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AP/PRWR 2007: Rhetoric Strategy and Application

31 October 2021

Escapism through Fantasy Themes of Cottagecore and Anime in Gucci's "Flora Fantasy"  
Campaign

Gucci's 2009 "Flora" perfume welcomes its fourth flanker in the line with the new 2021 release "Flora Gorgeous Gardenia". The campaign for this eau de parfum stars Miley Cyrus in a fantastical world of beautiful obscenely large flowers; in both a cottage style front garden, and a Japanese Anime style floral universe. Cyrus is a musical artist, actor, and philanthropist amongst her other professions, that lends her zest for life to the "Flora Fantasy" campaign. The strategies this campaign employs evokes a sense of escapism through use of the advertised product. I will analyze the "Flora Fantasy" campaign commercial to establish how the use of relevant pop culture references and personnel function to evoke escapism through fantasy themes of the cottagecore and anime aesthetic. An analysis of this artifact is particularly useful as it highlights how trends are effectively utilized to encourage consumerism within its young female audience.

The critical method through which this campaign will be analyzed is fantasy-theme rhetorical criticism. Conceived by Ernest G. Bormann as means of examining a shared worldview within a group, this method has two units of analysis ( Foss 105). The first unit is a way of coding an artifact for its themes of setting, character, action, and a sanctioning agent if present. This will be displayed through two tables, each containing coded information that has been separated by the two major setting themes. The second unit of analysis is the rhetorical vision of the artifact. That is, the synthesis of present fantasy themes in order to arrive at the artifact's constructed reality. This will be outlined above each of the two tables

as it comprises the setting, character, and action themes within the tables. The constructed reality of this artifact will then be explained in following paragraphs.

The commercial opens with individual themes that amount to the fantasy theme that is the cottagecore aesthetic. Following the order of events, table 1 holds the coded information of that particular setting:

**Table 1: Cottagecore Aesthetic**

Settings	Characters	Actions
Flower garden Pink cottage style house in background. Large colourful flower garden. Sunlight reflecting. Summer morning	Miley Cyrus	Holding large gardenia flower Smiling while the holding perfume bottle to camera Smelling four large flowers Petting dog Hugging brown cat Laying in the garden Kicking legs up happily Laughing and smiling towards camera Opening front door of cottage style house
Flower garden	White cat	Playing by flowers Crawling across grass
Flower garden	Brown cat	Receiving hugs from Miley
Flower garden	White dog	Receiving pets from Miley
Beach Clear blue water. Sunlight reflecting. Summer morning. Fresh white sand.	Miley Cyrus	Walking through door Closing eyes to spray perfume on neck Holding perfume bottle up to camera Excitedly running with dog across beach Playing pink guitar
Beach	White dog	Receiving hugs from Miley Running around with Miley

Opening with the setting theme of a front flower garden with a pink house in the background, the entirety of this setting is based upon the cottagecore aesthetic. This aesthetic: “Can be understood as the projection of the core fantasy of escape to a cottage in the woods to live as if it were a simpler time” (Brand 2). This explains the reason why Cyrus is the sole human actor in this campaign, as she functions as the embodiment of a successful escape. Her

only companions are animals (*white cat, brown cat, and white dog*) which tie in to the theme of a romanticized life in nature. She interacts with her companions lovingly (*hugging and petting* the animals) and can be seen joyously immersed in her surroundings as she is *kicking her legs up happily*, and *laughing and smiling towards the camera*. Her movements in this setting are simplistic and easily understood, as she does not act in a way that betrays her calm setting. She is seen *laying in the garden* and relaxing in its peaceful ambiance. The animals act in the same way, they are not rambunctious or aggressive; instead they act as an emphasis of the serenity within this fantastical floral world. The human and non-human characters in this commercial function as a digestible point of connection between the peacefulness of the cottage escape, and the product through which it is possible.

Surely a representation of such tranquility within the bustling modern world is highly valued, and what better way to achieve it than with the “Flora Gorgeous Gardenia” perfume! This is what Cyrus conveys through the rhetorical choices of her character. As the sanctioning agent, which is: “an authority who lends credibility to the vision” she brings her personal qualities to the campaign (Foss 113). She is able to communicate the emotional power of the scent through scenes of her delicately *smelling four large flowers* and then *smiling while holding the perfume bottle to camera*. In fact, she makes sure to pose and display the product in each location (*flower garden* and *beach*) after there have been landscape views of the beauty of each setting (*large colourful flower garden* and *clear blue water with fresh white sand*). Her confident display of the product sends the message that this escape is anyone's to have through their purchase and use of the product.

The second major setting theme within the commercial is an animated floral world in which the coded elements amount to the fantasy theme of Japanese anime. Table 2 holds the coded information for this setting:

**Table 2: Japanese Anime Aesthetic**

Settings	Characters	Actions
Anime garden Abundance of ultra colourful flowers. Closely packed together forming tall, natural hedges.	Anime Miley Cyrus	Catches bottle and holds it up to camera Clutches small white budding flower Closes eyes and leans back as she is flown through the flowers Flies up to sunset
Anime beach Orange sunset with pink hued clouds.	Anime Miley Cyrus	Plays pink guitar Flashes perfume bottle to camera

Applying the information from this table, repetition can be analyzed between the two major settings in terms of specific lyrics of the soundtrack and product shots. Cyrus' performance of the cheery pop song "Delicious" by the band Shampoo refers to the fragrance's floral and sweet notes (Askew and Blake). This is evident in the lyric "Delicious!" loudly playing as she stands *smelling flowers, smiling, and holding the perfume bottle to camera* in the front garden and beach of both locations. The next memorable lyric is "Feels so right" which repeats three times throughout the song, and each time the perfume bottle is captured in close up scenes (Askew and Blake). The lyrical confirmation of product confidence is what Gucci persuades buyers to feel throughout the commercial.

While these lyrics continue, a trending pop culture reference to Japanese anime is made in this animated sequence. This style of animation notably differs from American cartoon style animation by the exaggeration and personalization of a cartoon character's features (Liu et al.). A study comparing the facial features of American and Japanese style animations found that American animation exaggerates the eyes of characters to be twice as large, whereas in Japanese animation it is 3.4 times as large (Liu et al.). With this knowledge, and Gucci's camera shots that focus in on the character's eyes, the commercial does indeed employ Japanese anime as a fantasy theme to further appeal to its young audience.

An illusionary, yet well conceived sense of authenticity through the sanctioning agent helps construct the rhetorical vision of this campaign. The audience is made to trust Cyrus through their background knowledge of her coinciding with what the commercial displays. This is seen through Cyrus' outfit that is on par with her pop-punk image, volume of the soundtrack, and the symbolic scenes of her playing guitar. Her clothes and guitar are an ode to her personal talents and ambitions. She is a beloved musician on which Gucci capitalizes as they blend her unique image with colour theory (*pink guitar* and her purple shirt) to evoke thoughts of a distinguished, creative, feminine woman (Allen). They showcase her personality through elements such as the volume of the soundtrack. It plays loudly in reference to Cyrus being well known as never afraid to speak her mind. Gucci's vision works beside her recognizable character through song choice that speaks directly to the product. The rhetorical vision is then formed through Cyrus' authentic performance in fantasy themes of cottagecore and Japanese anime, to ultimately promote the perfume as a serene escape from reality.

The yield of successful celebrity endorsements, especially when handled as effectively as Gucci, generates wealth for corporations, but can be disappointing for consumers. With the projection of such elaborate fantasies, it is often the case that the advertised products are not up to par. In combing through 15 of the most recent reviews on Fragrantica (an established perfume community hub) this perfume is most kindly described as "Exceptionally generic and forgettable" (Fragrantica 2021). The commercial's promotion of fantastical escapism in a time the world needs it most is clever, however it must be recognized as a marketing tactic above all. It is my hope this analysis functions as caution to consumers to not buy into well constructed fantasies. Be advised and fully aware that the purchase of a product will never include the illusionary dreamscape it is showcased in.

## Works Cited

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