HANDBOOK OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION (2ND EDITION) EDITED BY SHEREE JOSEPHSON, JAMES D. KELLY, AND KEN SMITH. NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2020. 591PP. ISBN: 9781138590311

BOOK REVIEW

Manimegalai Ambikapathy[1], Maithreyi Subramaniam[2], Kamarul Shah Bin Bakar[3] & Yeap Thiam Hoong[4]
[1]Universiti Teknologi MARA,UiTM
[2,3,4]Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology
(manimegalai@uitm.edu.my, maithreyi@tarc.edu.my, kamarulshah@tarc.edu.my, yeapth@tarc.edu.my)

Sheree Josephson, James D. Kelly, and Ken Smith edited the Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media (2020), the second edition. This book was published by Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group) in New York, United States of America. There are 591 pages with 13 major theories, namely Perception Theory (Theory I), Visual Cognition (Theory II), Aesthetics (Theory III), Visual Rhetoric (IV), Visual Semiotics (Theory V), Cultural Studies (Theory VI), Visual Ethnography (Theory VII), Visual Narrative (Theory VIII), Applied Media Aesthetics (Theory IX), Digital Media (Theory X), Visual Intertextuality (Theory XI), Visual Ethics (Theory XII) and Visual Literacy (Theory XIII) are discussed in this book. The first edition of this book was released in 2004. This Handbook of Visual Communication reviews the key theoretical areas and research methods of visual communication. This volume brings together important and influential work in the discipline, with chapters attributed by many of the most well-known and highly regarded researchers in visual communication. The second edition of this already-classic text has been totally modified to reflect the evolution of communication over the last 15 years and the prevalence of visual communication in our modern mediated lifestyle. Leading experts describe 13 major visual communication theories in their fields: perception, cognition, aesthetics, visual rhetoric, semiotics, cultural studies, ethnography, narrative, media aesthetics, digital media, intertextuality, ethics, and visual literacy. Each chapter of this book covers a theory followed by an exemplar study or two in the relevant field, displaying the different methods used in visual communication research and the research strategies appropriate to particular media. The Handbook of Visual Communication is a theoretical and methodological handbook for visual communication researchers and a collection of most theoretical foundations required to comprehend visual communication. This book is an essential reading material for scholars, investigators and students in visual communication because it may impact many other fields like advertising, persuasion, and media studies. This book is especially useful for media practitioners who

want to comprehend the visual aspects of how viewers use media to make good use of each medium.

The first chapter wrote by *Ann Marie Barry* was about perception theory. "Perception theory" can be defined as the application of intellectual neuroscience principles to comprehend the concept of visual communication, including the investigation of how the human brain derives meaning from what it sees, the influence of what it sees on visual personality and culture, and the identification of strategies for achieving desired results. Perception theory able to identify the importance of showing emotion for a particular reason, the nature of feelings especially found from unconsciousness of the brain processing, and the influence of images to stimulate imitative behavior, reinforce feelings, and define culture. And for visual communication is a multidimensional subject that discovers how information from the outside world is transmitted to people through the sense of sight and brain. Information received comes through the eyes, and a processing process from the brain system is known as "Neuroscience". Neuroscience involves the interaction of neurons to understand how vision functions. Research showed that visuals may be processed and form a desired action without passing through the consciousness level. Also, the findings give researchers a rich idea about how society reacts to what they watch based on the brain's learning and memory systems from exposure to visuals. Pattern formation happens when the brain forms attitudes and ideas neurologically, and these repeated patterns formulate a standard template to map reality and expect the future. As a result, "perception theory," also referred to as the application of cognitive neuroscience ideas to visual communication, explains how the brain decodes what it sees to derive a preferred understanding of objects, identify relationships between variables or elements, and examine causes and effects on how things function. In exposing further to perception theory, In the procedure of using perception theory, light is transformed into meaning built up in the brain into recognisable patterns. The eye— triggered by the brain's attention system—continually and automatically finds specific information that can inform the mental image. A case study, *"Using Eye Tracking to See How Children Read Interactive Storybooks with Supplemental or Incidental Digital Features"* by Stacey Tyler and Sheree Josephson, was discussed in the second part of this chapter.

Visual cognition theory from chapter two, written by *Maria Elizabeth Grabe.* The writer reported that using eye or sight sense as the main directional tool for human beings is shown in daily cognitive routines. This chapter suggested three techniques in which the human brain comprehend images such as through react as a centre for processing visuals, visuals are transferred faster than verbal stimuli and verbal information is reacted during conditions of audio-visual non-redundancy. These three markers of visual cognition are key to building connections for memory formation and to shapes the basis of consciousness. Visual pallium is the basis for performing daily tasks such as identifying shapes and exposure to environmental changes and some other human stimuli reactions. The visual pallium also facilitates social behaviour by recognising the faces of friends, social groups, or family members identity. This chapter also discussed visuals and comprehension. Images and visual design in information play an important role in directing the media system because visual cognition and knowledge has a great potential for understanding the human situation using mental capacity combining visual, aural, verbal, and textual

elements. According to Information processing theories, comprehension and memory, as two different cognitive processes are used for integrating new information into meaningful knowledge, measurement of knowledge has to follow the shift to visual comprehension to understand how visuals function in the lives of human beings. *Tracy M. Rutledge* used this theory to discuss in *"Visual-Verbal Redundancy and College Choice: Does the level of Redundancy in Student Recruitment Advertisements Affect High School Students' Decision-Making Process?"* in the subsection of this chapter.

To make sense of the aesthetic experience in the 21st century, it is inadequate to look at aesthetics as an outlying field of study. This third chapter, written by Suzanne Mooney, found it necessary to understand aesthetics in the broader context of a changing and technologically progressive society. German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten coined the term "aesthetic" at the end of the 18th century. The experience of an art object is often an arbitrated experience, with art itself taking such a very large form to make any attempts to define art and its experience appear ineffective. However, a limited communicative role is fulfilled by aesthetic engagement, particularly in visual arts. This chapter aims to make sense of aesthetics in terms of contemporary heritage and how people currently perceive the visual. This chapter examines and assesses the aesthetic experience and its communicative role, discusses approaches to formulating aesthetic experiences in art, and considers the effects of technology on aesthetic experience. This involves examining the viewer experience beyond representational imagery or semiotics within the field of visual arts. The first step is to provide a concise overview of the most important philosophical theories that have facilitated academic debates on aesthetics. Then, the elements combined to create images are unfolded. In the end, the discussion of the aesthetic experience in contemporary art and culture in the context of a post-digital age requires a journey through the aesthetic experience in relation to art for both the audience and the maker toward possibilities for future developments in visual aesthetics. Following this chapter's subsection, *Kim Komenich* explored the aesthetics theory in a research paper entitled *"Applying Aesthetic Principles to Tell Stories through Photojournalism: Taking a Look Back at My Memorable Images"*.

Tracey Owens Patton wrote this book's fourth chapter, which discussed visual rhetoric in terms of theory, method, and application in the modern world. The study of visual rhetoric is crucial for communication students who want to understand the dynamics of public persuasion. The theory employs two types of analysis: the inductive approach, a type of reasoning and argument that moves from a specific situation to a general assumption, and the deductive approach, a type of reasoning and argument that moves from a specific situation to a general assumption. Sonja K. Foss proposed that three characteristics are involved in visual rhetoric: (i) symbolic interaction, (ii) human intervention, and (iii) the presence of an audience. Visual rhetoric is thought to be the actual image rhetors generate when using visual symbols for communication. In contrast, interpreting a visual in terms of meaning provides a rhetorical perspective on visual imagery that serves as a critical-analytical tool. The sign system entails analysis using a language that includes signifier (an idea associated with a word, image, or photo), signified (a word that makes you think of a visual image every time you see or read it), and sign (the union between the signified and signified). There are three characteristics involved in visual rhetoric as a method namely (i) nature of the image, (ii) function of the image, (iii)

evaluation of the image in terms of its methodological framing. The first character, the nature of the image, discusses concepts, ideas, themes, and illusions. The second character, the function of the image, refers to how the image works for its viewer. Finally, the evaluation of the image refers to analysing or assessing visuals to draw conclusions. A case study, *"Trump as Global Spectacle: The Visual Rhetoric of Magazine Covers"* were also discussed by *Janis Teruggi Page* after visual rhetoric theory.

The fifth chapter, written by Dennis Dunleavy, is to help students, educators, and researchers understand how visual semiotics can be used as a theory and as a method for analysing and interpreting messages found within sign systems. The visual semiotics is described as a study of signs, systems and communication. It includes the study of how people formulate and interpret the meanings of various visual messages integrated in sign systems such as graphics, images, body language, and text. Signs are divided into trichotomies; firstly, a sign in itself is a mere quality, an actual existent or a general law; secondly, the relationship of a sign to its object has some character in itself or some existential relation to the object or relationship to its interpretant, and lastly, the interpretant represents it as a sign of possibility, fact or reason.

The fundamental unit of visual semiotics is the sign, as a spoken or written word drawn from a figure or a material object unified within the mind with a specific cultural concept. Furthermore, past research using visual semiotics highlights how cultural values are instilled through the replication, recall, dissemination, and acculturation of a socially constructed reality rooted within sign systems. In order to understand visual semiotics through a Peircean filter, one should acknowledge how this theory of signs are grounded within the human consciousness and how humans can experience the same thing such as a gesture, an object, an image or even a word— independently as well as commonly. Semiotics, a collection of theories, aims to investigate the connection between perceptual mechanisms and the creation of mental representations through explaining a sign system. It goes beyond a method for interpreting visual cues. Two case studies were examined using visual semiotics by *Shaima Elbardawil* and *Kathleen M. Ryan,* respectively: *"The Myth of the American Landscape: Photography and the Semiotics of Nature"* and *"Jordanian Banknote Design: A Social Semiotic Analysis."*

Cultural studies theory offered in chapter six by *Victoria O'Donnell* is fundamental to cultural studies as the meaning remains in the capacity of a symbol, visual or verbal, to denote some meaning and understanding in the viewer's mind. Cultural studies theory concentrates on the production and consumption of meaning as meaning is a main idea in cultural studies, and it shows the relationship between the viewer and what is viewed. Cultural studies theorists exposed that a variety of meanings can be made from a single symbol or representation because viewers observe and interpret images differently and respectively based on their own cultural experiences. Meaning is crucial to cultural studies because the meaning remains in the power of a symbol to denote something in the viewer's mind. This chapter focused on the visual image by highlighting cultural theoretical interests with image, representation, and viewer response, and this image relates to power relations. Power relations is defined as someone who is leading or has power to voice out, and power is linked to control and dominance of ideology. "Ideology" is a theoretical framework that includes a set of beliefs, values, behaviours, and perceptions that society agrees upon. "Hegemony" is the power or control one group holds over another. Cultural hegemony

happens when an element of meaning dominates and manipulates others, as explained in this chapter. In exposing the hegemony concept, the author uses Hall's "Articulation" theory. This theory describes how receivers comprehend and denote a produced message to create unity by joining separated parts of meaning. This chapter also suggested that cultural studies analysts value all members of a culture to express their own voices and images through inclusions and exclusions elements, hierarchies, power relations, and ways of interacting in daily lives. At the end of this chapter, *Julianne Friesen Atwood* and *Cindy Price Schultz* explored this theory in *"Altering the Body/Altering Communication: Using Cultural Studies Theory to Examine Interactions Related to Body Modification"*.

Matthew Durington and *Samuel Gerald Collins* wrote this book's seventh chapter and discussed visual ethnography in terms of its methodological, ethical and theoretical practices that make ethnography conducted by a group of anthropologists through various media platforms. Visual ethnography is theoretically based on participatory and applied efforts, and it recognises the potential of visual mediums to express a different epistemology than text-based ethnography. Ethnographers' analysis of various visual media and forms is also included in visual ethnography. Visual ethnographers use visual technologies made possible by the internet and social media platforms to work with and analyse cultures in the twenty-first century.

The authors also discussed visual ethnography from various social media, such as networked anthropology, multimodal anthropology, letters, blogs, social media, apps, games and design anthropology by giving examples for each aspect. Although the process and form of producing visual ethnography are still associated mainly with ethnographic film and visual anthropology, new avenues are growing rapidly due to newly formed technologies and the new collaborative opportunities they enable. The majority of research on visual anthropology and ethnographic film aims to provide step-by-step instructions for making ethnographic films or to define the components of what is referred to as ethnographic film or visual ethnography. Ethnography has gone so far as to restrict who can produce ethnographic film, visual ethnography, or visual anthropology to qualified media producers with a master's degree in anthropology. Visual ethnography is a creative approach to using technology in ways it was never intended to be used. The results offer an extensively transformed perspective of the technology, its role in society, and prospective practises with the technology. *Krishnan Vasudevan* used this theory in a case study entitled *"Oppositional Articulations: An Ethnographic Study with Black Artists in Austin, Texas"* in the following subsection of this chapter.

This book's eight chapter written by *Trischa Goodnow* examines visual narrative theory that evaluates oral storytelling by suggesting possible ways to understand stories through images rather than words. News photographs are the best examples of singular images. Meaning-making in narrative images can be explained by examining traditional aspects of verbal narratives, such as character, place, plot, and narrative. Visual storytelling audiences become active participants. A visual image grammar and focused his attention on the sequencing of images contained in panels containing narrative structure. Images contribute to the historical narrative and gain power by challenging social narratives, affirming new social narratives, or reaffirming old ones. The viewer of a comic strip must recognise changes from one panel to the next and co-create the image's narrative. In news photographs, the viewer should assign interpretation to the photo's prominent images and

situate the event within the larger historical narrative. Understanding how stories are told through images is aided by visual narrative theory. In Aristotle's (trans., 2012) *Poetics,* the philosopher creates a narrative structure for distinguishing a tragedy from a tragedy. Aristotle provides the first theory of storytelling by outlining the structure, stating that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Since then, theorists from a wide range of disciplines—from education to literature to psychology to sociology to communication—have offered different points of view on what a narrative theory can be. These theorists debate the characteristics, benefits, and drawbacks of narrative comprehension. The focus of this chapter, on the other hand, is on how images tell stories. Images are limited to sequential frames of single frames in this context. Sequential images are made up of separate frames that are stacked one on top of the other. The narrative theory was used in a study, *"Performing the Past in the Present: Prosperity Junction, Public Memory, and American Identity"* by *Travis L. Cox.*

This book's ninth chapter, written by *Herbert Zettl* and *James D.Kelly* focuses on applied media aesthetics in cinema and television. Applied media aesthetics is different from traditional aesthetics, focusing on the concept of beauty. However, applied media aesthetic functions are based on the original meaning of the Greek verb aisthanomai (I perceive") and the noun aisthetike ("sense perception"). According to this theory, art and life are closely interrelated and fundamentally interconnected. Five basic aesthetic image elements contribute to the aesthetic material- the raw material- cinema, television and computer. In the first dimensional field, lighting displays images with various colours and brightness while colour fulfils objects and events by contributing a visual balance to create excitement to an event and establish a mood.

The second dimensional field, namely two-dimensional space, focuses on aspect ratio, screen size, and the structuring of the vector field. The third dimensional field, three-dimensional space, discusses the wide-angle and telephoto lenses, z-axis blocking, and z-axis motion. The fourth dimensional field discusses about time-motion in terms of digital cinema, live television and streaming video, recorded television, mental maps and computer display. And the last dimensional field is sound highlights on outer and inner orientation functions, structural function, and matching of vector fields. Furthermore, the authors discussed that all aesthetic decisions should be made within an ethical context for the well-being of humankind. Overall, this theory enables students to conduct a consistent and reliable aesthetic analysis and aesthetic synthesis-production-maximally effective and efficient. Knowledge of the major media-aesthetics aspects, their opportunities, and their contextual interaction in their relevant aesthetic fields can aid in predicting, to some degree, their impact on viewer perception. *Lawrence J.Mullen* explored this theory in *"Understanding X-Ray Images: A Medi(c)a(l) Aesthetics Approach".*

Due to the rise of digital media, this chapter ten written by *Megan A. Moreno* and *Jonathan D. D'Angelo* focuses on bi-directional information transmission and engagement. The theory emphasises how visual communication with digital media variables is manipulating, networkable, interactive, dense, and compressible. Technological advancement enables more interaction between the information user and producer; it leverages the interaction between both and, at the same time, increases the necessary understanding of the context of digital media. This chapter focused on social media to further the subject, focusing on interaction and sharing personal content with others. Social

media combines peer and media impacts, making it a potent motivator of behaviour, whether it's through personal material or peer-to-peer content. To broaden the discussion, it contains seven communication theories. George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory addressed how people react to spending much time on social networking sites with much visual information. Users can learn norms on digital media as a result of their high practice, according to the Social Learning theory, which argues that media with rich data, such as images and videos, may provide opportunities for users to observe and learn.

Three affordances framework as a mechanic to understand digital media: (i) Social Affordance, (ii) Identity Affordances, and (iii) Cognitive Affordances, (iv) Emotional Affordances. Under the uses and gratification theory, there are a few reasons why people use digital media similar to the foundation principle of the theory, indicating users of media use the media for information, escapism and knowledge; in digital media, it is to understand what the functions associated with particular outcomes, (i) Impression Formation, (ii)Media Practice Model and (iii) Facebook influence model. This chapter found connections across theories, showing overlap of each other to a certain degree, especially looking at the media landscape development, which currently prioritises visual communication. In the following subsection of this chapter, *Bob Britten* discussed *"Google Doodles and Collective Memory-Making"* while *T.J. Thomson* and *Keith Greenwood* discussed *"Profile Pictures across Platforms: How Identity Visually Manifests Itself among Social Media Accounts"*.

Sherice Gearhart, Bingbing Zhang, David D. Perlmutter and Gordana Lazic wrote this chapter eleven. The argument in this chapter brings the meaning of "visual intertextuality" to create a symmetrical and connected meaning between different mediums. The authors discussed visual intertextuality in terms of analysing the studies of media contexts such as film, commercial or advertising as the principle. Visual Intertextuality Theory examines that visual form can simultaneously present a wide range of meanings, resulting in various world experiences. This focus on intertextuality and the meaning dilemma led to the term's adoption by a variety of fields concerned with text decoding and encoding. This chapter and theory discussion used memes as discussion as they are the modern contemporary approach to communicating with the target audience, specifically focusing on political memes to see the intertextual nature of memes and political discourse that applies to democratic and non-democratic societies. Numerous scholars used the word intersexuality; forms of intertextuality can be theoretically traced to Greece by Mikhail Bakhtin, which focuses on dialogue and various languages and voices.

The chapter reiterates the foundation of visual intertextuality with semiotic tradition, predominantly related to text' meaning. Two other traditions originated from studying editing and mise-en-scene in cinema and commercial and political advertising. The chapter focuses on political memes and highlights their functions through interaction between visuals and text, the receiver interpreting based on their past experiences. It further discusses the political memes in democratic and non-democratic societies, the political memes in democratic serving as "speak back" to the politicians, counter-memes for critical commentary to oppose public policy, or to highlight staged public relations stunts. The non-democratic societies presented the importance of political memes, as they became a medium for a society that lacked freedom of speech, enabling the sharing of oppositional ideas and fostering oppositional opinions towards the states. *Maria D. Molina* explored this

theory in a research, entitled *"What Makes an Internet Meme a Meme? Six Essential Characteristics"* after discussing visual intertextuality theory.

Next chapter of the book, written by *Julianne H. Newtown*, chapter twelve examines visual ethics, as defined by the writer; visual ethics studies how visuals are produced and used in communicating, providing understanding for the readers. The ability to assess whether something or someone is visible or invisible, literally and metaphorically, and how anything or someone visible is likely to be regarded and understood or misunderstood is at the essence of visual ethics, as discussed in this chapter. The use of images and imagery for good is referred to as visual ethics. Visual ethics can be seen as part of a larger system, a visual ecology. Thinking on visual ethics via the lens of ecological theory focuses on the dynamic processes of meaning creation within imaging systems. In this theory, it is suggested to be based on (i) ecology of the visual, (ii) ethic manifestation system, (iii) process and reason of making the images, (iv) choices of the image used to communicate.

Logic and faith are based on ideology and serve as the base for any individual to understand the visual context; however, ethics serve no absolute right or wrong. Ethics falls into two major categories: teleological or goal-oriented and deontological or principle-oriented. The perceived superiority of logical thinking over intuitive thinking processes has transformed into an awareness of the necessity for both through a balanced approach to integrated, whole-mind processing, contrary to popular and scholarly wisdom generated by the mythology of reason. Development of visual ethics changed from Western approaches, which focused on anthropocentric, to Eastern scholars such as Confucius and Buddha, African, South American and various indigenous peoples and towards 20th century theoretical development, then postmodernism redefined the ways of thinking. Ethical inquiry during the postmodern era is based on (i) self, (ii) other, (iii) reality, (iv) truth, and (iv) representations. *Christine M. Miller* and *Nicholas F.S. Burnett* explored this theory and studied *"Stolen Valor," Moral Panic, and the Ethics of Digital Vigilantism"* in the subsection of this chapter.

In this final chapter written by *Maria D. Avgerinou* and *Rune Pettersson*, the term "visual literacy" acted as a blanket covering a wide range of disciplines, theories, and appropriate applications to the use of images in intentional visual communication and to the exploration and development of the essential visual skills and abilities. Based on an observational, in-depth examination and synthesis of the visual literacy literature, the article "Toward a cohesive theory of visual literacy" was published in the Journal of Visual Literacy and has since been cited extensively. This chapter introduces the remaining pillars, comprehensively discussing the proposed visual literacy theory. These five pillars are (1) visual communication, (2) visual language, (3) visual learning, (4) visual perceptions, and (5) visual thinking accelerated the advancement of the framework, research, and practice. One of the outcomes of the first National Conference on Visual Literacy was the establishment of the International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA). The IVLA, the most influential of all groups concerned with the study and practice of visual literacy/visual communication, has already celebrated its 50th year as a professional sorganisation that focuses on visual communication and learning.

Among IVLA's activities are countless publications, national and international conferences, research symposiums, creative visual literacy funding, and the promotion and

support of various research projects. Griffin and Whiteside argued that visual literacy theory should stimulate practical applications and suggested that it should be approached from three perspectives: (1) the theoretical perspective, which incorporates the philosophical, psychological, and physiological aspects of learning; (2) the visual language perspective, which incorporates a receiver-oriented approach committed to helping people become visually literate by effectively relating to visual stimuli; and (3) the presentational perspective, which incorporates a presenter-oriented approach and the improvement of the communications process through the design of visual stimuli. Reynolds-Myers propose the following four "principles of visual literacy theory": (1) visual language abilities develop prior to, and serve as the foundation for, verbal language development; (2) development of visual language abilities is dependent upon learner interaction with objects, images, and body language; (3) the level of visual language development is dependent upon the richness and diversity of the objects, images, and body language with which the learner interacts and upon the degree of interaction; and (4) the level of visual language development is facilitated by direct learner involvement in the process and equipment used to create objects, visual images, and body language. In the following subsection of this chapter, *Anthony Cepak* and *T.J. Mesyn* explored this theory in *"Fakes, Forgery, and Facebook: An Examination of Visual Literacy in the Era of Manipulated Images, Fake News, and Alernative Facts"*.

How to cite this article (APA):

Manimegalai Ambikapathy, M., Subramaniam, M., Bakar, K.S. & Yeap, T.H. (2022). Handbook of Visual Communication (2nd Edition) edited by Sheree Josephson, James D. Kelly and Ken Smith. New York: Routledge, 2020. 591PP. ISBN: 9781138590311. Book review. *Malaysian Journal of Performing and Visual Arts,* 8(1), 71-79.