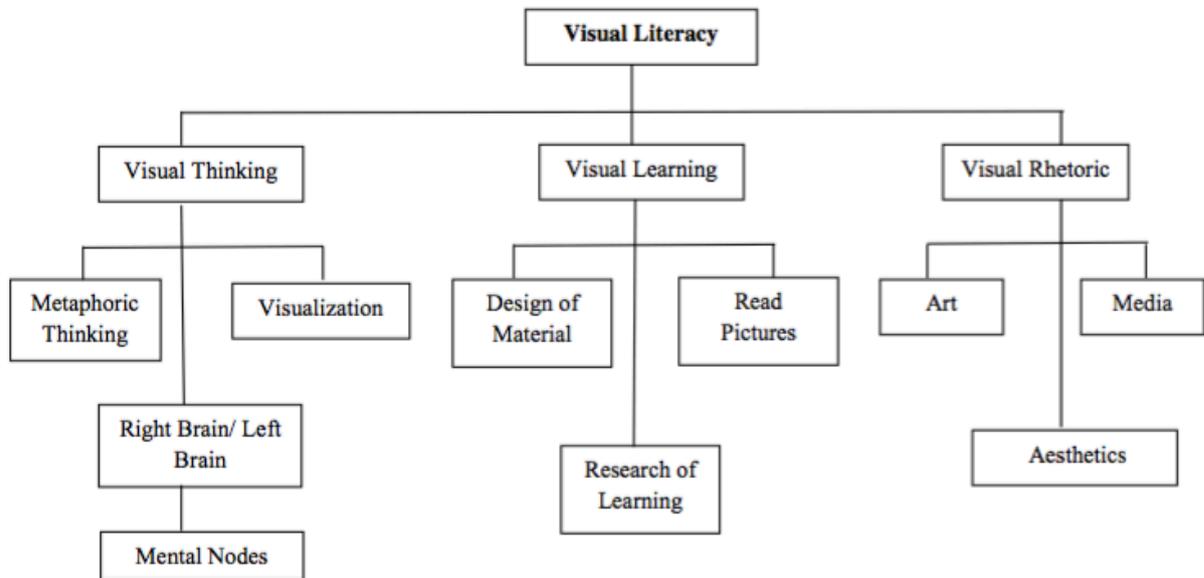


This research will start using a combination of a few former researchers' theories and that have been proved effective in the research study of visual strategy thinking (Figure 1). The first, is the theory of the use of rhetorical functions in visuals by McQuarrie & Mick (1992). The second, is the thinking strategy through visual communication by Moriarty (1997). The third, is a persuasive technique by Stone (2010), which is very important to evaluate the persuasive value on every visual that is used in advertising. The last one, is the theory by Sweeney (2013), to study the psychology inputs that act as indicators for interpretation of technical and manipulation values built on visual literacy methods. At the end of this study, we will use two methods, firstly, in-depth interviews with advertising practitioners, academics and existing regulators. The second is the experimental method that will be applied to the control and treatment steps in which both methods are dependent variables that will establish universal meaning in the overall essence of this study.

Conceptual Framework

According to Moriarty (1997), visual rhetoric can be described as a form of communication that uses images to create meaning or build arguments. Visual rhetoric communicates in many ways at one time and will leave a lasting impression on our mind. The best way to use the research that Moriarty has used, is as one of the guides in conducting this study (Figure 2).

Figure 2. A Conceptual Map of Visual Communication by Sandra Moriarty



Foss (2012) has suggested that visual rhetoric is widely used in visual research because of its unique ability to connect the use of symbols and objects to transform communication messages. Thus, researchers study the meanings and the socio-cultural context of Malaysian society in each image produced by a photo-journalist based on this conceptual framework.

According to Foss (2012) again, visual rhetoric is studied in three pillars and can be changed as in rhetorical theory. He stated that the three pillars are as follows:

- i. It is the definition of visual rhetoric itself.
- ii. The focus of the study on visual rhetoric.
- iii. As an approach to the visual rhetorical framework involved for this visual artefact.

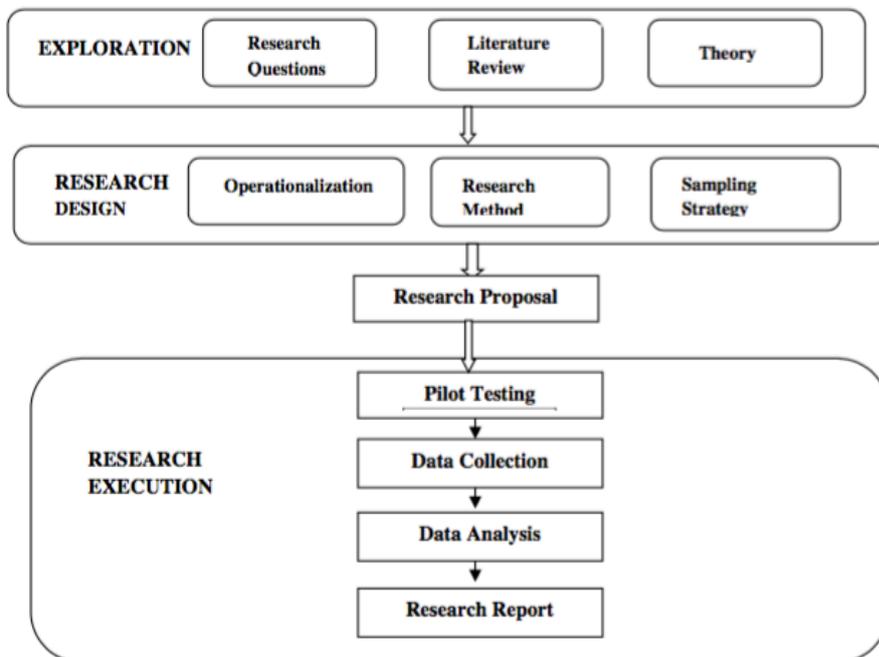
Visual rhetoric is a term used to describe the study of visual images within the rhetorical framework. He defines that visual imagery must be able to function as a lesson and can serve as a symbolic meaning of human intervention in which the message must be conveyed to the audience (Foss, 2012). The use of rhetorical perspectives on visual images aims to investigate the features and visual elements of generating rhetorical theory by considering different features of visual symbols.

Each of these rhetorical elements can influence how people think, and trust can be achieved using a strategic visual rhetorical system. In the visual rhetorical perspective, they serve as an

understanding of rhetorical theory towards communicative messages using images. The exploration of this visual rhetoric plays an important role in understanding people's symbolic reactions, usually involving a variety of social lives. How we perform, how we perceive (either literacy or metaphor), how we make assumptions, how we propose and how we deal with issues; all of these show how visuals are fundamental to communication (Koksal, 2013; Jayathilaka & Purasinghe, 2017).

Research Design

Figure 3. Functionalistic Research Process by Anol Bhattacharjee



The design used in this study is based on the functionalistic research process taken from the writings of Anol B. (2012) (Figure 3). He provided a method of research that has been widely used by prior researchers. Throughout this step, the process describes a series of activities conducted in functionalistic research that can be categorized into three steps of research: general data exploration, research design, and research implementation. Researchers follow each of these functionalistic steps in an effort to collect data that fits with the theory of visual rhetoric. This is applied to every photojournalism work by selected Malaysian photographers and is keeping with Malaysian social culture.

Researchers have divided this study into two stages. At the first stage, researchers provide basic questions related to the Malaysian public's understanding of the field of photojournalism. This study is important to identify the level of understanding in Malaysian society.

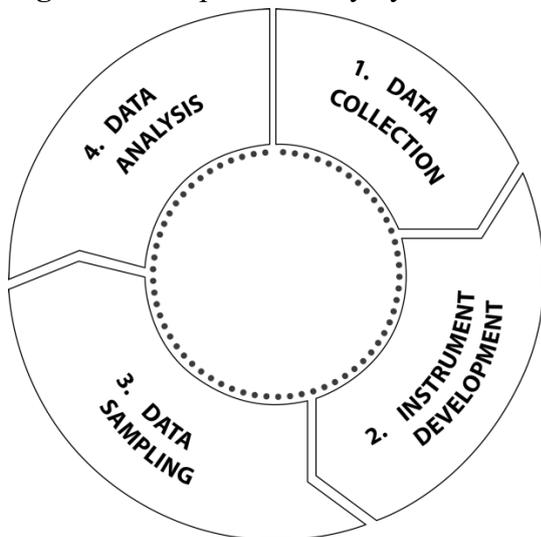
Unlike the first stage, the second stage of this study will be performed qualitatively. At this early stage, the researchers selected 10 expert photographers who had at least 10 years of experience in the production of photojournalist images. They will be selected based on some of the research ethics required. Selection will be conducted through in-depth questions that relate to this research, in order to obtain useful and holistic inputs as detailed in the introductory chapter.

The research questions that have been developed, will be used in the design of the descriptive study to test and answer the research questions. The descriptive research uses observational methods and interviews to help researchers conduct their research. Babbie (2010) cites many social science studies using this descriptive research as the primary way to describe situations and events. Researchers will examine the contemporary issue of community understanding, then the issue of revealing socio-cultural differences through visuals in Malaysia, and finally provide an explanation of what is seen.

Study Flow Chart

A research design is a comprehensive plan for the process of data collection in empirical research projects. Yin (1994) defines empirical studies as the scope of a case study to investigate contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, especially the boundaries between phenomena and where the meaning is not evident or implied. The result of sample data collected through experiments or empirical studies today is considered to be the strongest possible support to answer research questions. Empirical research is appropriate when the evidence requested uses certain variables that can influence other variables in some way.

Figure 4. Empirical Study by Stafford & Faber



Research studies are designed in a way that increase the chance of gathering the information needed to answer a question. A flow chart has been developed in Figure 4, it is a plan of action for this empirical research aimed at answering specific research questions, or testing specific research questions. It will be implemented in three phases: data collection, instrument development process (interview session) and sampling process. It will then be used in the process of data analysis to obtain research results.

Data Collection Strategy

In this study, researchers use the research base conducted by McQuarrie and Mick in 2004, which was written in the book "Visual Rhetoric in Advertising: Text-Interpretive, Experimental and Reader-Response Analyses" by Versteegen (2014). This study is based on a recent study in which McQuarrie & Mick (2004) tested the typology and framework of visual rhetoric. The main purpose of all topical contributions is to focus on the user's understanding of comprehensive and informative advertising with visual elements. Based on this study, researchers have followed three basic types of research traditions about visual rhetoric in advertising strategies:

- a) It involves the collection of ad samples and then these samples will be analyzed based on the details of the frequency of visual elements used.
- b) For the reader-response approach, the researcher used interview sessions with the respondents to study their response to the visual elements in the advertisement.
- c) From a text-interpretive perspective, the visual elements of the advertisement will be systematically analyzed based on semiotics, rhetorical depictions, and literacy theory.

Collin (2010) defines research design or research strategy in creative research as archive records, visual research, observations, interviews and questionnaires (closed or open-ended questions). Yin (2003) described data collection as possible from six sources namely documents, archive records, interviews, live observation, respondent observation, and physical artefacts. This research incorporates all methodological procedures and principles into a research investigation that will help to significantly improve the quality of the research.

In this research, visual rhetoric will be analyzed and based on Yin (2003), the procedures and principles involved in the survey and the suitability of archive analysis in answering who? what? where is it? how much? and how many? These procedures assist the researcher in developing a guideline for the research question for the questionnaire.

Visual rhetoric will follow the process of qualitative data form based on Creswell's (2012) study. The process of qualitative research can help researchers identify data in launching the research process. Researchers believe that using Creswell's (2012) qualitative data method in their data collection approach can enrich information and can lead to in-depth insights into research study phenomena. In addition, qualitative data collection can enable researchers to understand research issues or topics from the perspective of the local population involved. In particular, the use of qualitative forms can have an effective impact on cultural specific information about the values, views, behaviours, and social contexts of specific populations of visual rhetorical studies.

Archive Data

This study also involved the collection of secondary data. The use of documentary resources can assist researchers whether written or non-written. Collection of documentary source data includes: existing journals, books, newspapers, magazines, and commercial sources. The use of secondary data assists the literacy study with the formulation of research questions in the analytical model.

With the use of written archive data, the researcher collects information data on the respondents. This helps the researcher to build a method based on the results of the study where the data in the same group can be used as a control or comparison throughout the research. Archive data will also help researchers understand the visual rhetoric of cultural information.

By attending a related seminar or conference, researchers will be able to gather more data. The survey will be conducted in the form of a specific questionnaire or interview to determine the content in an attempt to define the response parameters from the respondents. The purpose of using secondary data in this study was to build and improve the understanding of research subjects. The useful part of archiving data for research studies is to produce a specific purpose for the subject's exact content.

Visual Research

Collin (2010) defines that visual research can be divided into four categories:

- i) Creation of researchers
- ii) Researchers' findings such as material taken from comics or magazines.
- iii) Producing respondents' visual data.
- iv) Re-presentation and visual research.

Researchers also used documentary photos, photographic images that reflect the process in the ad will come with captions. The use of Coloribus Creative Advertising will help to gather the latest ads and updates of all advertisements in Malaysia throughout the year. Coloribus is the largest worldwide archive of commercial advertising from USA, Europe and hundreds of other countries that provides the most accurate information on advertising. The archive data bank is structured based on information on advertisers, products, brands, release dates, countries of origin and creative credit. All collections of ads contain either little or no oral copies.

To preserve the wider use of decision data, ads are unmodified, using original file size and printed into coloured copies. Additionally, the Malaysian Design Archives is a website that helps to understand Malaysia's history through the chronology of graphic design from before Independence Day in 1957 to the present. This project involves study design, political design, and design knowledge. The project aims to highlight the importance of archives as a way to protect and preserve our visual history.

The visual collection of advertisements from newspapers and magazines in the 5 years studied, helps researchers to review the visual patents and visual data of this study. The development of Malaysian advertising visual patents also helps researchers determine the best form of persuasive strategies in delivering effective messages by incorporating helpful advice to the public on issues. In addition, the collection of ads with photographic images as a key element could benefit this study by exploring ways in which Malaysian audiences can be presented with a convincing visual approach.

Throughout this visual research study, researchers applied a variety of tools that modelled different questionnaires, which helped researches generate visual data into a flexible approach. Interestingly, this visual research can involve collaboration on projects that inform researchers while simultaneously fulfilling one purpose of the subject.

Respondents' Observation

Observation is an activity that involves the recording of patents of human behavior, objects and events in a systematic sequence (Collin, 2010). Observation can be one of the main methods in a particular research study. During the data collection process, the researchers will utilise the observations of the respondents and non-respondents. This process will not only involve the sharing of physical or life experiences, but it will also include their social life by studying their social conventions and beliefs, their use of language or other non-verbal communication (Robson, 2000; Jiang & Smith, 2017).

The observation of respondents has its roots in ethnographic studies (Collin, 2010). This process requires the researcher to participate and sit in, so as to fix the research in the investigation of the respondents. This information can assist researchers in ensuring that the planning and importance of respondents' decision making is investigated.

In addition, the researcher contacted the observed respondent directly. Researchers can gain insights by observing people's reactions to mass-media advertising. During the respondents' observation session, the researchers held informal discussions with printers, public audiences, academics, graphic students and advertising agencies about their personal views on understanding visual rhetoric as part of social culture in Malaysia. In response to the observation of respondents, the researcher included written or audio notes or video recordings of the respondents' social actions as part of their data collection strategy. Researchers are also involved in digital media such as the internet (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) providing opportunities for news from the respondents' observations.

Besides the observation instrument, the researchers distributed the research questionnaire to the respondents to determine their visual rhetorical understanding of advertisement in creating a social and cultural space for the Malaysian community, and to establish justification for why this research has to be conducted.

Interviews

The purpose of the interview was to obtain information beyond the respondents' experience. In this study, researchers engaged in in-depth discussions or interviews to gain a holistic view of experiences related to visual rhetoric. They are also useful and help to explore opinions or situations that can prompt further investigation. The researchers asked the questions and then encouraged the respondents to express their views freely and allowed them to explain in detail, their feelings on the research topic. In the data collection phase, the respondents that will be interviewed are: creative directors, graphic designers, policymakers, academics or anyone else that is related to this research. During the interview, respondents will be asked open-ended questions by researchers about the background of their demographics, their views or values, their feelings, their knowledge and their sensitivity to the subject that is being discussed.

In-depth interviews with sample groups were conducted in three different phases. The first phase involved a conversational interview in which advertising design students are used as a pilot study. Pilot studies can help to refine data collection plans for content creation and procedures during data collection sessions. Pilot studies also help researchers to build relevant and coherent questions, and they also form the structure of several conceptual lines for each research design (Yin, 2003). A pilot study was tested on graphic design students,

whereby they were asked open-ended questions about their knowledge and visual rhetoric in the public awareness of advertising in Malaysia. Interviews with students in the sample group were conducted using a mixed-method, a combination of informal conversation interviews and a public interview guide approach. A total of 30 students were asked to answer closed-ended questions about visual rhetoric in advertising regarding their views on persuasive elements as well as visual rhetoric on the use of photographic images in existing advertising.

The pilot study also helps researchers to capture the data they feel is necessary, develop an analysis procedure plan on the data collected and ultimately provide an opportunity to evaluate the usefulness of the data. The results of the pilot study were based on a small number of quantitative methods with visual aids and percentage graphs to test and reveal their results.

Conclusion

This concept paper is a part of the data collection for the development of a model system of guidelines for the effective use of visual literacy content in visual advertising. Such advertising will emphasize the use of the photographic images as major inputs in Malaysia. It will be applied together with regular psychological experiments and it is expected to be used by advertising practitioners and academic researchers in Malaysia.

Through this study the researcher will put effort towards the creation of a theoretical framework that will serve as a guide for advertising practitioners on the power of visual images. There must be guidelines for advertising so that the role of the images is effective, according to the needs and wants of the audience for the advertised product.

This study can also help to build knowledge for those who are not in the creative field about the rhetorical visual importance of each photographic image regardless of whether it will be used for advertising or in other media. The goal is to convey information to readers, researchers and academics that by applying and using the work, rhetorical visual elements can create greater attractiveness to consumers.

The effectiveness of the use of persuasive value in photographic products used in advertising mediums depends on how well the audience perceives and trusts the message to be conveyed. By examining the elements of art in photography and advertising, the development of a research guideline framework for visual rhetoric can be done, so that a knowledge base can be established that will benefit the audience, especially academics, by allowing appropriate image targeting.



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