



Visual Rhetoric and Text Image Relations of Corporate Advertisements during the Pandemic

Seham Osama

Faculty of Languages and Translation, Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, Egypt.

seham.osama@sadatacademy.edu.eg

Received: 3/7/2025 Revised: 3/8/2025 Accepted: 22/9/2025

Published: 8/10/2025

DOI: 10.21608/jssa.2025.400333.1748

Volume 26 Issue 7 (2025) Pp. 79-105

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had a global impact and was covered by a wide array of media platforms, TV networks, and some brands were involved in campaigns of corporate advertisement using several multimodal forms related to Covid-19. This study examines the use of visual rhetoric and text-image relations in corporate advertisements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nine corporate advertisements that use pandemic-related themes are analyzed using Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) interpretation of visual rhetoric, and Martinec and Salway's (2005) multimodal discourse framework of text-image relations. The study identifies common COVID-19 themes that are used by these businesses in their corporate advertisements and investigates their perceptual and conceptual interpretation with text-image relationships. Results show that the corporate advertisements analyzed used one of four COVID-19 themes: social distancing, mask-wearing, lockdown, and solidarity messages. They adapted their logos and redesigned the advertisement conceptually and perceptually to positively fit the COVID-19 message. Text and image functioned in equal or complementary status relations, improving the emotional involvement and intelligibility of the message. During the COVID-19 pandemic, brands retained consumer trust and encouraged social solidarity, combining conceptual, perceptual rhetoric tools, and effective use of text-image relationships.

Keywords: Maes and Schilperoord's (2007), Martinec and Salway's (2005) text-image relations, COVID-19 media, Corporate Advertisements, multi-modal analysis

البلاغة البصرية وعلاقات النص بالصورة في الإعلانات التجارية أثناء الجائحة

سهام أسامة
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية
كلية اللغات والترجمة
أكاديمية السادات للعلوم الإدارية
seham.osama@sadatacademy.edu.eg

المستخلص:

لقد كان لجائحة كوفيد-19 اثرا كبيرا على العالم كله حيث تناولت وسائل الإعلام المختلفة وشبكات التلفزيون والكثير من إعلانات الماركات العالمية موضوع الجائحة من جوانب مختلفة باستخدام وسائط متعددة وأشكال مختلفة. وتتناول الدراسة الحالية استخدام البلاغة البصرية وعلاقته النص بالصورة في الاعلانات المؤسسية خلال جائحه كوفيد- 19 حيث تم تحليل تسع اعلانات مؤسسية تتناول موضوعات متعلقة بالجائحة وتفسير ذلك باستخدام طريقه ميز وسكليرورد (2007) للبلاغة البصرية وإطار الخطاب متعدد الوسائط لمارتينك وسالواي (2005) لعلاقات النص بالصورة. وحددت الدراسة الموضوعات الشائعة المتعلقة بالجائحة التي استخدمتها الشركات في اعلاناتها وبحثت في تفسيرها الإدراكي والمفاهيمي. وظهرت النتائج ان الاعلانات المؤسسية التي تم تحليلها استخدمت أحد أربع موضوعات متعلقة بالجائحة وهي: التباعد الاجتماعي وارتداء الكمامة والاعلاق والبقاء في المنزل ورسائل التضامن الاجتماعي حيث قامت الشركات بتكليف شعاراتها واعاده تصميم الاعلانات الخاصة بها من الناحيتين المفاهيمية والإدراكية ليتناسب ذلك ايجابيا مع رسائل الكوفيد- 19. وقد وجدت الدراسة ايضا ان النص والصورة التي استخدمتها تلك الإعلانات في علاقات ظهرت في علاقات متساوية او تكميلييه مما عزز التفاعل العاطفي وقابليه فهم الرسالة في تلك الاعلانات وبذلك فان الشركات خلال جائحه قد حافظت على العلامات التجارية الخاصة بها وازافت اليها دعم وثقه المستهلكين مشجعه على التضامن الاجتماعي من خلال الجمع بين ادوات البلاغة المفاهيمية والإدراكية والاستخدام الفعال لعلاقات النص بالصورة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البلاغة البصرية، علاقة النص بالصورة، التحليل متعدد الوسائط، الإعلانات المؤسسية، الجائحة في الإعلام

Introduction

Since advertisements typically exploit contemporary trends and current events in promotional campaigns, the global spread of COVID-19 was a media event that drew the attention of nations worldwide. Therefore, brands and advertisers used the major COVID-19 messages in the form of certain repetitive themes to promote goodwill and keep up with the world event (Abdulhaleem, 2023). Corporate advertisements are those advertisements which do not promote a certain product but rather promote the image of the company by presenting the company's desired social image, sponsorship, advocacy, and cause-related advertisement (Aktan & Ozupek 2015). COVID-19-related advertisements can fall into the last category; therefore, the present study analyses some of these themes by looking at the various visual rhetoric schemes used in corporate advertisements of brands using both Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) interpretation heuristics and Martinec & Salway's (2005) text image relations analysis. The analysis includes brand logos, billboards, and TV channels' logos, and it focuses on the interaction between text and image. Then it investigates how visual rhetoric is used in corporate advertisements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

- To use Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) interpretation heuristic to find patterns of rhetorical effectiveness of COVID-19 related corporate advertisements.
- To interpret the conceptual and perceptual components of visual and textual elements in corporate advertisements related to the pandemic.
- To analyze the text image relationships according to Martinec & Salway's (2005) approach for investigating the relationships of text and image in corporate advertisements related to the pandemic.

Research Questions

1. What patterns of rhetorical effectiveness appear in the analyzed corporate advertisements that are COVID-19 related?
2. What conceptual and perceptual interpretations of the visual and textual components of COVID-19 are related to these corporate advertisements?

3. What text-image relationships appeared in corporate advertisements related to the pandemic?

Theoretical Framework

Advertisements usually use visuals and text to represent meaning and influence target audiences, which may extend beyond just using visual metaphors (Schilperoord & Ferdinandusse, 2007). Visual rhetoric enables brands to communicate multiple concepts simultaneously to engage customers on multiple cognitive levels, thereby increasing the total impact of the advertisement. According to Barroso and García (2015), companies' use of visual symbols is vital for reflecting corporate identity, and company logos are usually as persuasive as speeches intended for a modern audience. The following section highlights the theoretical background of the visual rhetoric of Maes and Schilperoord (2007), accounts for Martinec & Salway's (2005) text-image relationships analysis and finally explains the basic features of corporate advertising.

Maes and Schilperoord (2007) Interpretation Heuristics

The Maes and Schilperoord (2007) interpretation heuristics analyze visual rhetoric in advertisements. They categorize rhetorical figures in visual advertisements by combining structural and conceptual perspectives. They suggest a heuristic method for assessing an advertisement's structural elements, conceptual interpretation, and rhetorical elements. By using these heuristics, it would be possible to improve comprehension of the ways in which conceptual and structural components work together to produce compelling messages. Bateman (2014) claims that Maes and Schilperoord (2007) do not believe that all persuasive messages in advertisements can be considered rhetorical since there must be a degree of deviation from the normal depiction of a message.

Maes and Schilperoord (2007) utilized Forceville's (1996) concept of visual metaphor which is analyzed by responding to three important questions: through the first question the two objects involved have to be specified, through the second one object is made the source, and the other becomes the target, and finally the third question finds the attributes or relations that are transferred from the source to the target. Verbo-pictorial metaphors effectively spring from engaging multiple modes of perception (visual and linguistic) as well as simplifying complex ideas and finally

being memorable and emotionally impactful (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). This makes them useful in communication, advertising, and storytelling.

In this framework, each advertisement should have a fundamental propositional message that expresses the relationship between two entities: the product (X) and an added feature (Y) (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). A propositional message can take many different forms, for example, product X has property Y; product X causes circumstance Y; product X is favored by person Y. These messages are grouped under the general conceptual template that product X is associated with Y in a certain way. Therefore, the initial analytical step should be to identify the X and Y objects. Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) evaluate the artful deviation of the components in the advertisement to see whether it is rhetorical or not. Two heuristics are used for this purpose: one based on stylistic/perceptual characteristics, and one based on conceptual characteristics. Visual perceptual factors such as perspective, colour, and spatial orientation are forms of relationship between X and Y in the advertisement. For example, the use of Gestalt Principles like continuity and proximity is an improvement of the associative connection between verbal and visual components (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). The other is conceptual characteristics that are related to the existence of a conceptual link between X and Y that requires the viewer to build a connection between them. Therefore, if one of the two heuristics exists then the advertisement is a rhetorical one. Second, they identify the conceptual representation in the advertisement by finding a relational schema that relates X to Y such as association, contiguity, and identity. Finally, the third step investigates the structural interpretation of the advertisement. Thus, if X and Y are both visually present then it is a case of juxtaposition, but when X and Y are both visually present and merged this would be fusion, and if only X or Y is present then we have a case of replacement. Because they appeal to the viewer's emotions, visual signals and stimulate cognitive effects, advertisements that blend perceptual and conceptual rhetoric typically have a greater and more lasting effect (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). While advertisements that only use conceptual rhetoric may miss the immediate appeal of visuals, those that just use perceptual rhetoric may be visually appealing but may lack depth (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). A balanced, convincing message exists by combining the two strategies.

Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) classification of visual rhetoric, especially their focus on perceptual visual structure meaning operation also drew on the work of Phillips and McQuarrie's (2004) taxonomy using three structural classes: replacement, fusion, and juxtaposition, as well as three categories of meaning operations such as: opposition, similarity, and connection. To generate tension or highlight a specific point, the opposition places elements in contrast and draws attention to their differences. For instance, by making differences visually obvious, visual antithesis can dramatize a message, elicit thought, or clarify a position. Similarity highlights characteristics that elements have in common with visual metaphors, analogies, and associations. Finally, Connection does not necessarily imply likeness or contrast; rather, it unites components by association which merely illustrates the relationship or belongingness of two items.

Martinec & Salway (2005) Text and Images in Multimodal Discourse

Martinec & Salway (2005) present an approach for investigating the semantic links between text and images in multimodal discourse. They examine image modality in multimodal conversation using functional grammar theory, which is based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's work (2006). The system integrates two parts: status relation and logico-semantic relations (Martinec & Slway, 2005). Status relations examine the relative significance or interdependence of texts and images. They can have an equal status (independent or complementary) or an unequal status (text subordinate to image or image subordinate to text) (Martinec & Slway, 2005). Unequal status occurs when there is a partial correspondence between the image and the text, or vice versa (Martinec & Slway, 2005). Logico-semantic relations examine the semantic relations between the content of the text and the image (Martinec & Slway, 2005). They can be related to expansion (as in enhancement, elaboration, extension) or projection (as in a locution or idea) (Martinec & Slway, 2005). For example, expansion or elaboration of a component builds upon text adding new information while enhancement using text provides more information about the image's contents. With extension, the text could present fresh ideas that add a new concept to what the advertisement presents in the image. By analyzing both dimensions and defining how effectively the text and image work together to convey the advertisement's message the overall persuasive impact of the advertisement.

Corporate Advertisement

Corporate advertisement strategies as a type of marketing are defined as advertising strategies that help in maintaining or enhancing the reputation and public image of companies. It is one branch of advertising that is placed as an extension of companies' public relations (PR) function (Belch & Belch 2015). Belch & Belch (2015) explained that "*Corporate advertising does not promote any one specific product or service rather, it is designed to promote the firm overall, by enhancing its image, assuming a position on a social cause, or seeking direct involvement in something.*" (p. 594). They list two objectives that appear through corporate advertisements design: first, enhancing the company's reputation; and second conveying the organization's stance on commercial, social, and environmental concerns as well as promoting the organization and its ideals both for internal and external audiences. Companies resort to corporate advertising when they are in trouble or need to build trust with their customers (Argenti & Forman, 2002).

Aktan and Ozupek (2015) explained that corporations deploy three primary forms of CA: advocacy, sponsorship, image, and cause-related advertisements. Advocacy is usually related to environmental or humanitarian causes. The second is sponsorship, in which businesses support sporting events or television shows. The third is activism and it tackles environmental, business, or social issues by addressing divisive social topics and advertising ideas that are significant to the broader public. Advertising seeks to further the goals of the business. They also added that, instead of promoting the organization itself, the company takes a stance on a certain topic while still projecting a certain image of the company or organization. The advertisement campaigns of most major corporations and brand names resorted to corporate advertisements during the COVID-19 pandemic era.

Previous Studies

Media coverage and advertisement materials about COVID-19 were the source of inspiration for many research papers analyzing various aspects of the media's interaction with its spread. In tracing false information presented about the pandemic Brennen et al (2021) assessed the photos used in COVID-19 news. They identified and examined six frames and three distinct functions of visuals in

misinformation and how they illustrate and selectively emphasize arguments and claims. They used a mixed-methods analysis of ninety-six examples of materials rated false or misleading by independent professional fact-checkers from the first three months of 2020. The examination revealed altered photographs, but they were all created using basic software, not artificial intelligence-based techniques. More than half of the openly misleading content that has been analyzed used photos as evidence for false claims; these claims are mislabeled rather than purposefully misrepresented.

Shoenberger et al. (2021) investigated brand advertising during the COVID-19 pandemic that promoted socially acceptable behaviors such as wearing masks and how they could be effective. The study used a two-message type: threat to freedom vs. no threat in two brands: Uber vs. Heineken. Results showed that messages about a threat to freedom led to increased psychological reactance, and decreased intention to engage in socially responsible activities.

In another study Unal et al. (2021) use computational approaches to investigate the impact of persuasive multimodal content on popularity and dependability in COVID-19 news items shared on Twitter. They first propose a multi-modal (text and visual) approach to effectively assess the reliability and popularity of information sources simultaneously. Secondly, they identify linguistic and visual cues that indicate the authority and appeal of information. Thirdly, by simulating cross-modal relations and similarity, they can demonstrate how skewed and biased articles produce multimodal meaning. The methodology explores the implications of multi-modal analysis for comprehending important content and has implications for social media literacy and engagement.

The study of Gill (2022) analyzes the instructional television advertisements, or "campaigns," that the UK government has produced to increase public awareness of COVID-19. The study is based on a preliminary examination of seventeen COVID-19 advertisements. An examination of four selected advertisements (each with one screenshot from each phase) revealed that terror is used more through implicit multimodal semiotic interactions than through more conventional meaning potentials. The government's pandemic responses were divided into four stages: responsibility, management, mitigation, and reflection. Results show that fear-

based visual-verbal campaign messaging strategies affect people's compliance with public health regulations and raise ethical concerns concerning the definition of "expertise" and the process by which "irrational" activities are "rationalized."

Building on Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) van Weelden et al. (2018) discuss how people's understanding and creation of visual metaphors are influenced by the visual resemblance of shapes. They look at whether viewers' ability to make metaphorical connections is influenced by how similar two things are in shape. According to their findings, participants are more likely to identify a metaphorical relationship quickly and effectively when items in a visual metaphor have comparable shapes. Perceptual elements, particularly shape, actively aid intellectual integration in visual metaphors. They add to a sophisticated comprehension of the interplay between conceptual structure and visual form, providing insightful information for theoretical study as well as real-world applications in domains including multimedia design, advertising, and education.

Using Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) and other visual rhetoric theories van Enschoot et al. (2024) discussed the development of a visual rhetoric that distinguishes between various advertising graphical methods and connects them to customer reaction. They suggested a new typology that separates visual rhetorical figures into nine categories based on their level of ambiguity and complexity. They also generated predictions that can be evaluated empirically about how these various visual figure forms might affect consumer responses such as belief change and elaboration. They also discussed the significance of combining textual analysis found in literary, semiotic, and rhetorical disciplines with the experimental methods typical of social and cognitive psychology.

Studies that used Martinec & Salway's (2005) text-image relationships in a multimodal context such as Aktan and Ozupek (2015) investigate how corporate advertising is evolving in the digital era, particularly with the rise of social media. The authors stress how social media has fundamentally altered how companies communicate with the public regarding their values, reputation, and social responsibility. They emphasize how inadequate traditional corporate advertising strategies were and how companies need to leverage social media's dynamic and real-time nature to build and maintain a positive corporate reputation and brand

image. As it examines strategies for engaging with stakeholders, managing crises, and enhancing organizational identity across a range of social media channels, it emphasizes the critical need for authenticity and transparency in this new communication paradigm.

The study of El-Sayed (2018) examines the semantic relationships between text and image in advertisements. It employs two analytical techniques: Cheong's Generic Structure Potential (GSP) and Martinec & Salway's method of text-image interactions. Results showed that the overall intended message of the advertisements is served by the integration and relationship between the text and images and that both aid in the advertisement's processing and orientation.

Wang (2023) examine how image-text relations change when translating news cartoons in *China Daily* and provides an overview of multimodal translation techniques, drawing on Martinec and Salway's (2005) image-text relations theory. Considering the target audience and publicity requirements, the results show that the discourse meaning disparities between image and text in the Chinese version are greater than those in the English version. To achieve the sharing of political information and increase political consciousness, users would link words to images in multimodal translations, altering the image-text relationship.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative analysis to investigate nine corporate promotional materials used during the COVID-19 pandemic to investigate rhetorical elements in their production and describe their conceptual and perceptual interpretation, besides looking at text-image relationships, and how they can be related to their effects. The analyzed images of the brand advertisement and channel logos with background details are presented in the Appendix. The analysis, results, and discussions are presented below.

Selection Criteria for Advertisement Samples

The selected advertisements and logos are samples of different sectors of media and commodity advertisements. These specific sectors were chosen since they represent a variety of commercial sectors that provide products and services

worldwide. The eight advertisements and the one channel logo included function as corporate advertisements since they do not directly address product promotional targets but link their companies to the human calamity caused by the pandemic. The analyzed items include advertisements for some global brands that have franchises worldwide such as Coca-Cola[®], and McDonald's[®]. They also include three images captured by the researcher during the pandemic from her home TV for channel logos which are branding identity representations of the channel. Out of the nine corporate advertisements included here, two of which are from the Coca-Cola Corporation, and each is analyzed separately, and they are numbered Coca-Cola 1 and Coca-Cola 2.

Analytical Framework

The analysis followed the following procedures. First, Maes and Schilperoord's (2007) classification of visual rhetoric is replicated using their tabulation form. The classical advertisement message which is based on product X that is linked to quality Y to promote X was operationalized. In the chosen samples of corporate Advertisements that utilized the pandemic themes, the basic propositional message is related to showing the company as an entity with humanitarian concern. In other words, company X aims to promote its image through using COVID-19 -19 theme or visual Y. Therefore, X henceforth will refer to the company (represented by its logo, product, mascot, etc.) and the Y will represent the human shared cause which is COVID-19 represented by a COVID-19 related symbol (masks, home and lock down, distancing, etc.). In certain cases, two COVID-19 related forms are detected in a single corporate advertisement, therefore they are labelled Y1 and Y2.

Second, in the image-text relations analysis, two major categories are used. First, the status relations which examine dependencies between textual and visual elements (equal or unequal status of image and text). Second, logico-semantic relations are used to identify conceptual connections between modalities.

Data Analysis and Procedures

The selected corporate advertisements include food and beverages, automotive, media and TV channels. Each advertisement is analyzed, and images of the advertisements are included in the Appendix. The analysis is done in four steps.

The first three steps are an adaptation of Maes & Schilperoord's (2007, p.32) interpretation of visual rhetoric in advertisements. The fourth step uses Martinec and Salway's (2005) analysis of text-image relationships in the advertisements see Table (1)

Step 1	Step 1	Define X (the company logo, image, name, etc.) and Y (the Covid-19-19 related message(s))
		The advertisement contains perceptual cues which trigger a meaningful relation between X and Y The advertisement contains two objects, X and Y one of which is to be conceptualized in terms of the other
Step 2	conceptual interpretation	Conceptual interpretation of the advertisement X fit in a particular relational schema Y If yes → find the appropriate comparison relation between Y and X. Association – contiguity relations – identity. X belong to a particular class or category Y If yes → find the appropriate comparison relation between Y and X. Association – contiguity relations – identity.
		The structural interpretation of the advertisement X and Y both visually present (separately) = juxtaposition. X and Y both visually present (merged) = fusion. only X or Y present in a particular context = replacement
Step 4	Text-Image Relationship	The status relations of text and image in the advertisement? Equal Status: (Independent- Complementary) Unequal Status: (Image Subordination - Text Subordination)
		The Logico-Semantic relations between text and image in the advertisement? Expansion: (Elaboration – Extension) Projection: (Locution- Idea)

Table (1) Steps of the analysis

Results and Discussion

The following section presents results and discussion identifying patterns of rhetorical effectiveness, conceptual and perceptual interpretations, and finally text-image relations in the advertisements. All the advertisements included in the study showed contiguity relations both visually and verbally with the interaction between the company's identity which is commonly present in the logo, font, basic slogan, and colour scheme etc. and the COVID-19 theme. It is also important to note that classical corporate advertisements usually tend to keep changes in their basic features within a minimal range (Belch & Belch 2015). The changes that the

analyzed ads show visual effects that involve multiple visual cognitive processes which helped them engage their audiences. Table (2) summarizes these results.

Brand	COVID-Related Theme	Perceptual Structure	Text-Image Relation	Conceptual Interpretation
Coca-Cola 1	Social Distancing	Fusion Juxtaposition	with Equal weight	Visual metaphor, Paradoxical messaging
Audi	Social Distancing	Fusion Juxtaposition	with Enhancement	Visual metaphor Paradoxical messaging
Volkswagen	Social Distancing	Fusion Juxtaposition	with Enhancement	Visual metaphor of distancing
McDonald's	Social Distancing	Fusion	Absent	Visual metaphor
Chiquita	Lockdown/Stay Home	Replacement	Equal weight	Personification
MBC Group	Lockdown/Stay Home	Fusion	Absent	Visual metaphor (home as lockdown/entertainment)
Starbucks	Mask-Wearing	Fusion	Equal weight	Humor Cognitive engagement
Subway	Mask-Wearing	Fusion Juxtaposition	with Enhancement	Literal mask imagery
Coca-Cola 2	Solidarity	Fusion Juxtaposition	with Equal weight	Verbo-pictorial metaphor, Gratitude

Table (2) Results

Corporate advertisements in the present study used four categories of COVID-19 theme patterns: social distancing, lockdown and stay home, wearing masks, and finally "thank you" and solidarity messages. To represent pandemic-related behaviors like social distancing, staying at home, and wearing masks, firms applied minor yet effective changes to their original brand logos and visual features in all the advertisements.

Patterns of Rhetorical Effectiveness

The first and most used theme in the analyzed advertisements is social distancing used by Coca-Cola1, Audi, Volkswagen, and McDonald's. The visual addition of space between the main components of the brand's logo created the

distancing theme effect, and applying the Gestalt visual principle of continuity renders the company logos easily identifiable. Valinsky (2020) reported that Coca-Cola ran an advertisement in New York's Times Square that shows each letter of its logo separated and added the slogan "*Staying apart is the best way to stay connected.*" This showed how the brand celebrated the solidarity of humanity in this advertisement (Valinsky 2020). On the other hand, Audi.com the official website of the brand broadcasted an animation of the four interlocking rings representing the union of four Saxony, Germany based automakers separating the rings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Then the text changes while the four Audi circles move away from each other. The verbal message under the original connected rings that says, "*Stay Together*" while the text under the separated circles into "*Keep Distance.*" Volkswagen used a similar approach altering the logo of the company by adding space between the "V" and the "W." They have posted their logo in the form of posters, billboards, and animations on various social media platforms (Valinsky 2020). The letters with the added space in the logo accompanied by a verbal message underneath "*Thank you for keeping your distance*" (Valinsky, 2020). Finally, the simplest form is adopted by McDonald's Brazil as they divided the well-known Golden Arches that symbolize the McDonald's brand (Walansky, 2020). No text exists to the altered logo of McDonald's.

The second theme, lock down and stay home, is used in two advertisements. In the Chiquita Brands International advertisement, the brand mascot is removed from the logo and replaced by a text message "Miss Chequita Stays home." Chiquita Brands International is a vegetable and food company established in North America and well known for its logo centered on the Chiquita lady Mascot that has been present in the logo since its release in 1987 when the banana Chiquita was humanized into lady Chiquita (Chiquita Brands International, 2014). All updates of the logo throughout the years kept Miss Chiquita in the logo, but she was removed in the Covid-19 ad. The same message was visually presented differently by the TV group channel of MBC which surrounded their usual channel logos with a home image. The MBC group is a big prestigious media organization in the Middle East and North Africa. The logos of all the group channels changed during the lockdown.

The third theme that appeared in the advertisements is wearing masks which appeared in the advertisements by Starbucks and Subway. In the Starbucks advertisement, Starbucks brought humor into the COVID-19 advertisement by using everyday practices in its branches and adding ingenuity to it. The advertisement published on Starbucks UK official Facebook page (August 2020) included the usual visuals of a cup with the company logo with an additional message “*Thank you for wearing a mask in store*” message; however, to add some drama, the cup carried a weirdly spelled customer’s name showing the difficulty that baristas would have in hearing names of customers wearing a mask in store. The fun comes from the fact that baristas in Starbucks are known to write names of customers in odd spellings to add joy to the customers’ unique experience in store but because COVID-19 baristas are now doing it because of the safety measures of the worn masks. As for India Subway, they presented a face mask covering a part of the company's logo and a "Stay Safe" text message underneath.

Thank you, and solidarity messages appeared in the Coca-Cola Advertisements. The Coca-Cola official Facebook page published an advertisement on March 23rd 2020 carrying a message that consisted of two parts: the first was a dedication note that read “*For the human race Coca Cola*” and the second carried a headline that read “*thank you*” and the rest of the message is typographically shaped into a Coca-Cola bottle and read “*and to everyone staying at home families with small children social workers caregivers teachers farmers pharmacists nurses supermarket workers cleaning staff delivery workers police doctors paramedics*”.

Conceptual and Perceptual Interpretations

The conceptual interpretations of the advertising's findings about the usage of textual and visual elements to communicate COVID-19 themes showed that while keeping the brand identity recognizable, the used visual metaphor is based on the separation of the letters in the Coca-Cola1 logo (see Appendix image 1) which represents the COVID-19 concept of social distancing. The same ad used paradoxical phrases "Staying apart" and "Staying connected". Similarly, Audi and Volkswagen (see Appendix images 2 and 3) used the same verbal-visual depiction. While McDonald’s (see Appendix image 4) used the same exact visual metaphor but without any accompanying text. To represent the stay home concept and highlight

the fact that the channels provide entertainment for viewers at home during the pandemic, MBC Group (see Appendix image 6) included a home icon around the station logo. To portray personification verbo-pictorially, Chiquita (see Appendix image 5) substituted text for the mascot, which implied that it "stayed home," in the logo. Starbucks used the mask-wearing theme in their advertisement. Although the images did not show a real mask, they used misspelt names and a text-reading challenge to add humor and cognitive engagement. Subway's advertisement (see Appendix image 8) used the mask motif more overtly by adding the mask image to the company's logo. The Coca-Cola 2 (see Appendix image 9) commercial integrated the solidarity message by displaying a dedication line above the logo and a list of employees displayed inside the classic Coca-Cola bottle shape.

The advertisements show a high emotional connection and strengthen solidarity inclination through several visual and textual elements. The separation of the letters in the logo creates a visual metaphor and places it in a relational schema of association with the COVID-19 theme visualising the message of distancing without affecting the recognizability of the brand logo. Furthermore, paradoxical messages that contain opposing ideas like "Staying apart" and "Staying connected" used by Coca-Cola, or "Stay Together" and "Keep Distance" used by Audi intensified the message by upscaling the visual metaphore into a verbo pictorial one that highlights the difference between normal circumstances and the pandemic situation. Another visual metaphor related to the stay home theme was used by the MBC group. The home icon that they added around the channel logo conceptually represents the lockdown stay home theme and it also enforces the fact that these channels are a source of home entertainment during the hard times of the pandemic. The Chiquita advertisement used a more complicated verbo-pictorial approach to the same theme. It removed the mascot from the logo pretending that it stayed home as in the Chiquita advertisement personifying the Mascot and creating more human involvement with customers. Replacement of the Mascot with the text added to the verbo pictorial effect of the personification. McDonald's chose simplicity. The advertisement implicitly uses the visual metaphor of distancing that carries the connotation of a distancing message but has no text to refer to the concept.

On the other hand, Starbucks dramatised the practice adding humour to the skit, hitting on establishing customer brand connections. Using misspelt names to boost customers' confidence in the company and adding a text reading challenge is a well-known practice of the brand but adding the oddly spelt customer name puts the viewer in a challenge that creates more cognitive involvement. Although the Starbucks advertisement uses the wearing mask theme, the visuals of the advertisement do not contain a physical mask unlike that of Subway which places the advertisement on a higher level of utilising the verbo pictorial elements.

In The Coca-Cola 2 advertisement, the dedication line that stands on top of the logo paves the way for the concept of gratitude and solidarity. The second part, which is visually depicted in the shape of a Coca-Cola bottle is a creative typographical visual that gives a sense of involvement of the company with the COVID-19 crisis and solidarity with the humankind by thanking all participants. The visual of the Coca-Cola bottle is commonly associated with happiness and joy; however, the verbo pictorial metaphor add a dimension of involvement with the customers and support to the hard-working social groups.

As for perceptual structural interpretation, the advertisements used graphic features and visual elements to generate clear, and intuitive representations of COVID-19 themes. Fusion is the most common perceptual structural form used in all advertisements. Used alone in advertisements such as the McDonald's advertisement and the MBC channels logo. However, in the Coca-Cola1 advertisements, the element of the COVID-19 themes, and the company logo are in fusion while the text stands separately in juxtaposition. While in the Coca-Cola 2 advertisement, the dedication message stands separately in juxtaposition and the list of workers receiving the thank you message is in fusion with the iconic shape of the Coca-Cola bottle. The same structure is used in the advertisements of Audi, Volkswagen, and Subway where the Covid theme is in fusion with the company logo and a stand-alone text juxtaposing with them. Finally, the Miss Chiquita advertisement used the perceptual format of replacing Miss Chiquita's Mascot with COVID-19 related text in its advertisement. Regarding perceptual visual structure meaning operation all the analyzed advertisements used opposition of what their logo and branding were before and after Covid -19 using different operations as

mentioned before including fusion and replacement. Finally, all the analyzed advertisements combine perceptual and conceptual rhetoric to deliver a stronger impact because they appeal to the viewer's emotions, visual cues, and cognitive impacts (Maes & Schilperoord, 2007). Regarding perceptual structure, the commercials used a variety of visual elements, and the most common structural form was fusion. Coca-Cola 1 positioned the text individually in juxtaposition while fusing the COVID-19 motif with the brand logo. Coca-Cola 2 combined the Coca-Cola bottle image with the list of employees, presenting the dedication message separately. Advertisements from Audi, Volkswagen, and Subway combined the COVID-19 motif with their logos and contrasted them with independent text. In the Chiquita commercial, COVID-related language was utilized in a process of replacement.

When these results are compared with previous studies about media use of COVID themes the following observations can be generated. First, corporate advertisements base their campaigns on concepts of solidarity, mimicking positive behaviour and promoting social responsibility. Sometimes they used humour and dramatisation to create a friendly atmosphere in a fear-based situation. Public health messages and other media reports base their messages on fear and caution often addressing the public as higher authorities and showing aloofness (Gill 2022). Furthermore, Corporate advertisements addressed simple basic precautionary procedures like lockdown and social distancing and avoided controversial themes or misinformation in their multimodal communication as mentioned in Brennen (2021). Finally, corporate advertisements in the present research applied similar multimodal techniques to reinforce their credibility and trustworthiness to those mentioned by Ünal et al. (2021) when they examined persuasive multimodal content that influenced COVID-19 news credibility.

Text-Image Relationships

The way text and image interacted demonstrated a deep comprehension of multimodal communication techniques. Text and image have equal rhetorical weight in some cases, guaranteeing a cooperative and complementary relationship to improve emotional engagement and message clarity. Thus, text added a new dimension to the visual message. The text in the Coca-Cola 1, Coca-Cola 2,

Chiquita, and Volkswagen appeared to have the same weight as the visual components. Coca-Cola 1's text logo was the visual representation of the COVID-19 concept, whilst Coca-Cola 2's image of a bottle was the vehicle for the message of solidarity. The MBC channel logos and the McDonald's commercial lacked any text. Finally, logico-semantic relations analysis showed that text played two basic roles in the visual namely: enhancement and extension.

Regarding status relations Coca-Cola 1, Coca-Cola 2 and Chiquita advertisements text was given an equal status to the visual since the text logo itself was the manifestation of the visual COVID theme in the first advertisement and the Coca-Cola bottle was the visual vessel through which the solidarity message was given. In the advertisements of Audi and Volkswagen and Subway text are complementary to the visuals since it adds explanations and resonates with the COVID-19 theme. McDonald's advertisement and the MBC channels' logos do not include any textual elements.

As for Logic-semantic relations, in Coca-Cola 1, Audi, Volkswagen, Starbucks, Subway, and Chequita advertisements text played the role of enhancement because the text improved the visual mode giving it contextual information about the reason for distancing or wearing a mask. While in the Coca-Cola2 advertisement, the text played the role of extension because it provided new related content to the visual of the brand and Covid-related messages in the form of a list of jobs that deserve gratitude.

Conclusion

According to the analysis, COVID-19 commercials primarily employ a mix of indexical, symbolic, and metaphorical visual components to inspire obedience, urgency, and trust. Meas and Schilperoord's (2007) interpretation heuristics show that conceptually, the images in the analyzed ads frequently used straightforward simple Covid-19-related ideas such as masks and distancing to convey safety precautions. Perceptually, the retention of the original brand composition and colour schemes was essential in keeping the brand identity and assuring the solidarity message. However, the COVID themes were added in a subtle effective way. To graphically convey social separation, safety, and unity. Businesses used fusion of

visual elements such as incorporating masks into a logo or juxtaposition like dividing logo elements and replacement through the removal of recognizable components, like Miss Chiquita from the Chiquita commercial, which was a potent metaphor for remaining at home, demonstrating how absence may have just as much significance as presence.

Complementarity of text and images like that in the Coca-Cola advertisement, paired with the separated logo, is one example of how advertisements employ text and images as equal partners to communicate their messages. Text frequently expresses the underlying meaning of visual cues, projecting concepts like safety as Subway's advertisement or thankfulness as in Coca-Cola's thank you bottle shaped message.

This study highlighted how brands used a time of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen customer loyalty, build brand image, and support social resilience by effectively aligning themselves with shared values through genuine, visually appealing messaging in their corporate advertisements. These commercials' creative use of textual and visual rhetoric offers a model for successful brand communication in the event of future international crises.

Theoretically, this multimodal discourse analysis shows how various interpretation heuristics and text-image interactions work in health communication. It expands Meas & Schilperoord's (2007) model's relevance to public health campaigns beyond commercial advertisement and validates the usefulness of Martinec & Salway's (2005) framework in figuring out how textual and visual aspects function together.

In COVID-19 times companies used their corporate advertisements (CA) to advertise a different dimension. In general, brands employed visual rhetoric and text manipulation to interconnect with their customers and show concern and involvement on the most circulated topic worldwide at that time. These findings have significant implications for linguists involved in corporate advertising and marketing. This study presented the Covid -19 pandemic as a situation that created designs in corporate advertising. These designs can help in creating more successful public health campaigns to ensure that public engagement can be facilitated.

Audience perception analysis is not included in this study; visual rhetoric is analyzed from a semiotic standpoint. Therefore, future studies should include focus groups or surveys to find out how people perceive these advertisements. Further investigation should examine the ways in which local brands used COVID-19 messaging to pinpoint cultural differences in visual rhetoric.

References

Abdulhaleem, R. S. O. (2023). A multimodal analysis of some selected American coronavirus awareness posters. *Occasional Papers*, 83(July).

Adweek. (2020, March 23). *Brands promote social distancing with altered logos, slogans: Chiquita, Mucinex and Coca-Cola have created branded PSAs*. <https://www.adweek.com/creativity/brand-marketing-promotes-social-distancing-covid-19-facts/>

Advertisements of the World. (n.d.). *Keep distance* [Campaign]. Retrieved March 2024, from <https://www.advertisementsoftheworld.com/campaigns/keep-distance>

Aktan, E., & Ozupek, M. N. (2015). Corporate advertising at the age of social media. In N. Ö. Taşkıran & R. Yılmaz (Eds.), *Handbook of research on effective advertising strategies in the social media age* (pp. 197–212). IGI Global.

Argenti, P. A., & Forman, J. (2002). *The power of corporate communication*. McGraw-Hill.

Audi. (n.d.). *Why does the Audi logo have four rings?* [Company profile]. Retrieved August 30, 2024, from <https://www.audi.com/en/company/profile/history/history-of-the-logo.html>

Barroso, C., & García, F. (2015). The rhetorical construction of corporate logos. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad*, 27(2), 289–309. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARIS.2015.v27.n2.44667

Bateman, J. A. (2014). *Text and image: A critical introduction to the visual-verbal divide*. Routledge.

Belch, G., & Belch, M. (2015). *Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Journal of Scientific Research in Arts
(Language & Literature) volume 26 issue 7(2025)

Brennen, B. S. (2021). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Routledge.

Chiquita Brands International. (2014, March 10). *The Chiquita story*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20140310203525/http://www.chiquita.com/Our-Company/The-Chiquita-Story.aspx>

Coca-Cola. (2020, March 23). *Coca-Cola advertisement* [Facebook post]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/CocaCola/posts/44a4bxedxPwGQtSnEzGzdejnCdtrDJqkJ6uqWwGbXmdx5zrjGdHivmr9pyd7x8rVQMgumwGPCfuwseieCg8tuN5jNNeMJPU>

Economic Times. (2020, June 2). Brands tweak logos to wear a mask for awareness around COVID-19. *ETBrandEquity*. <https://brandequity.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/marketing/brands-tweak-logos-to-wear-a-mask-for-awareness-around-Covid-19-19/76149206>

El-Sayed, Y. M. (2018). Text-image relations in print advertisement: A multimodal discourse analysis. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 9(1), 543.

Forceville, C. (1996). *Pictorial metaphor in advertising* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203064252>

Gill, K. A. (2022). Conformity through fear: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of COVID-19 information advertisements. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 14(1), 22–44.

Harley, A. (2020, August 2). *Proximity principle in visual design*. Retrieved from <https://www.example.com>

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Maes, A., & Schilperoord, J. (2007). Classifying visual rhetoric: Conceptual and structural heuristics. In E. F. McQuarrie & B. J. Phillips (Eds.), *Go figure! New directions in advertising rhetoric* (pp. 67–78). M. E. Sharpe.

MBC Group. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved August 28, 2024, from <https://www.mbc.net/about-us>

Martinec, R., & Salway, A. (2005). A system for image–text relations in new (and old) media. *Visual Communication*, 4(3), 337–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357205055928>

Phillips, B. J., & McQuarrie, E. F. (2004). Beyond visual metaphor: A new typology of visual rhetoric in advertising. *Marketing Theory*, 4(1–2), 113–136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593104044089>

Schilperoord, J., Maes, A., & Ferdinandusse, H. (2009). Perceptual and conceptual visual rhetoric: The case of symmetric object alignment. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 24(3), 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926480903028110>

Shoenberger, H., Kim, E. (Anna), & Sun, Y. (2021). Advertising during COVID-19: Exploring Perceived Brand Message Authenticity and Potential Psychological Reactance. *Journal of Advertising*, 50(3), 253–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1927914>

Ünal, S., Erciş, A., & Keser, E. (2011). Attitudes towards mobile advertising – A research to determine the differences between the attitudes of youth and adults. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 361–377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.067>

Valinsky, J. (2020, March 26). Social distancing: Brand logos get a makeover amid coronaviruses. *CNN Business*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/26/business/social-distancing-brand-logos-coronavirus/index.html>

Van Enschoot, R., Spooren, W., van den Bosch, A., Burgers, C., Degand, L., Evers-Vermeul, J., Kunneman, F., Liebrecht, C., Linders, Y., & Maes, A. (2024). Taming our wild data: On intercoder reliability in discourse research. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.51751/dujal16248>

Van Weelden, L., Maes, A., & Schilperoord, J. (2018). How visual form affects metaphoric conceptualization: The role of shape similarity. In G. J. Steen (Ed.), *Visual metaphor: Structure and process* (pp. 147–162). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/celcr.18.06van>

Walansky, A. (2020, March 24). McDonald's changes golden arches logo amid coronavirus outbreaks. *Today*. <https://www.today.com/food/mcdonald-s-changes-golden-arches-logo-amid-coronavirus-outbreak-t176653>

Wang, R. (2023). Multimodal analysis of image-text relations in the translation of news cartoons in China Daily. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(8), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.54691/fhss.v3i8.5534>

Appendix



Image 1 Coca-Cola1 (Valinsky,2020)

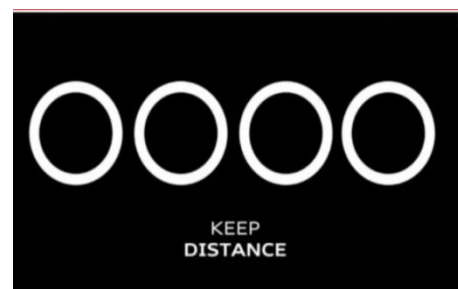


Image 2 Audi (Advertisements of the World retrieved, 2024)



Image 3 Volks Wagon (Valinsky, 2020)



Image 4 Mc Donald's (Walansky, 2020)



Original



COVID-19 version

Image 5 Chiquita Brands International (Adweek, 2020)

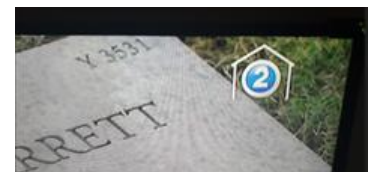
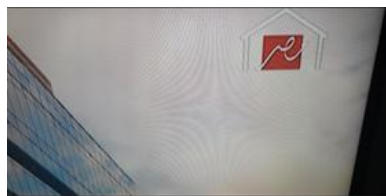
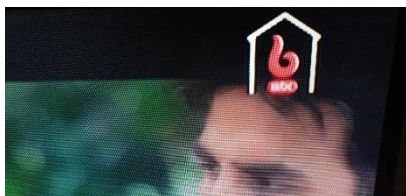


Image 6 MBC screen logos (captured by the researcher from home TV (4th April 2020))



Image 7 Subway: Economic Times. (2020)



Image 8 Starbucks UK official Facebook page (2020)



Image 9 Coca-Cola official Facebook page (2020)