

Visual rhetoric in advertising of China's new tea beverage industry, using HEYTEA as an example

Yufei Ye*

School of Literature, Communication University of China, Beijing, 100020, China

Abstract. In recent years, China's tea market has undergone immense transformations, giving rise to a diverse range of novel products collectively known as new tea beverages. This market trend has led to intense competition, compelling brands to employ innovative advertising strategies to captivate consumers. This study focuses on the well-known Chinese new tea beverage brand "HEYTEA" as a case study. It employs the theoretical framework of visual rhetoric to analyze visual rhetoric in new tea beverage advertisements from two dimensions: visual image and rhetorical techniques. In terms of visual image, advertisements effectively convey messages through a rich array of visual elements, attracting target audiences and enhancing their overall impact. On the other hand, within the domain of linguistic visual rhetoric, advertising copy emphasizes the use of words, sentence structures, and rhetorical devices to accentuate product features, thereby stimulating consumers' sensory experiences. The objective of this research is to explore the value of visual rhetoric in new tea beverage advertising.

1. Introduction

Since 2010, with the growth in consumer demand for diversified beverages and changes in consumption patterns, China's tea industry consumption market has gradually witnessed the emergence of a new type of tea beverage product distinct from traditional teas and bottled ready-to-drink teas. These products have broken through the boundaries of traditional tea production and consumption, offering features such as healthy ingredients, innovative designs, and on-site preparation. They meet the needs of the younger generation of consumers in the new era, leading to rapid industry development [1].

New tea beverage advertisements are a derivative form of advertising designed to cater to the new tea beverage market, with their primary function remaining as marketing. In the common case, consumers are often influenced by advertising marketing and no longer rely solely on product quality as their purchase criterion; they also consider the overall discourse of the advertisements [2]. Therefore, in order to stand out in a highly competitive market, various brands have begun actively establishing advertising marketing channels to attract potential consumers and enhance brand loyalty.

Furthermore, according to the "2022 China Catering Gourmet Awards" list released by the Chinese dining data research and evaluation organization New Catering Big Data (NCBD), HEYTEA ranks first as the "Most Popular New Tea Beverage Brand [3]". Therefore, this paper will take HEYTEA as an example and explore how the advertising image of such widely recognized

brands is constructed, using the framework of visual rhetoric theory.

1.1 Vision

Vision is a fundamental human capacity for understanding the world. In the era of new media, it has become the primary way people gather information. Visual information, in this context, is composed of various visual symbols, including lines, light, colors, and other elements. These symbols serve as a medium for conveying diverse types of information [4].

1.2 Rhetoric

Rhetoric originally referred to the use of language techniques, with its research primarily focused on language or textual symbols in the past. Nowadays, research on rhetoric has become increasingly comprehensive and profound, finding applications across various industries. Within the field of advertising, rhetoric provides a framework for advertising strategies [5]. In recent years, visual communication based on new media has rapidly evolved, and the concept of "reading images" has become a widespread cultural pursuit. People are more inclined to accept information predominantly conveyed through visual symbols, which play a significant role in communication. Presently, the practice of conveying messages primarily through visual elements, supplemented by language, text, sound, and other symbols, is referred to as visual rhetoric [6]. Choosing appropriate symbols and modes of expression for conveying meaning is crucial in effectively

*Corresponding author's mail: yufei_ye@cuc.edu.cn

communicating the desired message from advertisers to consumers. The application of visual rhetorical methods has increasingly come to the forefront of this process. Enhancing advertising's communicative effectiveness through the utilization of visual symbols poses a critical question that necessitates contemplation within marketing strategies.

HEYTEA's digital advertisements on various new media platforms effectively exemplify the techniques of visual rhetoric. They intricately incorporate visual images based on seasonal ingredients, holidays, and trending topics, coupled with a diverse array of visual and linguistic rhetorical methods. This enriches the expressiveness of the advertisements, simultaneously serving as a reflection of the advertiser's marketing intentions. These efforts effectively implant marketing content into the consumer's psyche.

2. Visual images in HEYTEA's advertisements

Advertisements encompass a variety of information. Yet from the perspective of visual symbols, they primarily revolve around tangible human figures, objects, and relatively abstract brand images. Within this context, human figures featured in advertisements can be categorized into advertisers themselves (such as product developers or manufacturers) and individuals external to the advertisers (such as product endorsers or consumers). Similarly, objects within advertisements can be classified into products (including logos and manufacturing processes) and supplementary items employed in product promotion.

HEYTEA's advertisements predominantly start with object imagery, positioning the promoted beverages as the visual focal point. These advertisements incorporate numerous supplementary elements, utilizing corresponding content formats to effectively convey information to the target or potential audience, achieving precision in their promotional impact. Notably, the design of supplementary object imagery closely aligns with popular topics, such as Chinese culture or cyberpunk, seamlessly blending elements of current trends with promotional content to cater to the aesthetic preferences of the consumer base. This strategy enhances the "memorability" of the advertisements, facilitating efficient delivery and dissemination of the intended message.

3. Image vision rhetoric

As mentioned earlier, HEYTEA's advertisements primarily focus on object imagery. Within the process of constructing advertising imagery through visual rhetoric, the image of the promoted beverages serves a "presentation" function. It either conveys partial information about the product's producer or service provider or highlights the outstanding aspects of the product or service [6]. On the other hand, auxiliary object imagery beyond the product serves a "symbolic" function, which involves the "transfer of characteristics

from one object to another." From a semiotic perspective, these "presentation" and "symbolic" functions correspond to the visual rhetorical methods of "metaphor" and "metonymy," respectively.

Metaphor and metonymy are two fundamental rhetorical devices characterized by the use of one thing to represent or imagine another [7]. Whether metaphor or metonymy, they are not limited to external ornamentation or useful patterns; they are fundamental forms of perceiving the surrounding environment. For example, humans rely on visual perception as an essential guiding form during exploration and expression. In such cases, visual metaphor and visual metonymy may come into play [8]. Visual metaphor involves using another thing to understand and experience what is currently captured visually [9]. Visual metonymy, on the other hand, is essentially about image reference, emphasizing the use of a visual element to refer to another thing associated with it [10].

Taking a HEYTEA advertisement released during the Spring Festival as an example, the visual symbol of the "福 (Good Fortune)" character sticker on the right employs visual metonymy to metaphorically represent the Chinese New Year, aligning with the timing of the advertisement (Spring Festival). The prominent text "Spring Festival Limited Edition" on the left reinforces the information that the beverage is available for a limited time during the Spring Festival. At the top, the peeled longan, used as the primary visual symbol, serves as a metonym for fresh ingredients. The central image of the "Longan Bubble Tea" product within the advertisement visually demonstrates the use of high-quality ingredients and presents an enticing appearance.

4. Language vision rhetoric

Language-based visual rhetoric refers to rhetorical practices that employ language and textual symbols as a means of achieving optimal visual effects [11]. Various rhetorical techniques, including word choice, sentence structure, and figures of speech, can be employed to create vivid rhetorical effects. Roland Barthes coined the term "anchorage" in *Rhétorique de l'image* (1964) to describe the use of text within images, where textual elements serve to "anchor" or fix relevant meanings to the visuals. In HEYTEA advertisements, copywriting often effectively amplifies the product's aroma, taste, flavor, and other characteristics through rhetoric, establishing a strong correspondence between images and text. This correspondence contributes to the dissemination of persuasive messages aimed at stimulating consumer desire among the advertising audience. In the following sections, the analysis of visual rhetoric within copywriting is the key point, focusing on aspects such as word choice and grammar.

4.1 Various types of words

4.1.1 Internet slang and creative language

Internet slang and creative language play a significant role in HEYTEA's advertising copy, particularly through the use of homophonic transcriptions and metaphorical associations. For instance:

"8137, use HEYTEA to massage away your troubles!" (8137, 用喜茶给眉头做个马杀鸡!)

In this first advertising slogan, numerical homophones are employed. "8137" phonetically resembles "don't be disheartened" in Chinese, and "马杀鸡" (mǎ shā jī) creatively translates to "massage," drawing a humorous and playful connection, making it lively and engaging.

"As time flies by, I 'zǐ' care about you." (任时光匆匆, 我紫在乎你。)

The second sentence utilizes Chinese characters' homophonic qualities, where "紫" (zǐ) phonetically resembles "只" (zhǐ), cleverly incorporating the beverage name into the advertisement. This approach effectively leverages color-related words to evoke visual image, making the ad vivid and enhancing its communicative impact.

"Three-in-one, a brilliant plan to extinguish the heat." (三招合一, 灭火妙计成。)

In this case, "灭火" (miè huǒ), which translates to "extinguishing the fire," metaphorically suggests that the beverage's refreshing quality can relieve the summer heat. HEYTEA's target audience primarily consists of intellectually vibrant and imaginative young individuals. The use of metaphorical and associative language helps capture the attention of a younger demographic, thereby achieving the goal of promoting the product.

4.1.2 Frequently employing imagery-rich vocabulary

For instance:

"Natural peach aroma, sweet and enticing, with a soft and velvety texture." (自然桃香, 清甜诱人, 口感软糯。)

"Crackling and bursting, exploding with succulence." (噼里啪啦, 爆炸多肉。)

Each word corresponds to a psychological auditory or visual image, as well as related experiences, capable of evoking various psychological sensations [11]. For example, terms like "清甜" (qīng tián - sweet and clear), "软糯" (ruǎn nuò - soft and glutinous), and "噼里啪啦" (pī lǐ pā là - crackling and bursting) in the examples respectively serve to trigger olfactory, gustatory, and auditory perceptions. When the audience comprehends these words, they naturally draw upon their existing experiences to stimulate psychological sensations.

HEYTEA's advertisements are predominantly disseminated on self-media platforms, and in order to facilitate online transmission and communication, they

employ a variety of creative and diverse rhetorical techniques in their language.

4.2 Flexible syntax

4.2.1 Variation in sentence structures and tones

There is a diversity of sentence structures and tones in HEYTEA's advertisements. For instance:

"How much mango? So refreshing and generous, busy relieving your greasiness." (有多芒? 又清爽, 又多料, 忙着解腻。)

"It is SUPER fragrant!" (嘎嘎香!)

Here, the advertisement employs a variety of sentence structures, including affirmative and negative sentences, declarative and interrogative sentences, and exclamatory sentences, among others, to create a complex and engaging narrative [12]. This approach allows for more effective communication in the organization of advertising discourse.

4.2.2 Reconfiguration of sentence length and organization

The advertisements by HEYTEA exhibit a combination of sentence structures, both in terms of sentence length and organization. For instance:

"Red apricots weigh down the branches, half-ripe and yellow; next door, waiting for the season. Golden peaches send fragrant breezes in waves, hanging on branches, facing each other." (红杏压枝黄半熟, 邻墙, 候时。金桃送风几阵香, 挂枝, 相望。)

At a micro level, these sentences interweave structured and fragmented elements, creating a rhythmic and engaging reading experience [13]. However, when considered as a whole, the paragraph maintains consistent sentence structures, such as the contrasting "red apricots" (红杏) and "golden peaches" (金桃) and the parallelism between "next door" (邻墙) and "hanging on branches" (挂枝) in Chinese. HEYTEA's advertising copy often combines both structured and fragmented sentences, achieving a harmonious synergy that enhances the overall aesthetic appeal.

"Switching from addition to subtraction, simplifying complexity, returning to the original intention, confronting the true essence of cherries, one's mindset also finds tranquility. 'Full Bottle Cherry' arises from this." (换加法为减法, 化繁为简, 回归初心, 直面车厘子本味, 心态也随之放平, "满瓶车厘肉" 便由此而来。)

"No more words, just more flesh." (没别的, 就多肉。)

These examples illustrate different visual effects conveyed by HEYTEA's advertising slogans for the same product. In terms of sentence structure, longer sentences offer richer and more intricate descriptions. Using longer sentences in advertising can effectively convey the brand's philosophy. Conversely, shorter sentences feature simple structures, fewer words, and

convey less information. Advertising needs to showcase the most valuable information within limited space, and the use of short sentences demonstrates strong "conciseness."

4.3 A variety of rhetoric devices

4.3.1 Depiction: Enhancing the Sensory Appeal of the Product

"The subtle aroma of red oil peaches combines with the sweet and sour freshness of hibiscus plums, enveloped in the delicate fragrance of jasmine flowers, offering a layered experience of crispness, freshness, and sweetness."(淡淡的红油桃香气与芙蓉李的酸甜沁爽, 包裹住清雅茉莉花香, 脆、鲜、甜层层递进。)

Depiction is a rhetorical device used to vividly describe the sensory qualities of objects, such as their colors, smells, and more. It allows for the concrete and sensory portrayal of objective phenomena [12]. In the food industry's advertising, marketing relies solely on ad copy, leaving the audience unable to directly experience the taste, aroma, and appearance of the food. Language-based visual rhetoric can be interchanged with other sensory rhetoric to create various sensory impressions. In the process of rhetoric, people often utilize connections between the senses to reproduce sensory experiences through visual images. Therefore, in addition to using images, combining vivid depictions allows consumers to more directly assess whether a product is worth purchasing. In the example sentence, the depiction of peaches, plums, and floral tea enhances the descriptive imagery, making it vivid and engaging.

4.3.2 Transference: Infusing Novelty into the Product

"The subtle sweetness, a hint of bitterness, and assertive sourness blend seamlessly, creating a harmonious fusion."

Transference, consciously applying words applicable to one thing to describe another, comes in various forms. One common form is transferring emotions by using words describing human emotions to characterize other objects [13]. In the example sentence, "assertive," originally describing a person's personality, is used to emphasize the novel experience brought about by the sour taste, connecting the sensory phenomenon with a psychological sensation. HEYTEA incorporates the concept of 'inspiration' into its marketing, aiming to provide consumers with a sense of novelty. By utilizing transference, it transforms mundane descriptions, amalgamating connections between objects, thereby stimulating associations and generating fresh experiences.

5.The Impact of Visual Rhetoric on Advertising Effectiveness

Firstly, visual rhetoric endows advertisements with striking visual appeal. Within the context of new tea beverage advertising, visual rhetoric stands out due to its uniqueness and creativity, guiding the audience's gaze towards the content of the ad. By employing vivid images, rich colors, engaging compositions, and other elements, advertisers can capture the visual attention of the audience, making them more inclined to delve deeper into the information conveyed by the advertisement.

Secondly, visual rhetoric exerts a positive influence on the persuasiveness of advertisements. Advertising is an art of persuasion, and to some extent, more persuasive advertisements stimulate greater consumer motivation. Vision is the subjective sensation obtained through the encoding, processing, and analysis of external environmental stimuli by the visual system. It is estimated that over 80% of external information is acquired through vision. In contemporary culture, high levels of visuality highlight the significance of visibility and visual pleasure, making visual factors a central element of modern culture and a crucial means of creating, representing, and conveying meaning [14]. Consequently, new tea beverage brands like HEYTEA, often employ unique visual imagery and visual rhetorical elements to trigger emotional responses in the audience and arouse their interest, thereby embedding the persuasive function of the advertisement deep within the audience's emotional cognition.

Most importantly, visual rhetoric involves the skillful selection and arrangement of various visual components used in communication, aiming to maximize the effectiveness of advertising [15]. By adeptly employing diverse visual rhetorical strategies, advertisements can vividly showcase the features, advantages, and purposes of products. Furthermore, visual rhetoric allows for a more expressive conveyance of the emotions and meanings contained within an advertisement. Building upon this, brands can not only elicit emotional responses and resonate with the audience through visual elements but also, to a certain extent, mask the persuasive nature of the advertisement, enhancing its entertainment value [16].

Summarizing the analysis of HEYTEA's advertisements, it becomes evident that advertisers actively utilize visual rhetorical techniques to evoke sensory experiences of new tea beverages while stimulating consumers' imaginative faculties. Visual rhetoric enriches the visual image and conveys meanings in new tea beverage advertisements, simultaneously enhancing the effectiveness of visual elements and textual content. This not only augments the visual appeal and memorability of the advertisements but also strengthens the effectiveness of conveying information. By eliciting sensory experiences and emotional resonance in the audience, visual rhetorical methods imbue advertisements with deeper significance, establishing a potent visual and emotional connection for the brand.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals that potential consumers, when purchasing new tea beverages, take into consideration not only product quality but also the overall discourse of advertisements. Consequently, the successful marketing of new tea beverage advertisements relies not only on the product itself but also significantly on the use of visual rhetoric in advertisements. Various forms of visual rhetorical methods play an indispensable role in constructing the visual image of advertisements.

Moreover, this study suggests that as competition intensifies in the new tea beverage market, brands should promptly grasp and align with the characteristics and styles of outstanding brand advertisements within the industry. This will help maintain the freshness and distinctiveness of advertising marketing. Such an approach contributes to fostering the diversified development of the new tea beverage advertising market, catering to the needs of various consumer groups, and enhancing brand market share.

In conclusion, the success of new tea beverage advertising relies heavily on the application of visual rhetoric, offering brand advertisements opportunities for innovation and differentiation. In the future, researchers can delve further into the effectiveness of various types of visual rhetorical methods in advertising and explore how to better meet the needs of the audience, thereby promoting further development in new tea beverage brand advertising marketing.

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