



# Visual Rhetoric

Many of the same s of rhetorical analysis and close reading that we have practiced on written texts are also useful for detecting how visual texts convey their messages.

# OPTIC

- O = write a brief **OVERVIEW** of the image
- P = Key in on all the **PARTS**, by noting any details that seem important. This can be anything: color, figures, textures, scenery, etc...
- T = Use the **TEXT** to clarify the subject of the image.
- I = Specify the **INTERRELATIONSHIPS** in the image. In other words, how are the parts related both to one another and the image as a whole?
- C = Draw a **CONCLUSION** about the image as a whole.

**DODGE DURANGO.** This is the most affordable SUV with a V-8. Dodge Durango. With nearly four tons of towing,\* this baby carries around chunks of those wimpy wanna-bes in its tail pipe. For more info, call 800-4 A DODGE or visit [dodge.com](http://dodge.com)

**GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS**



**IT'S A BIG FAT JUICY  
CHEESEBURGER  
IN A LAND OF TOFU.**

\*Depending on model and properly equipped.

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**Speaker:**

Dodge and the advertising agency

**Audience:**

The potential SUV buyer

**Subject:**

A powerful sport utility vehicle

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Appeals to ethos: banks on associations to Dodge cars and trucks—power, dependability, toughness

Appeals to pathos: plays on preconceptions about food; cheeseburgers are what you WANT to eat, tofu is what you're SUPPOSED to eat; a big powerful truck is what you REALLY want, a small fuel-efficient car is what you're SUPPOSED to have

Appeals to logos: money—it's affordable; it makes sense to own one

Why not enjoy life, drive an affordable SUV, and eat big juicy cheeseburgers?

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Let's break it down!

Look at the words both individually and the way they are placed on the page.

Look at the text at the top left part of the ad.

What tone would you call this?

Aggressive? Yep. This is created by the repetition of the hard consonant sounds in Dodge Durango. It is created by the prepositional phrase announcing that the vehicle can tow four tons. **FOUR TONS.** It's the "baby" that carries "chunks" of its competitors in its tailpipe.

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The use of the colloquialism “baby” contrasts nicely with the image of the car as a predator eating the competition.

The owner of a Dodge Durango will be the kind of person whose car is his or her “baby” and who is the leader of the pack, not one “of those wimpy wanna-bes.”

The Dodge logo, a Ram’s head, and slogan, “Grab life by the horns,” appear at the top right of the ad.

Both the image and the words play with the CONNOTATIONS of horns: strength, masculinity, and noise.

The imperative sentence is a call to action that can be paraphrased as “Don’t be a wimp! Enjoy life now!”

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The text at the bottom of the ad has yet another message. The large white letters on the dark road are boldly designed, but the message is gentle and even funny.

“Big fat juicy cheeseburger” acknowledges our natural desire for pleasures that are not always healthy. But who can resist when the alternative is tofu?

The antecedent of *It's* is, of course, the SUV; but the pronoun suggests an understanding, an insider's wink.



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Study the images in the text in the same way: individually and in terms of composition.

Even though the logo is very aggressive (it's **red**), the photo is less so. In fact, the photo shows a man and woman in the car, pulling a vintage Airstream motor home, thus suggesting not only a family atmosphere but also good taste—as Airstreams are collectibles. Perhaps it is a pitch to the rising number of women car buyers or to the use of an SUV as a less stodgy replacement for a minivan.

Though the front of the Durango is outsized, a reminder of the power under the hood, the ocean and sky in the background temper the aggressiveness of the looming SUV; it looks like a beautiful day for a cool couple with great taste to be out for a ride.