**TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR ADVERTISING RHETORICAL ANALYSIS**

*You may want to use these sources for tips on how to approach the project.*

*You may also want to cite some of them in your essay.*

**Breaking Down an Image from Writing Commons:** [**http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/visual-literacy/breaking-down-an-image**](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/visual-literacy/breaking-down-an-image)

**Analysing Ads: Gender** [**http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/visual-literacy/ad-analysis/436-analyzing-ads-gender**](http://writingcommons.org/open-text/information-literacy/visual-literacy/ad-analysis/436-analyzing-ads-gender)

**Analysing an Advertisement from The Center for Media Literacy:** [**http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/how-analyze-advertisement**](http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/how-analyze-advertisement)

**The Rhetoric of Advertising from College Board:** [**http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers\_corner/32181.html**](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers_corner/32181.html)

**(From University of Washington Visual Analysis Document)**

**Content analysis**

* What do you see?
* What is the image about?
* Are there people in the image? What are they doing? How are they presented?
* Can the image be looked at different ways?
* How effective is the image as a visual message?

**Visual analysis**

* How is the image composed? What is in the background, and what is in the foreground?
* What are the most important visual elements in the image? How can you tell?
* How is color used?
* Can the image be looked at different ways?
* What meanings are conveyed by design choices?

**Contextual information**

* What information accompanies the image?
* Does the text change how you see the image? How?
* Is the textual information intended to be factual and inform, or is it intended to influence what and how you see?
* What kind of context does the information provide? Does it answer the questions Where, How, Why, and For whom was the image made?

From Purdue Owl:

**Visual Rhetoric: Analyzing Visual Documents**

**Summary:**

This resource covers how to write a rhetorical analysis essay of primarily visual texts with a focus on demonstrating the author’s understanding of the rhetorical situation and design principles.

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**Definition and Goals of Visual/Rhetorical Analysis**

**Definition**

A visual document communicates primarily through images or the interaction of image and text. Just as writers choose their words and organize their thoughts based on any number of rhetorical considerations, the author of such visual documents thinks no differently. Whether assembling an advertisement, laying out a pamphlet, taking a photograph, or marking up a website, designers take great care to ensure that their productions are visually appealing and rhetorically effective.

**Goal**

The goal of any rhetorical analysis is to demonstrate your understanding of how the piece communicates its messages and meanings. One way of looking at this process is that you are breaking the piece down into parts. By understanding how the different parts work, you can offer insights as to the overall persuasive strategies of the piece. Often you are not looking to place a value judgment on the piece, and if there is an implicit or implied argument you may not be ultimately taking a side.

It’s worth asking then: is rhetorical analysis of visual documents any different than this basic description? Yes and no. Sometimes you will encounter an interplay of words and images, which may complicate the number of rhetorical devices in play. Additionally, traditional schooling has emphasized analysis of certain texts for a long time. Many of us are not so accustomed to giving visual documents the same kind of rigorous attention.

We now live in such a visually-dominated culture, that it is possible you have already internalized many of the techniques involved with visual communication (for example, every time you justify the text of your document or use standard margins, you are technically using visual rhetoric).

That said, writing a rhetorical analysis is often a process of merely finding the language to communicate this knowledge. Other times you may find that looking at a document from a rhetorical design perspective will allow you to view it in new and interesting ways.

Like you would in a book report or poetry analysis, you are offering your “reading” of the visual document and should seek to be clear, concise, and informative. Do not only give a re-telling of what the images look like (this would be the equivalent of stopping at plot summary if you were analyzing a novel). Offer your examples, explain the rhetorical strategies at work, and keep your focus on how the document communicates visually.