



# Visual Rhetoric: Framing the Methodology for Truck Visuals Through Visual Rhetoric Theory and Rhetorical Appeals

**Fatima Zahra**, Department of Fine Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. Bahauddin Zakariya University, Pakistan, Email: [fzahra@student.usm.my](mailto:fzahra@student.usm.my)

Truck art has a long and illustrious tradition in South Asia. It is, above all, one of most popular and globally recognised art forms. The visual representation of civilizations is one of the reasons for this art form's appeal. As a result, truck art has evolved into a means of expressing many cultural ideas via the appealing quality of its images. Such images emphasize the significance of the location or place from where the vehicle comes. Furthermore, the truck's graphics are not only appealing but also effective communicators. This article aimed to establish the technique that will be used for visual persuasion and to explain how the visual components are used in the interpretation. Based on a rhetorical study, this visual-based research is aimed at the creation of visual meanings. By combining Sonja K. Foss' theory of visual rhetoric as artefact with Aristotle's appeals of rhetorical, a qualitative method can be developed to investigate the characteristics, features, and persuasions of these truck visuals. The findings revealed the suggested technique is developed or produced in such a way that the visuals are described as rhetorical visuals with the capacity to interact with the audience. Future recommendations include using the method developed by merging two rhetorical theories to discover and analyse more images in order to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of interpretations and persuasions.

**Keywords:** *Visual Rhetoric, Truck Visuals, Rhetorical Methodology, Rhetorical Theories*



## **Introduction**

The research approach adopted for this cultural study of truck art visuals and their cultural importance is examined and discussed in this paper. This study's research strategy is interpretative, and it will be investigated further by using Visual rhetoric as an artefact theory for meaning identification and creation, as well as Aristotle rhetorical arguments for persuasions and interpretations of the truck visuals. As data gathering methodologies, members' perceptions will be utilized in conjunction with unstructured interviews with participants. This paper concludes with a diagrammatic representation of the research design, which allows this study to meet its goals successfully.

## **Visual Rhetoric Perspective and Explanation**

Visual Rhetoric (VR) is a branch of study that looks at a variety of pictures and texts. Additionally, Visual rhetoric is a subset of visual literacy, which is described as the ability to infer meaning from pictures and is described as the meaning of visual study indications in the context of visual thinking rather than verbal reasoning. The most significant strategy for visual rhetoric is to identify the significance of visuals, which can be linked back to Roland Barthes' critical work "The Rhetoric of the Image" from 1964. However, the core concept of visual rhetoric in this study, is that, meaning is formed through structure of rhetoric, such as allusions and metaphors encoded in vocal words, as visual presentations using academically established methods.

Well-known approach VR may be found in a variety of visual creative works, ranging from classic visual artwork to web page design and modern comic comics. Visual rhetoric, which is tied to the reasoning of vehicle paintings, may be utilised to affect people just as effectively as verbal communication, if not more so. To summarise, visual rhetoric is an effective analytic approach that has a wide range of applications.

Various rhetorical academics proposed ideas and techniques to describe visual as rhetoric, but Foss and Aristotle, two rhetorical professionals, collaborated on this endeavour. Foss proposed that there are two sorts of visual practices in rhetoric in a research. It is used to examine a visual or object (paintings, sculptures, symbols, and so on) from a visual perspective. Mostly, VR is a product that individuals construct when they communicate using visual cues. The second viewpoint is that of a scholar, which is based on symbolic ways that allow for visual communication. According to Foss, there are three parts of perspective to consider: the nature of the visual, the function of the visual, and the judgement of the visual.

Despite the fact that the research modes and methodology have been refined, the focus of this study is on exploring the design components depicted on trucks, such as portraits, wood carvings, and metal carvings, in order to reveal the theme linked to the specific culture of the region from which the truck originates. The focus is on the myths, myths, and design aspects shown on trucks as symbols of Pakistan's distinct culture. The qualitative research methodology was effective in this study since it focused on the visuals of the automobiles in



terms of quality rather than quantity. The key tactics employed in this study were in-depth study, inquiry, and archiving. A qualitative technique is best adapted to generating acceptable replies to specific research inquiries since a substantial proportion of these questioning components are now naturalistic or subjective.

This study aims to investigate the qualities and meaning of truck-painted graphics that depict the cultural value of numerous emblems, folklore, mythology, and other symbols. Furthermore, this study recognizes the cultural relevance of truck art's look in the development of meanings, and it employs a visual ethnography approach to achieve these goals. A rhetorical technique is used to study a descriptive and interpretative visual ethnography.

Visual study is vital in a cultural setting for better comprehending what is going on around us. The fundamental explanation is that visuals are ubiquitous in culture and society; yet, certain visual representation concerns may be incorporated in cultures and sociological research as a consequence. For the second goal, visual studies may be able to appreciate certain cultural knowledge that is not available via other means.

### **Research Paradigm “Rhetoric”**

Rhetoric is an ancient Greek field of study concerned with the study of how images are used to convey; in its most basic sense, rhetoric is an old term for what we still consider communication. Rhetoric is also a term for language or a method of communicating with an audience, whether written or oral, in order to convince them to think or believe in a specific manner. When analysing visual rhetoric, it had an impact on the idea of visual manipulation. Visual rhetoric, on the other hand, entails a lot more than merely manipulating images. Visual rhetoric, on the other hand, is concerned with how pictures interact and create meaning.

As previously mentioned, the study aims to identify, build, and investigate the hidden cultural meanings and relevance of truck sights. As a result, the study's focus is largely on "Rhetoric," with a rhetoric paradigm (truck images and calligraphies) being used to investigate the border network of beliefs and perceptions.

### **Justifications of Visual Rhetoric as Method**

In addition to rhetoric, other tactics such as semiotics and iconography are used to investigate the visual, albeit each methodology has its own visual exploration frame. Semiotics interprets signs and symbols in cultural circumstances based on their common meaning. Visual images are also studied as a distinct kind of sign or communication that is meant to be seen rather than observed or read aloud. Their primary method, on the other hand, is to recognise visual signals and connotative meanings utilising visual features. In addition to referring to the sign in the semiotic context, iconography focuses on the symbol's position in addition to other symbols, including the message it may convey, how it is communicated, cultural importance, and historical reasons. Iconography is the study of the identification, representation, and interpretation of visual material in art history. "Iconography" may also relate to a particular visual depiction of a theme in art history, such as the number of figures employed, their



arrangement, and emotions. The term semiotics is employed in a range of academic fields outside of art history, such as media studies, to describe visual content, distinctive representation, and associated meanings.

Rhetoric differs from other visual exploration strategies in that not all images are rhetoric. The visual rhetoric must communicate three elements: it must be symbolic, have a human presence, and be presented to the audience as a communication tool. This rhetorical characteristic distinguishes this strategy from iconography and semiotics.

### **Visual Rhetoric: Visual Rhetorical Theory of Foss**

"Visual rhetoric" refers to the study of visual symbolism within the rhetorical circle. Visual rhetoric is a type of visual literacy that investigates the cultural implications of visual signals as well as the nature of visual thinking rather than verbal reasoning. It's defined as the capacity to derive meaning from visual images.

Photographs, drawings, paintings, graphs and tables, interior design and architecture, sculpture, Internet images, and film are all analysed rhetorically in response to the pervasiveness of visual rhetoric, access to multidimensional human experiences, and a desire for comprehensiveness in rhetorical theory. Scholars of rhetoric have recognised three key grounds on which to construct the present paradigm for visual rhetoric research: The principles of visual rhetoric, areas of emphasis in visual rhetoric study, and techniques for rhetorical analysis of visual objects are all investigated.

### **Theory of Visual Rhetoric as Artifact**

Because the research focuses on the visual of truck art to define the hidden cultural significance of the visuals, such as colour depiction, simplicity, aesthetics, similarities, and differences in layout elements of different areas, the visual rhetoric theory as an artefact demonstrates proximity to study and is fruitful in analysing phases.

When it comes to utilising pictures to communicate, visual rhetoric, also known as instructive images, is the real rhetoric of the visual. Three characteristics must be present for a visual to be classified as visual rhetoric, and these three indications must be present for a visual to go from informative artefacts to visual, a picture that communicates and may be evaluated as rhetoric. The image must represent a Representative/ Symbolic/ Emblematic Action with human contact that is displayed to an audience with the intention of communicating with them.

Visual rhetoric is made up of visual messages, much as other kinds of communication. When a symbol is combined with anything else, it conveys in the most basic meaning. Because the visual is solely linked to its reference, such as the painting of women eyes on trucks symbolising "keep the evil look away from the vehicle," a visual must be descriptive to be classed as visual rhetoric.



Human action is included in the visual rhetoric. People are exposed to visual rhetoric when they participate in creative pursuits such as painting, drawing, or photography. The method requires a deliberate decision to transmit as well as deliberate decisions on the techniques to use in the place, such as shadow, shape, medium, and size. Non-explanatory verbal images may be altered as a kind of human intervention in visual rhetoric. At that moment, visual rhetoric need human participation, either during the creation phase or during the explanation phase.

The intentional creation or course of action of colours, structures, and other components to communicate with the audience is visual rhetoric as artefacts at that time. Because the link between the visual and the referent is subjectively assigned, it is a representational activity. When presented to a group, it integrates human activity into different parts of the visual correspondence process and is educational. Audiences may take such visual artefacts as a communication message, and researchers may analyse them as an unambiguous imaginative object.

Visual rhetoric depicts a gathering of people and is concerned with a true or ideal crowd's attention. A rhetoric organises and changes visual components not just for self-articulation, albeit they may represent a remarkable cognitive process in the creator of a visual, but also for communication with a crowd. The creator of a visual may act as that audience; the gathering of people does not have to be outside of the discourse. As Burke suggested,

"A man may be his own special group of observers inasmuch as he creates certain ideas or images for the impression, he believes they have upon him, even in his secret concerns."

### **Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals (Three Rhetorical Appeals): Visual Rhetoric**

The terms ethos, pathos, and logos refer to the rhetorical triangle, or persuasive techniques, and Aristotle's three arguments. "Others are in the presenter's persona, some are in some manner organising the audience, and some are in the convention itself, exhibiting or seeming to be displaying something," the author adds.

To put it another way, Aristotle asserts that influence has three different characteristics

Pathos rhetoric is used to influence the audience and convince them to feel a certain way, while Ethos (Ethical Appeal) rhetoric is used to influence the audience and persuade them to feel a certain way. Rhetoric's efforts to persuade the listener via the presentation of attractive ideas are known as Logos (Logical Appeal).

### **Conclusion**

#### **Research Framework: A Rhetorical pathway (Fusion of Foss Rhetorical theory and Aristotle Rhetorical Appeals)**

In modern culture, visual data, particularly photographs, is ubiquitous. They are present in our academic work, everyday lives, dialogues, creativity, and imaginations. According to Pink, pictures are inextricably linked to our everyday lives, individual personalities, narratives,



civilizations, communities, and social hierarchies, as well as historical, spatial, and truth implications. As Pink points out, the potential use of visual tools in research may be enhanced by incorporating visual research into a broader framework, which includes broadening the use of visual research methodologies and developing visual as a methodology.

The purpose of this study approach was to illustrate the importance of visuals in Pakistani truck art and their cultural relevance via the production of meanings and persuasions. As a result, the emphasis was on various types of subjects, painting styles, colours, mediums, and procedures that are really culturally representative. Overall, Pakistani truck art encompasses a wide variety of art forms, such as wood carvings and metal decorations; however, this study concentrated on truck paintings, the themes shown on trucks, their colours, and the tales behind each picture.

The research employed Foss' visual rhetoric theory as an object to analyse truck pictures in three ways: representational, interpersonal, and compositional, as previously indicated. These three goals investigated the meaning of the graphics, why and where truck painters produce visuals, and how their audience understands those images. Not every image is analysed from a rhetorical perspective. According to Foss, in order to analyse a picture rhetorically, two key components must be present: parts that have been shown, and elements that have been suggested.

The path to discovering the ideas, thoughts, subjects, and implications that a viewer is likely to derive from the displayed components is through recognition of the visual's presented components, which includes naming the visual's major physical highlights, such as appearance, shape, space, medium, and shading, whereas distinguishing proof of the suggested components is through discovering the id (interpersonal). The deliberate creation or connotations of colours, frames, and other elements in order to communicate with a group of people are referred to as visual rhetoric as an artefact. In addition to these two basic characteristics, the image must contain three additional features. Emblematic/Symbolic, Human Intercession, and Audience Communication should all be included.

Visual rhetoric gives a discretionary relation between image and referent as the symbolic activity. It also comprises human action or something similar in the sense that the production of the image (painting) includes the intentional decision to communicate as well as conscious decisions in areas such as colours, structures, medium, and size. An image (artefact), according to Cara Finnegan, is an item that develops its meanings and implications via ways other than words or texts.

The study's structure is shown below, and it was divided into two phases: the first phase used the Artifact Foss theory of Visual Rhetoric to analyse the visual, and the second phase used Aristotle Rhetorical appeals to make the analysis and persuasions trustworthy and believable.

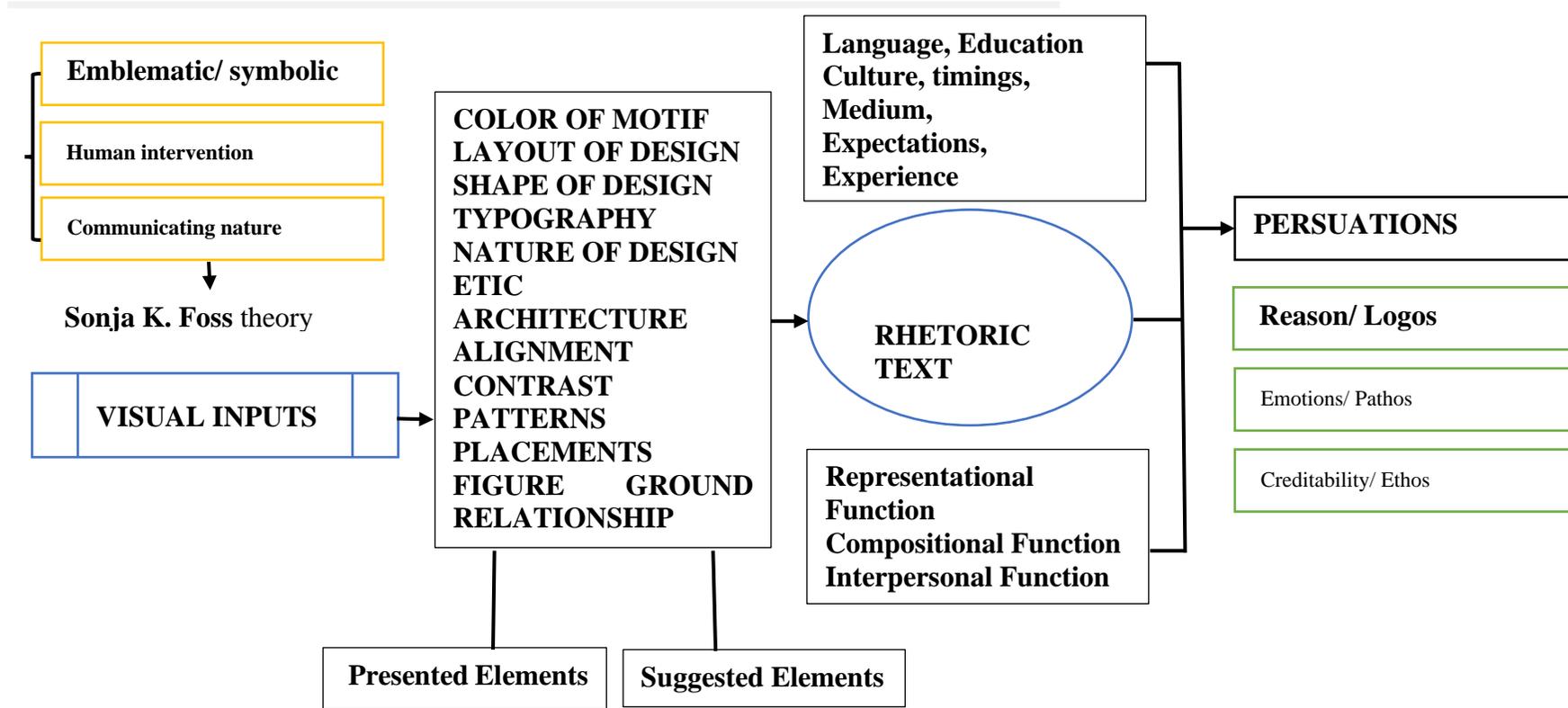


Figure 1 Research Design of Foss and Aristotle Rhetorical Approach



This study looks at two forms of data: textual data gathered via interviews and visual data. To get responses to the study topics stated in the interview methodology, unstructured interviews were performed with truck painters and truck owners from each region of Pakistan. The local public, including truck drivers, truck painters, and local individuals belonging to certain locations and locations, is the justification for unstructured interviews.

The interviews focused on the pictures in contemporary research that signify the viewers' unique experience, event, or custom, as well as the folklore and mythology underlying the pictures. In this research, 120 vehicles were investigated, with 30 vehicles per location and 16 participants. Various vehicle themes, subjects, patterns, and designs are the subject of visual data. Atlas ti's visualisation feature was chosen for this project (Network). 8 Data analysis software to gather data in categories/themes that are further addressed in depth in the next chapter.

This paper discussed the research paradigm, research method, and theories utilised in rhetorical research, as well as procedures, participants, data collection methodologies, and information collecting tactics. The oration outline was used in this study as an engaging and interpretative contextual, visual exploration that was analysed primarily using qualitative methodologies employing the descriptive approach.

The features of cultural visual were explored in terms of representational function, compositional function, and interpersonal function, which were further elaborated by aesthetic persuasions, religious persuasions, cultural persuasions referred by ethos, paths, and logos by Aristotle Rhetorical trinity. The message communicated by art on trucks in Pakistan's four provinces was investigated using these two basic concepts from visual rhetoric. The basic concept was that the research, when coupled with regional socio-cultural data, would provide insights into Pakistani trucking culture and the meanings communicated by various truck signals.

### **Future Recommendations**

First, the method adopted and created by combining two rhetorical theories may be used to finding and analysing additional visuals in order to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of interpretations and persuasions.

Some rhetorical methods may not be appropriate in particular circumstances due to variations in researchers, topics, and genres, but researchers may utilise and adapt these strategies to meet their requirements. The technique used in this study was based on visual identification and persuasion, with the end result being the development of themes and meanings that are more believable as a consequence of the process, which includes all elements of the visuals.

Many of the visual-describing methods are extensions of art and visual studies concepts. The goal of this study was to identify the visuals and their persuasion in order to explain how the visual components contribute to the interpretation. As a result, the study results tend to focus



---

on rhetorical methods rather than textual communication approaches. This is one of the present study's limitations.

The present study is expected to lead to further investigation into different social themes and trends. The study's limitations stated that it tried to analyse some of the rhetorical aspects of the themes painted on Hino and Bedford trucks in four Pakistani regions. Throughout the future, a similar method may be used to examine the aesthetics of other companies' trucks, rikshaws, long vehicles, and vans in Pakistan. Researchers that are interested in truck art may focus on other topics to fill in the gaps that aren't feasible to investigate due to limitations.



## References

- Alfonso, Ana Isabel, Laszlo Kurti, and Sarah Pink. *Working Images: Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography*. Routledge, 2004.
- Banks, Marcus. *Using visual data in qualitative research*. Sage Publications, 2018.
- Barthes, Roland. The Rhetoric of the Image. *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World*. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, (2004): 152-163.
- Betts, Raymond, and Lyz. *A History of Popular Culture: More of Everything, Faster and Brighter*. Routledge, 2012.
- Blair, J. Anthony, Charles A. Hill, and Marguerite Helmers. *Defining Visual Rhetorics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004: 41.
- Herrick, James A. "The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction." *In History and Theory*, (2005):1–30.
- Hulin, L. Carless. "The Diffusion of Religious Symbols within Complex Societies." *The Meanings of Things: Material culture and symbolic expression* (1989): 90-6.
- Olson, Lester C., Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope. "Visual rhetoric: A reader in communication and American culture." *Sage*, (2008).
- Pink, Sarah. *The future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the senses*. Routledge, 2006.