

The Rhetoric of *Visuals*: A Multimodal-Rhetorical Analysis of Food Advertising Campaign of Dawn Bread

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ABSTRACT

Persuasion being the ultimate goal, 'Rhetoric' has always shared a powerful and a deep-seated relationship with advertising. Irrefutably, in this age of visual advertising, different persuasive and various aesthetically eloquent visuals play a key strategic role in the success of many food chains; yet there are few studies in this domain that help explain the rhetorical nature of the visuals that are employed and manipulated in such advertising. Attempting to fill this gap, the present study aims at finding the role and usage of different figures of visual rhetoric in advertising, more specifically, in food advertising. In this context, a multimodal-rhetorical analysis with an interpretative approach is conducted on the selected visuals of Dawn Bread nutrition-campaign run by the Synergy Advertising in 2010. The analysis was guided by the framework adapted from Phillips and McQuarrie's (2004) two-dimensional typology of visual rhetorical figures and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design. The investigation has found the operation of various figures of visual rhetoric in the selected advertising visuals to the effect of persuading and manipulating the target audience.

Key Words: Visual rhetoric, semiotics, multimodality, food advertising, visual rhetorical figures, visual persuasion, rhetoric and visuality

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, the rhetorical use of visuals has been a vital part of human communication, safe to say, from 30,000-year-old cave wall drawings to modern-day emojis. Invoking the antiques, over 600 parietal “wall paintings of caves at Lascaux” and the “Zeuxis’ painting of grapes”—that appeared so real that birds flew down to peck at them—are famous examples of the continual presence of visual rhetoricity in history (Helmers & Hill, 2008, p.1). Indeed, ancient Egyptians successfully communicated in the form of “pictographs or hieroglyphics to visually represent an idea, activity, or object” (Patton, 2020, p. 125). Rutledge (2020, p. 71) has even told that “the use of visual information pre-dates the development of alphabets and word based communication systems” (see also, Grabe, 2020).

However, the origins of the academic study of the visual representations can be traced in the centuries-old traditions of ‘rhetoric’, in which painstaking efforts are carried out in defining and distinguishing the available *figures of thought or figures of speech* (Fahnestock, 1999). In his *Institutio Oratoria*, elaborating the trope-scheme categorization, Quintilian (1921, [95 CE]) was probably the first of antiquity who anticipated the rhetoric of visuals, when he described that

“Some [rhetorical] figures are represented as running or rushing forward, others sit or recline, some are nude, others clothed, while some again are half-dressed, half-naked” (part I, pp. 293-295). In such elaborations, in fact, he (Quintilian, 1921, [95 CE]) created a space for the actuality of the *visual rhetoric* that is being practised in static pictures and visual animations of modern advertising by pointing out that “We see the same thing [i.e., rhetorical figures] in pictures and statues too... [where] the body when held bolt upright has but little grace, for the face looks straight forward, the arms hang by the side, the feet are joined and the whole figure is stiff from top to toe” (part I, pp. 293-295). However, for a real credit, “it was the 19th century’s invention of lithography that allowed for a truly mass distribution of images on calendars, maps, and posters, as well as in advertisements in mass circulation magazines” (Kelly et al., 2020, p. xviii), with the technological advances of 20th and 21th centuries that witnessed the peak of visual rhetoricity in its most modern sense of photojournalism, television and internet media of YouTube, twitter (now referred as ‘X’) and Instagram etc. Undoubtedly, we are living in *the age of visuality*; and the prevalence of such rhetorical visuals, in fact, calls for a close scrutiny.

Being precise, the present study aims at finding the role and usage of *visuals* for persuasion in advertising, more specifically, in food advertising. Undeniably, in this age of media and technology, food advertizing has become a ubiquitous phenomenon (Gunter, 2016). It has been found that “food manufacturers and distributors are among the biggest promoters and marketers of any product category in the mainstream mass media and on other major promotional platforms” (Gunter, 2016, p. 1). The phenomenon is not in itself illegal, but it has become a subject of a growing concern among the researchers when it was found that most of the activity of food advertising is dominated by the products deemed to have questionable or poor nutritional quality (Kemp et al., 2007; Cairns et al., 2013; Zank & Smith, 2021;) and is believed to shape the masses’ orientations towards such products (Kalog et al., 2022; Rybak et al., 2024). Much light has been shed over this concern critically and empirically (see, Ali et al., 2009; McGinnis, 2008; Wollslager, 2009; Livingstone 2005; Oates et al., 2014;). However, the complex texturing of visuals and their richness of the rhetorical potentialities, that are inherent in food advertising, were largely neglected in such investigations. The present study intends to fill this gap.

Generally, the purpose of this study is to examine the nature of the information and the persuasive content of the food advertisements to uncover the possible influences that might exert from them. More specifically, the study intends to explore various *visual rhetorical figures* in the food advertisements of Dawn Bread Campaign, run by the Synergy Company in 2010. Moreover, the study also endeavors to decode the systematic practices of the advertiser(s) to use such *visual rhetorical figures* as a way of articulation to aestheticize the visuality; and to find how they increase the effectiveness of the process of meaning-making and reinforce their communication process. In this context, the present study will address the following research questions:

- i. What type(s) of figures of visual rhetoric are used by the advertiser(s) in the food advertisements of Dawn Bread Campaign?
- ii. How various linguistic and semiotic discourses are employed by the advertiser(s) to enhance the effect of these figures?
- iii. How such advertisements play a key strategic role in the success of brand without any indication as to whether they could form part of their original claim of healthy diet?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Persuasion being the ultimate goal, 'Rhetoric' has always shared a powerful and a deep-seated relationship with advertising. As a term, the word 'advertising' is derived from the Medieval Latin verb *advertere*, meaning "to direct one's attention to" the targeted object, product or service by way of some public announcement (visual, verbal or oral). Considering the new technological innovations and the respective unusual digital formats of advertising, one might think that, as an activity, advertising is a recent phenomenon. However, advertising is neither an activity that is exclusive to the modern era, nor a form of discourse which was entirely absent from the past centuries. It has an extensive history that can be traced back to the ancient times of Egyptians, Chinese and the Greeks.

Around 4000 BC, Egyptians are noted to be the first who practised a sort of advertising, in which they "used papyrus to make sales messages and wall posters" (Behal & Sareen, 2014, p.3). The displays of occasional political campaigns and various commercial messages have been found in the ruins of Pompeii and ancient Arabia. In ancient China, the earliest known advertising was of oral in its nature and function. Both in ancient Greece and in ancient Rome, the advertising on papyrus was quite common. As the masses were generally illiterate, most of the practice of advertising was restricted to the visual signs (i.e., swords, horseshoes as the symbols of a trade) and the oral announcements (i.e., criers were hired to walk through streets to make an announcement for the arrival or location of a product, service or goods at a port). The available archeological evidences have indicated towards the fact that the strategies, which were used both by the poster-makers and the criers in their announcements, are rhetorical rather than of purely informational techniques (Danesi, 2015).

However, in the late 1400s, the paradigm of the ancient activity of advertising carried through wall posters and street criers really shifted after the invention of the printing press. In fact, the Gutenberg printing press, the hallmark of a new social order, enabled the advertisers to get the prints of fliers or posters rather quickly and at a low-cost; thus, displayed in abundance at the public places or appended in books and pamphlets to reach the far and wide populace. It was, probably, the second half of the 17th century that print advertisements came on regularly due to the wide circulation of the newspapers. Danesi (2015) has indicated that "The *London Gazette* was the first newspaper to reserve a section devoted exclusively to advertising for a fee" (p. 4). However, what we think of traditional advertising nowadays has developed gradually and slowly over the period of centuries but it had never really boomed until the early 1900s.

As far as the history of the rhetoric of *visuals* is concerned, Thomas J. Barratt—"the father of modern advertising"¹ was the first advertiser who recruited an English actress and socialite (i.e., Lillie Langtry²) to become the poster-girl for Pears' soap advertisement, making her the first celebrity to endorse a commercial product in 1882. Then, in the early decades of 20th century, the discipline of psychology entwined with the practice of advertising and, as a result, the totalitarian version of modern advertising originated with the application of the psychological tactics of Edward Bernays, Walter D. Scott³ and John B. Watson. For this, the advertisers of

¹ He was first described as such in T F G Coates, "Mr Thomas J Barratt, 'The father of modern advertising'", *Modern Business*, September 1908, pp. 107–15.

² Her advertisement can be accessed from: <https://zozzledcocktail.wordpress.com/2021/01/30/jersey-lily-pousse-cafe/> Accessed on: 28-03-2024

³ In advertising context, Scott said, "Man has been called the reasoning animal but he could with greater truthfulness be called the creature of suggestion. He is reasonable, but he is to a greater extent suggestible" (quoted in Baker & Benjamin, 2014, p. 139)

1910s and 1920s implemented the doctrine that human instincts could successfully be harnessed, that is to say, “sublimated” into the urge to buy specific commodities as targeted. Edward Bernays—a nephew of Sigmund Freud—employed this method in its real sense in his famous tobacco campaigns of 1920s, when the companies hired Bernays to create positive associations with tobacco smoking. To be precise, selling products by triggering to the rational instincts of consumers (the main method prior to Bernays) proved to be much less persuasive than selling commodities grounded in the domain of unconscious desires or cravings that Bernays felt were the true motivators of human action. As a result, the controversial issue of “Sex sells”, with its various techniques for titillating the audience, posed a challenge to conventional morality. In short, the advertisers ransacked not only the linguistic and visual modes of presentation, but also the implicit contents of advertisements in achieving their fundamental objective of persuasion.

Apart from the discipline of psychology, the technological advances in information sector also provided a significant boom to the practice of advertising. With the invention of radio came in the widespread use of a new variety of advertising known as the *commercial*—“a mini-narrative or musical jingle revolving around a product or service and its uses” (Danesi, 2015, p. 5). And, with the advent of commercial television in the early 1950s and the cable television in the late 1980s, the radio commercial was adapted successfully to the new visual medium, which further enhanced the impact of the multimedial and multimodal attributes of advertising messages. Then, came into being the Internet—a birthplace for the *digital advertising*—contributing single-handedly, to the “dot-com” boom of the 21st century (Senn, 2000). In fact, the ‘Internet’ provides graphics, aural, and various visual techniques to augment the efficacy of advertising texts quite cheaply. In a nutshell, the medium of cyberspace has grown up to become a dominant and ever-evolving vehicle for the effective advertising, even though it has not notably altered the basic psychology behind offline advertising discourse styles. In fact, the new technologies are changing the ways in which advertising is delivered, but they have not changed its basic persuasive strategies.

However, the entire practice of advertising came under constant assault ever since the widely read publication of *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) by Vance Packard, who indicted the advertising practice as a surreptitious and sneaky form of brainwashing. Practically, all advertising corporations put their entire efforts on the key dimension of advertising: its *persuasive intent*. Persuasion refers to the intended use of language and other social semiotic resources to change and/or influence someone’s attitudes, beliefs, or behavior related to consumerism. Inherently, it is neither an entirely good nor an entirely bad phenomenon, but it can be both. And, if it is the latter (i.e., bad), it is generally denoted as *manipulation*. From this point of view, “advertising can be a form of manipulation, since it is the advertiser/persuader who almost always benefits, while the benefits to the hearer may not always materialize” (Jaworska, 2021, p. 430). In fact, on account of its manipulative intent, the critics usually consider advertising as a parasitic form of discourse and a form of exploitation and deception, which, quite mechanically, brainwashes the target viewers to spend money buying products or commodities that they most likely do not need (Breeze, 2013).

To mention some, examining the impact of food advertising on consumers’ eating behavior, Story and French (2004) have found that “Foods marketed to children are predominantly high in sugar and fat, and as such are inconsistent with national dietary

recommendations” (p. 1). Similarly, investigating the decision-making influences of various food advertisements on university students of Ghana, Kalog et al., (2022) have found that “this population has high self-reported advertisements’ influence on their food choices” (p. 1) and have called for the implementation of some intervention programmes “that would influence healthy food decision making and promote consumption of nutrient rich food” (p. 1). Lastly, Cardoza et al., (2023) conducted a systematic study to probe the effects of food advertising on food intake and neural activity of children and have revealed that “the findings suggest that acute exposure to food advertising increases food intake among children and adults and that the middle occipital gyrus is an implicated brain region among children” (p. 339). Probably, it is for such manipulative effects, Lenderman (2009) has opined that “the cumulative effect of the new and increasingly savvy ways that advertisers will reach billions of global consumers is bound to amplify calls for a curb on the prevalence of [advertising]visual and its mental pollution” (p. 157). And, the present study intends to probe such increasingly savvy ways of advertisers by conducting a multimodal-rhetorical analysis of the food advertising campaign of Dawn Bread.

3. METHODOLOGY

Since the present study aims at exploring the visual phenomenon multimodally and rhetorically, it falls, generally, under the umbrella term of CDA. With its qualitative research design and constructivist paradigm, the operational analytical framework of the study is an *adapted* one, which relies collaboratively on Gunther Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) ‘grammar of visual design’ for its multimodal probe of the ad-visuals; and Phillips and McQuarrie’s (2004) ‘two-dimensional typology of visual rhetorical figures’ (see Table 3.1 below) for their rhetorical investigation.

Table 3.1: Two-dimensional typology of visual rhetorical figures

| | Visual Structure | RICHNESS → | | |
|--------------|--|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | Meaning Operation | | |
| | | Connection (‘A is associated with B’) | Comparison | |
| | | | Similarity (‘A is like B’) | Opposition (‘A is not like B’) |
| COMPLEXITY ↓ | Juxtaposition (Two side-by-side images) | | | |
| | Fusion (Two combined images) | | | |
| | Replacement (Image present points to an absent image) | | | |

(Adopted from: Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004, p. 116)

As far as the nature of data, research focus, methods of data collection and mode of analysis are concerned; the study follows the *Strategic Approach* (earlier known as *text-interpretive* approach e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 1999) within the broader visual research design. In this approach, “Visuals are symbolic devices that exert influence and impact on audiences’ perception and evaluation of reality; they are a means of persuasion” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 503). For the data analysis, this approach “draws on semiotic, rhetorical, and literary theories to provide a systematic and nuanced analysis of the individual elements that make up the ad” (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999, p. 38) and it treats visual and verbal elements as equally capable of conveying crucial meanings and as equally worthy of differentiation and analysis (Meyer et al., 2013; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999).

Since, when dealing with the rhetorical analyses of the visuals, “the smaller quantities of data are used” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 505), the study collects the data through non-random theoretical sampling—also known as *purposive* sampling (O’Leary, 2004). In fact, the study conducts the multimodal-rhetorical analysis on the advertisements of Dawn Bread- Nutrition campaign run by Synergy Advertising (PVT) Ltd mostly in 2010. The campaign was initially

“Print only” and it ran successfully by registering its outcome of making “Dawn Bread as the most hygienic and healthy bread in the market” (Synergy Advertising, 2010). Although the selected ad-visuals are easily available on internet, the study’s exact source of data collection was the company’s website: <http://www.synergyadvertising.biz/>.⁴ The rationale behind choosing the Synergy Advertising⁵ is that the company has maintained its ranking “amongst the top 10 Pakistani Advertising Agencies since 2001, by the prestigious Aurora rankings”. The Company has won the “Best Print Advertisement” AURORA Award and the ABBY Award of Bombay—considered to be the Oscars of Indian Advertising. ‘How did Synergy attained and maintained such high rankings?’ was the curiousness, which became the motive behind this probe.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, two of the print advertisements of Dawn Bread Nutrition Campaign are analyzed. In probing the persuasive impact of the campaign, its sequence of the advertising visuals is quite significant to note; as the challenge of this campaign was “to create awareness for Dawn Bread as the most nutritious in the country” (Synergy Advertising, 2010). On the website, Synergy Advertising has claimed that “The [above] challenge was beautifully met when the print execution focused on the six main nutrients included in the bread and was able to create recall for all of them...[It] was followed by the advertisement of a mother’s endorsement for the bread” (Synergy Advertising, 2010). Thus, it is safe to assume that it was a systematically targeted campaign with its proper objectives and expected outcomes. In its analyses, the present study not only attempts to match its findings/interpretations with the advertiser’s attained objective or outcomes, but also with the Dawn Bread’s actual claims and information that is provided on its packaging. Let us try to unveil the curtain of rhetoric and ideology by analyzing the advertising visuals in the above mentioned sequence i.e., first the ‘Six-main-nutrients Ad’, then, the ‘Mother’s Endorsement Ad’.

4.1 Six-main-nutrients Ad

Descriptively, the image depicts five slices of baked-brown bread that are piled up asymmetrically just in the middle of the ad-visual (see Fig., 4.1 below).

⁴ Images can also be accessed directly at <http://synergy-advertising.blogspot.com/> Accessed on: 12-12-2016.

⁵ All information in this paragraph is obtained from the Company’s CEO, Ahmed Hussain Kapadia’s profile available at: <http://www.ahmedkapadia.com/profiles/synergyadvertisingprofile.pdf> Retrieved on 12-12-2023.



Figure, 4.1: Six-main-nutrients Ad

Upon this pile, a bunch of ripen-gold spikes of wheat are placed randomly. Both of the elements (i.e., slices of bread and staples of wheat) are surrounded by six-main-nutrients—three above and three below of the pile of bread. Above all, in the left corner of the ad, the brand-logo of Dawn Bread is placed. Moving down the visual, a four-word slogan-like statement “Pack nothing but nourishment” is positioned in black color. Above the blue line—which divides the upper and lower parts of the ad—all the elements are depicted against the white background. Below the blue line, a two-sentenced statement is fixed in justified alignment against the dark-yellow-colored background. At the bottom, towards the right corner of the lowest part of the ad-visual, a packaging of Dawn Bread has been placed horizontally.

In reading (or viewing) a visual, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) posit that it involves two kinds of participants: the *interactive participants*, and the *represented participants*. The former are the participants who are interacting with each other in the act of reading a visual, one being the graphic/photographic/artist, and the other the viewer. This category represents the social relations between the viewer and the visual (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The *represented participants* include all the elements or entities that are actually present in the visual, whether animate or inanimate.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the very first point to be noted in the ad is the absence of human participant in its visual. All the *represented* entities are inanimate; which suggests that the purpose of this visual is more representational than the interactional one. In this image, the represented entities exhibit an in-built *analytical process*, in order to trigger the cognitive or the rational sense of the target consumers. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 87), “*Analytical processes* relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure... [They] involve two kinds of participants: *Carrier* (the whole) and its *Possessive Attributes* (the parts)”. In the present advertisement, a pile of sliced-bread functions as the *Carrier* (the whole) and the six-main-nutrients as its *Possessive Attributes* (the parts). Practically, such analytical processes “serve to identify a Carrier and to allow viewers to scrutinize the Carrier’s Possessive Attributes—in an impersonal, detached scrutiny” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.89). So, in this image, the synergy advertisers have, in fact, appealed only to the reasoning faculty of the target consumers, thus, inviting to involve them in an unemotional process of ‘memorization’. Clearly, this accounts for the absence of human participant from the visual, echoing the latter part of the above mentioned objective of the visual that “the challenge was beautifully met when the print execution focused on the six main nutrients included in the bread and was able to **create recall for all of them** [emphasis added]” (Synergy Advertising, 2010). Thus, in its structural designs and its operative tendencies, the visual stimulates cognition rather than emotion—an exact outcome set by the Synergy advertiser(s).

Rhetorically, the juxtaposition of six-main-nutrients around the pile of bread (i.e., part-whole structure) conforms the meaning operation of “Connection” from the typology, in which ‘A is associated with B’ i.e., a case for the rhetorical figure of *visual metonym* (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). According to Phillips and McQuarrie, (2004, p. 119), the rhetorical purpose of ‘Connection’ “is to increase the salience of some aspect of element A—the aspect that provides the link to B”. In the present visual, the salience of bread is effectively enhanced by directing the viewer’s focus towards the six-main-nutrients of the bread, visually. This, in fact, echoes the first part of the above mentioned objective that “the challenge was beautifully met when the print execution focused on **the six main nutrients included in the bread...**” (Synergy Advertising, 2010). Hence, in order to achieve their goal of persuasion, the Synergy advertisers have employed the rhetorical figure of *visual metonym* to insinuate the validity of the visual argument persuasively.

However, pulling back the curtain of ideology, it can be noted that the association between the six-main-nutrients and the pile of bread has not been asserted affirmatively. The argument is weakly suggested only through the dotted lines (i.e., vector that directs the viewer in an ad), while their arrowheads are missing notably. Now, this could not be casual or innocent. Functionally, an arrowhead conveys directionality and indicates the target pointedly. And, in contrast to the dotted line, a continuous line suggests ‘a certain density of traffic’. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 71) have posited that “Vectors may also be *attenuated*, by the use of dotted

lines, by making the arrowhead smaller or less conspicuous in other ways, or by placing it in the middle, rather than at the front of the line, which diminishes the sense of ‘impacting’ and ‘targeting’, causes the meaning of the vector to move in the direction of mere connectivity” (emphasis original). Hence, by using dotted lines that are not arrowheaded, the viewers are not directed properly. Such choice on part of the advertisers, in fact, suggests that the association between the Carrier (i.e., pile of bread) and its Attributes (i.e., six-main-elements) should not be taken as literal. It has been designed purely to be taken as a rhetorical argument or a mere figurative proposition. Tracking the visual trail of focus, a viewer reads the top-nutrient “Protein” with its caption “The basic source of cell construction”; follows the dotted line, he/she finds but the pile of bread, suggesting that the bread may or may not contain protein in it, *at all*. The same is the case with all the other nutrients. The viewer will read the “Fibre”, the “Minerals”, the “Water”, the “Starch” and the “Vitamin B” and reaches nothing but the pile of bread. From the typology of figures (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004), this can be the case of ‘Comparison’ by ‘Opposition’, where ‘A is *not* like B’—i.e., a special case of *visual irony* that establishes difference between the visual appearance and the visual reality. Describing the purpose of *visual irony*, Phillips and McQuarrie (2004, p. 120) have asserted that ironic ‘opposition’ is cognitively more challenging, because it requires meta-representational reasoning (i.e., thought about thought) in order to draw a second-order inference. Such portrayal of the visual elements proves to be figurative again and, in fact, heightens the cognitive nature of the ad-visual effectively.

Moreover, the manipulative intent of the visual becomes more obvious, when the effect of this *visual irony*, is reinforced by the *verbal irony* too. It is remarkable to note that in the four-word slogan-like statement in the lower half of the ad i.e., “Pack nothing but nourishment”, agency has not been asserted. It is a curious statement in which the possible agency “we” or the name of company/brand is omitted purposefully. The lexical choice of ‘Pack’ instead of its past participle counterpart (i.e., “packed”, which would have imparted a sense of commitment to the statement) implies the ideological intent on part of the advertisers. Such lexical choices, in fact, generate multiple uncertainties: who is actually packing these nutrients? If it is Dawn, why has the advertiser not mentioned it clearly? Can “nourishment”—an uncountable abstract noun—actually be packed? Ideologically, even the code hierarchy of the six-main-nutrients becomes ironical or paradoxical when we find that “Protein”—the top one in the hierarchy—is not even mentioned in the list of “Ingredients” on Dawn Bread’s packaging (see Fig., 4.2 below). Moreover, one can observe the rhetorical and the ironic use of plurals and generalizations in the advertisement too. The visual suggests that the bread contains “Minerals”—which minerals?? How many?? How much?? Such potential questions are left unanswered only to the imagination of the viewers to ponder on—a rhetorical space meant to evade clarity, hence, responsibility.

Moving on, in the lower part of the visual, a two sentenced statement has been placed i.e., “A complete bread brings all essential nutrients to your meal. Dawn Bread is baked and produced with carefully selected ingredients so that you can have the finest of what nature has for us”. In this chunk, the first sentence seems to be a general statement—a sweeping statement in fact. The point of irony is that it is not verbally asserted that Dawn Bread is actually “a complete bread”. And, what does it mean by “a complete bread”? It is just visually implied that since the six-main-nutrients are included in Dawn Bread, thus, it *is* “a complete bread”. Moreover, in the second sentence, agency is again omitted by the use of ‘agentless passive structure’: “Dawn Bread is baked and produced...” There is no claim about who is baking and

producing? This is rhetorical. According to Fairclough (1992, p. 182), the ideological reason for an agentless passive is to obfuscate agency, and hence causality and responsibility. Apart from this, “a passive shifts the goal into initial ‘theme’ position, which usually means presenting it as ‘given’ or already known information” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 182). The capitalized phrase “Dawn Bread” is given the thematic position i.e., the focus of information structure. So, visually, the whole image seems to persuading the target audiences by proposing a weak claim, that is to say, six-main-nutrients are actually included in the Dawn Bread.

However, when we visited the ingredient-part of the actual packaging to find the conformation of the claim; surprisingly, we encountered the rhetorical use of *verbal irony*—i.e., the difference between what is implied in the visual and what has actually claimed to be included—there too (see fig., 4.2 below). Firstly, there is no “Protein”—the top nutrient from the code hierarchy—at all in the ingredients. However, sugar—which is not depicted in the visual code hierarchy—is there in the ingredients. Moreover, the “Vitamin B” of the visual, here changes to be “Vitamins”—a rhetorical insertion of plural noun to evade the sense of commitment. The same misleading use of plurals can also be found in other ingredients as well i.e., “Bread Emulsifiers” and “Preservatives”. This is the ideological and the rhetorical use of plurals to extend the nutrition-related minerals/elements into some shady generalizations. Such are the common techniques manipulated by the advertisers, especially in food advertisements (Johar 1995; Pechmann, 1996). Andrews et al., (1998), in their examination of nutrient-content claims in advertising, have found such type of ‘misleading generalizations’ and have exposed that “such generalizations may result in ad-based beliefs that are in invalid, incorrect, or deceptive” (p. 63). The same is true in the present situation.



(Figure, 4.2: Ingredient-part cropped from the packaging of Dawn Bread)

Apart from the misleading generalizations, one can also observe the manipulative use of abstract nouns as well. For example, consider the statement written above the ingredients on the packaging (see fig., 4.2): “Dawn Bread’s pioneering effort in Vitamin Mix now brings health, wealth & wisdom to our children’s daily menu”. This statement is full of manipulative, ideological and rhetorical use of abstract nouns. Firstly, in the sentence structure, again, the thematic position is given to Dawn Bread. Secondly, the basic claim is that Dawn Bread is bringing health, wealth and wisdom. How can wisdom be induced by just eating Dawn bread? What has wealth to do with the use of such bread? And, the absurd point is that the target of all these three abstract nouns is the “children’s daily menu”—not the children themselves. How

skillfully the sentence structure has been manipulated to achieve persuasion without any indication of their original claim of healthy diet.

Moreover, in the visual of six-main-nutrients ad, it can be noted that, as an alternative to arrowheads, all dotted-lines have a big circular dot at their ends. This preference also makes a rhetorical point. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “Circles and curved forms generally are the elements we associate with an organic and natural order, with the world of organic nature” (p. 55) as they “are self-contained and complete in themselves” (p. 54). All the six-main-nutrients labeled in the visual are considered to be organic and have natural occurrence. Rhetorically, this is an example of ‘Fusion’ by ‘Similarity’ i.e., **visual blending**—a visual rhetorical figure in which visual and verbal expressions work together in an effort to prompt a desired response from the audience (Stroupe, 2008). So, over all, it has been depicted that the six-main-nutrients are included in the bread, but the claim has not been asserted overtly and strongly. The reason behind this weak assertion may directly be linked to the absence of these six nutrients from the ingredient-part of the Dawn Bread packaging; and can also be explained by noting the lexical choice of uncountable noun ‘nourishment’ instead of the countable noun ‘nutrient’ (i.e., Pack nothing but nourishment—rather than *nutrients*)

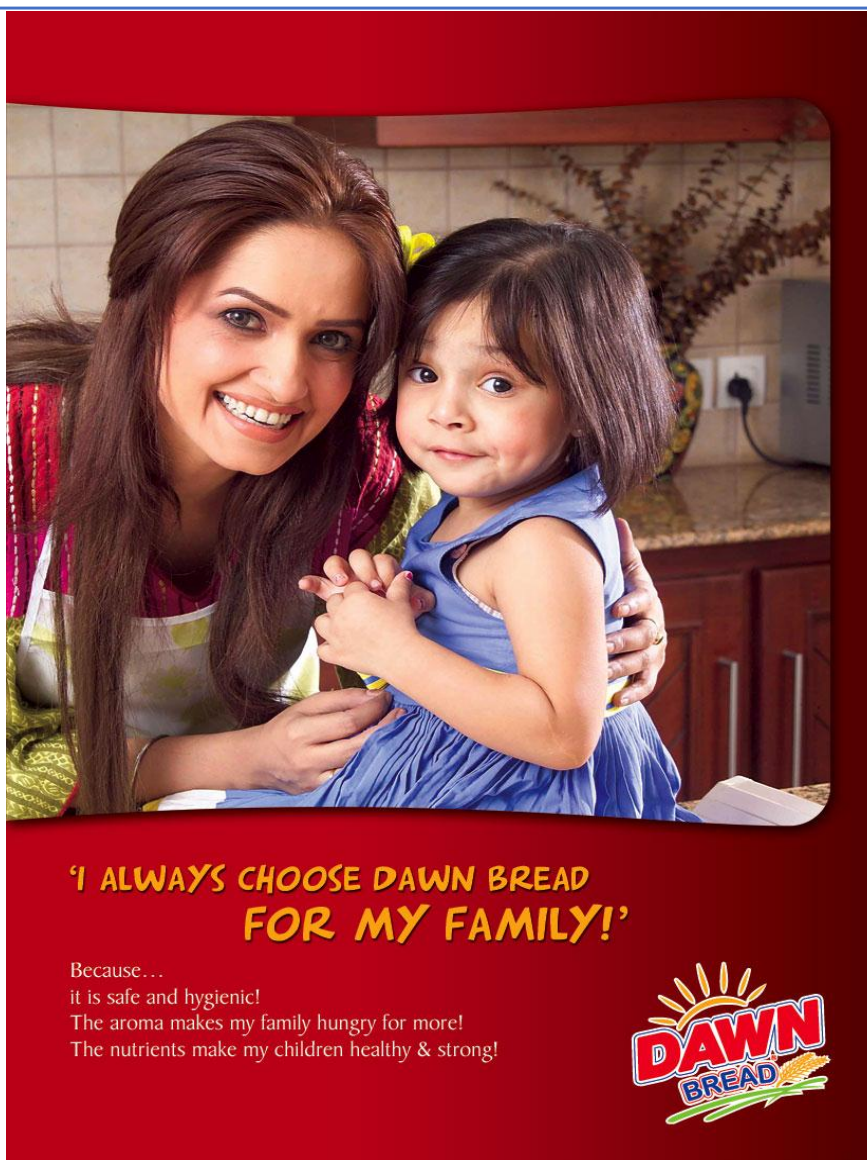
Apart from the hierarchy of six nutrients, the viewer can also find the figurative use of the bunch of ripened-gold spikes of wheat’ just upon the pile of bread. Such placement is quite unusual in the sense that one never eats a slice of bread with a bunch of wheat-spikes actually on it. This process of (re)presentation is again figurative and symbolically *Attributive*. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), symbolic attributes “look out of place in the whole, in some way” (p. 105) and “are made salient in the representation in one way or another; for instance, by being placed in the foreground, through exaggerated size, through being specially well lit, or through their conspicuous colour or tone” (p. 105). In the visual, it can be observed that the bunch of wheat-spikes has been purposefully foregrounded by placing it upon the pile of bread. The unequal lengths of the wheat-spikes are intentionally managed to cover the maximum space of the visual advertisement. In fact, horizontally, these wheat-spikes are the shown with the largest size of all the elements in the visual, hence, made salient. And, the colour of the curved sides of the slices of the bread is conspicuously modulated to echo the light-golden colour of the spikes of wheat.

Rhetorically, this is the case of **visual metaphor** and **visual rhyme**—a complex case of *visual richness* in which two figures of visual rhetoric are fused together to make a single point (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). The out-of-place position of the bunch of wheat-spikes induces a special sense of a *visual metaphor*—the representation of a person, place, thing, or idea by means of a visual image that suggests a particular association or point of similarity (Nordquist, 2016). And, the colour echoing of the spikes and the slices makes the point of *visual rhyme*—the repetitive echoing of the same visual scheme, design, colour and pattern aiming the enhancement of visibility (Nordquist, 2016). The same enhancement of visibility via the rhetorical use of *colour rhyme* can also be found in the bran-logo of Dawn Bread that is placed at the uppermost left corner of the visual. In the brand-logo, however, a bit dense-golden colour has been echoed (i.e., rhymed) between the image of half-sunrise and the couple of wheat-spikes. Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) have pointed out that “all visual figures stem from their artful deviation” (p. 126) and the impacts of such deviations are certainly rhetorical as, “readers do not consider this deviation to be an error...” (p. 114).

In fact, by employing such visual rhetorical figures, the viewers are, actually, persuaded that the man-made bread is purely natural and organic. The rhetoric of such *visuals*, in fact, presents a solid example of *visual argumentation* in which an argument has been proposed *visually* to enhance the impact of its persuasiveness (Hill, 2008). Indeed, the absence of human participant(s) and the use of complex figures of visual rhetoric conform that the ad is meant to be visually rich and rhetorically complex, appealing to the cognition or rationality of the audience. This conformation, thus, endorses Phillips and McQuarrie's (2004, pp. 128-129) first prediction/proposition about the consumer outcomes and the expected impacts of complexity and ambiguity on the psychology of consumers: "More complex visual figures, and also richer visual figures, will result in more cognitive elaboration"; and the Synergy advertisers (2010) have also reported in the results that "this campaign helped *remind* consumers about the health aspect of the bread..." (emphasis added)

4.2 Mother's Endorsement Ad

Descriptively, this advertisement presents two human participants—a smiling mother and a smiling baby—with the kitchen in the background (see Fig, 4.3 below). Saliently, more than half of the visual has been taken up by these two participants. In the lower part of the visual, an irregularly capitalized quotation 'I ALWAYS CHOOSE DAWN BREAD FOR MY FAMILY!' is depicted in dark-yellow colour. Below these words, in the lower left corner, there is a four-line caption in white colour; and in the right corner, the brand-logo of Dawn Bread is stamped up.



(Figure, 4.3: Mother's Endorsement Ad⁶)

In contrast to the representational nature of the earlier ad, however, the inclusion of the human participants suggests that the purpose of this ad is strongly interactional. It looks obvious that, after the cognitive brainwashing the target viewers, the advertisers (i.e., Synergy Advertising) want to engage them emotionally in this visual. Indeed, after blowing them in the Head, the target, now, is the Heart. This strategy has been quite usual and proved effective in the domain of advertising generally and in 'food advertising', especially, as such interactive visuals "tend to prompt emotional reactions and that, once the viewer's emotions are excited, they tend to override his or her rational faculties, resulting in a response that is unreflective and irrational" (Hill, 2008, p. 26). Let us analyze how the viewers are engaged in this ad.

In contrast to the first visual, where the central focus was on inanimate pile of bread, in this visual, clearly, the focus is on the animate visuals of mummy and her baby; as more than

⁶ Accessed from: <http://synergy-advertising.blogspot.com/> Accessed on: 28-03-2024

half of the ad-space is taken up by them. So, in this visual, there are two *represented participants* gazing directly at the viewers maintaining an eye-contact. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “the gaze of represented participants directly addresses the viewers and establishes an imaginary relation with them” (p. 89). For analyses, they draw a distinction between two kinds of *image acts* i.e., *demand* and *offer* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 116-124). An indirect address would represent an *offer*, whereas a direct address represents a *demand* for the viewer to enter into relationship with the person (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). And what is demanded by the *represented participant* in the image depends entirely on *how* the look is conveyed. There may be a smile (suggesting social affinity), a stare (suggesting disdain), or a pout (suggesting a sexual offer). Each of these actions requires some kind of response from the viewer in terms of entering into some kind of social relation. The main difference being that in *demand* the requirement of entering into some kind of social relationship on the part of the viewer is mandatory, while in *offer* it is an optional one i.e., viewer may reject or accept the *offer* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 122-123).

In the present visual, the mummy and the baby are gazing directly at the viewer in spite of their oblique angle of the pose. Thus, *image act* is that of *demand*. Since there are two participants in the visual, the *demanded* impact of their gaze is intense and double-edged. The gaze of mother seems to be strongly experiential, keen and triumphant, while the gaze of the baby seems to be immediate, cute, delightful and adorable. Furthermore, the mother’s direct eye-contact has been maintained with the accompaniment of her broad, simulated but celebratory smile, while the baby’s smile seems to be sporadic, but natural one.

What does this whole image act *demand*? It can be inferred that, simply and pragmatically, the whole image act *demands* the sole action from the viewers: Buy the Dawn Bread. In fact, the advertiser has made this appeal thorough a rhetorical phenomenon known as *visual coherence*— an inherent quality of Augmented Reality in which “the goal is to have visual augmentations blend with the real world in a visually coherent manner”⁷. Turner has defined *visual coherence* as “the extent to which visual elements of a composition tied together with color, shape, image, lines of sight, theme etc.” (Turner, 2009). Triumphant smiling face and protective gesture of mother’s arms around the baby visually echoes the word “safe” written in the caption below. She becomes the emblem image of a pleased and satisfied mother. So, the overall message conveyed is that ‘I have saved my baby by using the Dawn Bread’; all the other mothers must also do the same, if they wish to protect their babies. In fact, a motherly emotion— a culturally shared value—has been invoked quite persuasively to win the audience’s adherence to the product.

Moreover, by employing the smiley image of a baby, the intensity of the motherly emotion has been further enhanced, pretty effectively. The baby’s cute gaze, her dimpled facial expression, her innocent natural smile and her playful gesture of hands; all echo the words “healthy & Strong” of the caption below. The image of “healthy & Strong” baby has been further augmented by giving the direct focus to her sleeveless dress. The intensity of light clearly depicts the focus of camera; as the focused arm of the baby is more illuminated than the baby’s and the mother’s face. Rhetorically, the impact of the visual is heightened by employing rhetorical figure of *visual rhyme* i.e., the baby’s dressing and the word “BREAD” from the brand-logo of the

⁷ “Visual Coherence in Augmented Reality” (online webpage), Available at: <http://ael.gatech.edu/lab/research/technology/visual-coherence/> Accessed on: 12-12-2023.

Dawn Bread both are in blues. And, blue colour being the colour of sky again connotes the organic and pure nature of bread (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In fact, the image of the healthy and strong baby has been endorsed by the brand logo chromatically. One of the intended messages conveyed is to be: 'If you choose to eat Dawn Bread, your baby will definitely be healthy and strong, like this one'. How rhetorical? The same colour rhyming is nearly modulated between the red-colored "DAWN" from the bran-logo and the red background of the left corner of the visual.

Rhetorically, the whole image presents the manipulation of rhetorical figure based on 'Replacement'.—the **visual extended metaphor**. According to Phillips and McQuarrie (2004, p. 118), "Most *demanding* of all is replacement, where it must be discerned that there is a second element, not shown, but linked to the element that is present. Identifying that missing element and deciding upon its relation to the present element is a still more complex task than disentangling two fused elements..." In the current visual, the "Family" (the missing whole) has been replaced by depicting the 'Replacement' (the presented elements i.e., the mummy and the baby). So, by depicting the augmented visuals of the satisfied mother and the healthy baby, the target viewers are persuaded to purchase Dawn Bread, actually "For the whole Family". Again, this confirms the achieved objectives of the advertisers, as in the results the Synergy advertisers (2010) have reported the outcome that the campaign "influenced the health conscious target audience about the positives of buying Dawn Bread above all others".

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the study aimed at finding the role and usage of different figures of *visual rhetoric* in food advertising, has found the operation of various figures—*visual metonym*, *visual irony*, *visual rhyme*, *visual blending*, *visual metaphor*, *visual extended metaphor* and *visual coherence*—to the effect of persuading the target audience, rather forcefully. Apart from these various figures of visual rhetoric, it has been exposed that food advertisers have manipulated the culturally shared values and assumptions to achieve their overriding goal of persuasive communication, and have also been successful in making brand look appealing without any indication of their claim of healthy diet. Almost none of their claims about being nutrient-rich nature of Dawn Bread could be matched with their claims made on the actual ingredient-part of the packaging. Such mismatch should be taken as the operative signs of the rhetoric of *visuals* in favor of manipulation and warrants future probes and investigations.

Contributively, the present study has brought in light one of the essential topics of *visual rhetoric*, that is to say, the special theoretical debate of *visual argumentation*. Since 1990s, just when W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) claimed to witness the "pictorial turn" in advertising media and communication, the central issue was whether or not visual argumentation was possible at all. Skeptics of visual argumentation complained that since pictures are vaguely ambiguous, make multiple claims/statements without even clear grammar or syntax, and, thus, the claims cannot be contested, they, by definition, cannot be arguments (Johnson, 2003). However, if argumentation should be viewed as speech acts or as a cognitive experience, as has been argued in analyses, there is no solid theoretical ground that visual argumentation is impossible. And, in this context, the present study is at hand to explore the full rhetorical potential of an ad-image or picture by linking its discursive propositions to its multimodal aspects of aesthetic and sensual contiguity. Thus, in line with the scholarship (e.g., Blair, 2008; Birdsell & Groarke, 1996; Fleming, 1996;

Kjeldsen, 2018), the present study has contributed significantly in achieving a general agreement that an argument can be expressed verbally, visually, or in many other modes possibly.

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