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# POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF TEXT STRATEGIES IN THE POLITICAL MARKETING

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## **Abstract**

Media and political marketing are interconnected. The current situation proves the role of the media and the new media for the objectives of politicians. We focused on cases in which marketing of politicians is built on a negative political campaign. Relations between competing political offerings can be also analyzed on the basis of antithesis and at the same time based on networking of communication texts based primarily on text – billboards and promotional videos. When analyzing the texts we applied the well-known intertextual networking theory – the theory of intertextuality. The content of communication text gets to the recipient through the media. It is specified in the perception of its importance in the context of societal and social reality. The theory of intertextuality presupposes the percipient having knowledge of the source text (pretext) of the competitive political party or ideology, which is the subject of criticism in political advertising. The aim is to identify and analyze one of the means of intertextuality – parody.

*Keywords:* political marketing, intertextuality, parody

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## **1. Introduction**

Media and political marketing are mutually interconnected; the current situation shows the importance the new media for political objectives. Along with traditional advertising means such as print advertising or audiovisual advertising, the internet can be an effective tool in the political struggle. In the monitored period since 2008 there are identified multiple examples of communication texts forming a part of the electoral campaigns of politicians.

Political campaigns operate within a framework given by the competition of political programs. The means applied at this level include appeals, arguments, persuasion, giving information and disclosure (unmasking the context) depending on the communicative intent of whichever political party or politician in a particular election campaign. Way of addressing the target group can be realized at the cognitive, emotional levels, or may be present in both

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lines. As the political communication takes place mainly at the textual level, in terms of the objective pursued, we will analyze its semantic structure.

## 2. Intertextuality, marketing, mass-media

Genres, in which means of intertextuality are applied in different ways, are present also in journalism. Intertextuality as one of the principles being applied and operating at content and formal levels of the text, are defined by characteristics marked with considerable text-creative potential.

The question rises here to what extent we can think of compliance or whether the similarity should be considered. Use of the same words and their sequence are in favour of compliance, similarity is confirmed by different contexts and time distance of the situations. The similarity precludes assertion of conformity, which makes the advertisement text oriented towards the peculiar interpretation different from the source text (pretext). There is a clear difference at the lexical level. Similarity implies diversities. Intertextuality is prerequisites by similarity and at the same time by the difference in the context of two separately functioning communication texts, the latter of which (posttext) shows some semantic dependency on the pretext.

The definition of intertextuality in advertising as a way „*in witch one text echoes or refers to another text. For example, an advertisement, which stated 'To be in Florida in winter or not to be in winter' would contain an intertextual reference to a key speech in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Intertextuality can operate at many different levels of language, from phonological and lexical references in titles and slogans to visual aspects such as layouts and images.*” [1] There is a clear difference at the lexical level, although both communication texts used the same verb.

When analyzing and interpreting, we used two pairs of terms to differ the texts (source text – a newly created text; pretext – posttext) synonymously. In this study, we start from the understanding of the terms as they are well established in the Slovak Literary science, particularly within the Nitra school. Such an approach does not appear to be limiting in the context of the works of foreign authors, as well as those of Tibor Žilka - as its generation member, works in the literary interpretation of a literary text with the pair of terms pretext and posttext. In the introduction to the book *Text posttext* he provides his commentary on the status of terminology: “*Today the term intertextuality is a too customary term, but only few people can realize that it is used mainly in the Slavic and Roman literary studies. The English prefers more the term pretext and posttext, in German rather Vorlage (pattern) or Pretext and Posttext are used. In Nitra the given issue came to the centre-focuses of the researchers already in the second half of the 70s, but the research was applying terminology which did not fully correspond with the Western trends. Prototext and metatext were discussed, metatext always followed the prototext, the new text followed the pattern.*” [2]

Conclusions of Žilka are supported by other applications not only in his interpretation practice. He himself notes that *“the starting point is that the current practice is based on an adaptation of the text, largely a literary one, into another sign system, respectively to another medium. This testifies the fact that adaptive networking is in priority, i.e. transcription of text and patterns of transcription (adaptation).”* [2]

The practice, but particularly the high incidence of these means prove the legitimacy of their functioning review not only in the Slovak art, but also in practically oriented texts, utilitarian ones. Example of advertising built on Caesar’s quotation is one of such types of texts. However, intertextuality is not limited to advertising or to the political discourses studied by us. As Žilka notes *“M.M. Bakhtin in his reflections on the text goes beyond intertextuality and shifts the attention of the researchers towards other texts (pretext) - to genres of everyday communications, to texts of a colloquial style. But it was just the French theorist Julia Kristeva who elaborated the theory of intertextuality as one of the fundamental principles of creation of new texts.”* [2] The possibility to design a theory of intertextuality to other communication texts confirm the texts already built on this principle, but also the authors who contributed to its development both in terminology and in interpretation. M. Banyár, dealing with intertextuality in art and its overlapping into marketing, states that the term *“was originally born on the literary ground, but intertextuality has gradually extended its borders to other areas of art, as film, theatre, visual arts, music, etc., but it is also possible to be noticed even in the contemporary popular culture or in different advertisement communication texts. There are many concepts and definitions by several authors (e.g. M.M. Bakhtin, J. Kristeva, R. Barthes. G. Genette, U. Eco, A. Popovič, T. Žilka, Š. Gero, etc.) dealing with intertextuality but different in terminology and content. Therefore, the research on intertextuality is very diverse and there is still no final conclusion. All the authors apparently agreed only on one fact (however not always using the term of intertextuality) and it is the fact that it is a condition when one text follows another one, which is the basic, the easiest explicable principle of intertextuality action.”* [3]

The principle of intertextuality has the potential not only in the creation of texts, but also in communication texts built on different sign systems. *“Advertising in the context of intertextuality often brings into its commercial message references to other texts, respectively piece of work. These texts/works can be rather often found in the advertisements, either direct, but mostly indirect, hidden links to works of art, fairy tales, film genres, popular songs, etc.”* [3]

In principle, we can state two basic facts: 1. A newly created text (posttext) uses the content and formal aspects of the pretext, and it is a response to pretext. 2. Intertextuality is applied in a variety of genres, not only in text ones. These two starting points are simultaneously linked to the general frame of these communication texts and with an intertextual mean – parody. The first

term mentioned plays a role in the reception of intertextual texts, and the latter one proves the potential to be used in political marketing.

### 3. Theoretical framework, intertextuality and interpretation

Intertextual networking is applied in both the artistic genres, as well as in substantive literature. It reflects intertextual relations and connections which fall into a cultural awareness and education and therefore they comprise cultural tradition and (literary) memory [4].

In mass media and in advertising, the intertextuality occurs frequently. Advertising uses more artistic and more sophisticated ways of text creating. The style of advertising is currently the most productive [5]. In the field of artistic style intertextuality can be identified as one of the principles of text construction of Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*. It contains a number of procedures in the field of intertextuality: large number of quotations and allusions. So it can be simultaneously read at several levels of the meaning.

When Umberto Eco considers the assumptions of the text perception, he speaks of the Encyclopaedia of the viewer's mind, where the information is recorded and "*forms a part of the treasure of the collective imagination, and as such they are also evoked*" [6]. The term projects for artistic texts and extends them to the field of mass communication, television series and film. In connection with the term, fixing and continuity of the text is important. "*The text theory distinguishes between three types of response: intratextual continuity, which is implemented within a single text; intertextual continuity that expresses the reflection of one text in other texts, and exophoric continuity, which is the reference correlation towards non-textual reality. Non-textual continuity is carried out in relation to the non-linguistic reality facts and phenomena.*" [4]

Journalistic communication varies in timeliness of information. The genres of realised communication are in reference relation to non-linguistic reality. They communicate information about the world, about problems, critical things, about topics in another way attractive for percipient. Veverková in her analysis of tabloid press functions compares several views, while she synthesizes the known patterns of media functioning and defines the status of the tabloid media within journalism that is common in ground with mass media communication in bringing new messages and is based on expectations of the audience [7].

Besides the method of processing, the issue is related with periodicals with news values preferred in the print media. According to the Slovak journalist Kašiarová, in this context, the value of recipient's proximity is particularly important, both for the cultural as well as the geographic significance. Tabloids, therefore, focus on displaying events from various regions, respectively from a single cultural aspect "*... the point is that make the facts most directly touching the addressee or one's experiential frame of reference; which is also applied to the selection of messages from abroad*" [8].

Compared with the concepts of ‘*Encyclopaedia of reader’s mind*’ (Eco), ‘*intertextual relationships and sequences falling in to cultural awareness*’ (Sokolová), the term ‘*experiential frame of reference*’ as the specifics of journalistic communication seems to be largely consistent with the assumptions of understanding of any text. The amount of communication texts in the media contains the factor enabling the implementation of intertextuality.

Eco’s approach to the analysis of cultural texts is based on the Literal science interpretation. While investigating the mass communication and marketing they form the basis for qualitative methodology. Cultural research tradition is rooted here as build on the synthesis of Rhetoric, Semiotics, Sociology and Psychology. It explains media communication in social context based on the prevailing qualitative research methods in order to analyze not only the media communication text, but also perceptual strategies of the recipient [9].

This current problem in the research of media communication covers the area of philosophical and semiotic research focused on semiotic analysis of communication text, in which the subject of research comprise semantic, pragmatic and aesthetic components of communication texts [10]. Qualitative methodology of this type finds its natural place in the analysis of intertextuality in the mass media that makes marketing working well. The internet creates conditions for mass spread of communicative texts, particularly youtube.com web page plays an important role in this regard. Several qualitative analyzes were dedicated right to the advertising spots and videos on the web in general. Intertextuality and parody was, during the monitored period since 2008 in the context of current media campaigns, focusing on the example of Davisson and Booth [11] who analyzed the intertextual relations between political videos of Barack Obama in 2008 and advertising campaign for Pepsi. An analysis of political campaign of successful candidate for mayor of the capital of Iceland, Jón Gnarr in 2010, was presented by Boyer [12] when he put it into relation with a dominant discourse on public matters. Access to intertextuality, by providing a discourse analysis of ads and advertisements presenting values, was chosen by van Niekerk [13].

After having reviewed the recent problems of intertextuality and of specific parody of political advertising, we have chosen political billboards and political video-parody. Selection of the method used is within the purview of qualitative research practices focusing on the structure of communicative text (semantic, pragmatic and aesthetic components).

#### **4. Parody in political marketing**

According Chlebcová Hečková, “*the internet, meanwhile, has not become a space for a change of political communication, even when the politicians have been finding its taste. They use it rather for promotion, persuasion, manipulation then for communication with their citizens.*” [14] During electoral campaigns advertising spots are applied, many are aimed at promoting the personalities, on polemic with the views of opponents, often decorated in the spirit of negative

campaign as a response to a video broadcasted by their opponents. In this context the use of arguments, criticism, insults and ridicule is not rare. They arise as a response to the communication style, opinions and attitudes of the political opponents. It is creating the space for intertextuality, which is based on the importance of reviewing the pretext. The relationship of action and reaction in political campaigns is then reflected in the intertextual relations. In accordance with the polemical and critical tone of these communicative texts, parody based on satire is used.

Publications focusing on communication, rhetoric, poetics and stylistics provide a number of definitions which, in principle, differ mainly in the used examples, illustrating its possibilities. Žilka defines it as “*a genre of intertextual networking and text originally humiliating another text through imitation*” [15]. Later, the semantic circuit of the word greatly expanded and penetrated also into the daily life. In connection with the development of the genre he warns that originally not the individual author’s style was under parody, but the genres of official, religious and literary documents. Parody was applied to steady, strictly defined form which proved its own character form. Given the current situation, he notes that based on the current considerations an imitation may be applied also to a literary movement, genre, author style, manners of the writer, another work of art. Considering the spoken form of language and in terms of its syntactic level in the present times the following characteristics are essential: a parody, it can be contained even in one sentence, the subject of ridicule can become a watched gesture, focus on a simple act, the mechanized and automated feature of facial expressions, gestures, style, text construction but also the whole work, or even a collection of works [15]. Parody is reflected from several aspects, influenced many times by the literal theoretical focus of the authors. Dentith is fostering the text approach to pattern (posttext to pretext), much is influenced by the attitude of a parodic text to pretext. The relationship can range from humour to the game-oriented comicality with components of the pretext up to satire and controversy [16]. The dictionary of literary theory giving characteristics of the genre parody mentions mockery, a joke, a satirical comedy or comic deformation of style [17]. Opposite focus of the picaresque text against the pretext comprises the basic characteristic of parody. Satire and polemic “*give the parody questioning and denial of the values upheld by the pretext, respectively to access ironic and mocking*” [18].

The political marketing comprises a phenomenon based on political satire shots, in which parody – characteristic processes are applied. These videos published on the Internet “*can range from amateur remixes that edit together two or more political ads and popular culture texts to professional comedy teams that produce short video parodies of campaign ads*” [19]. The second group, in addition to satire, is characterized by critical and polemical approach. Parody and intertextuality often also appear on billboards belonging to the classical means of political advertising.

Intertextuality-based texts are represented by three billboards. Due to the quality-oriented interpretation, character of parody and extent of this article, we chose a professionally produced video-parody on the pre-election campaign promo of the unsuccessful presidential candidate, Robert Fico, currently the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and leader of the governing party Smer – Social Democracy.

Parodies billboards are based on the initial billboard: *Ready for Slovakia. Presidential candidate* [<http://www.cas.sk/galeria/374445/bilboardy-prezidentskych-kandidatov-podla-odbornikov-su-vyretusovani-ako-modelky?foto=1>]. On right, below the text, there is a reproduction of the signature of the politician and the website address. The text is set in the classic visual type of portrait images with the politician's face on the left. It constitutes a pretext for the following parody: *Unprepared for Slovakia/Imposing taxes to whole Slovakia*.

In the first parodist text – *Unprepared for Slovakia* [<http://www.aktuality.sk/foto/244399/7/robert-fico-parodia-na-billboard/>] – the original communication intention is the suitability of the presidential candidate negated by the extreme opposites. The intention achieved by parody highlights the fact that the billboard was not created by external intervention via re-typing the text, for example by spray or in a similar manner. The second parody was not prepared professionally, but due to external intervention into an already existing pattern (pretext). Intervention was done as a form of vandalism or sprayed. Idea and intention are, however similar, the appropriateness of the presidential candidate was controversially called into the question.

The original text (*Ready for Slovakia*) was, by the unknown 'authors', bleached and replaced with the title *Imposing taxes to whole Slovakia* [<http://www.aktuality.sk/foto/244399/5/robert-fico-parodia-na-billboard/>]. The posttext, at the same time, proves a greater degree of semantic distance from the pretext. While giving characterization of parody, Linda Hutcheon notes the importance of the approximation to the pretext; parody focus on the repetition of some of its characteristics and properties [20]. Such interference to the billboard corresponds to the two types, defined by Wojciechowski, Nicholas and Fichnová: "*Pre-pared supplementation of the text and spontaneous supplementation of the text, e.g. with spray paint. This is a spontaneous reaction (not prepared in advance). In this case, interventions are made by adding textual messages to billboards with sprays or other writing tools.*" [21] Short range of texts and established way of application of the figurative component on the billboards provide some opportunities, and at the same time proves its limits. It is indicated also by Lincényi and Polakevičová while giving the analysis of the election campaign billboards in the self-governing regions elections held in 2013 [22].

Also pre-election spots of the unsuccessful candidate for president, Robert Fico, were parody-targeted as the spots may be presumed that "*were targeted to people who were not among his traditional electorate. That communication in the mentioned video was rather naive and turned against him. There was a great*

*deal of populism to make a man, who works every day on the Internet, to accept it.*" [[http://aktualne.atlas.sk/print.xml?path\[article\]=fico-sa-odvazil-na-internet-zatial-pripomina-slona-v-china](http://aktualne.atlas.sk/print.xml?path[article]=fico-sa-odvazil-na-internet-zatial-pripomina-slona-v-china)]. Besides Robert Fico, in the spot, lasting 4 minutes and 35 seconds, also the Minister of Culture and Deputy Chairman of Smer-SD, Marek Maďarič, acted as the question master [[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66VXY70up\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66VXY70up_8)]. The spot covered topics as childhood, origin, family roots, social inclusion and moments forming his personality. The interview was strongly positive - oriented to the extent that it made it too obvious. The answers to questions asked by Marek Maďarič followed in this order with the given information: 1. Childhood – without a mobile phone, Internet and television, and above-standard friendships, village environment, Prime Minister and presidential candidate Robert Fico would “*just have to wish children to have such a nice, happy and turbulent childhood than I did*”. 2. Every Sunday he attended church ceremonies decently dressed in his trousers made of tesil material. He attended football matches at the village. 3. The origin – from a Catholic family, the relatives were also priests and nuns, missionaries abroad. Grandparents were traditional Christians. He comes from a working class family. 4. The standard of living - for above-standard things he had to earn money at season jobs, on the black market he had to exchange money for a voucher to buy some scarce goods (jeans).

Video-parody of the pre-election video of Robert Fico was ordered by the party Freedom and Solidarity, in which, its chairman Richard Sulik with his fellow Martin Poliačik unmask the communicative intent of Robert Fico in form of criticism and humour [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQWZV3njtgg>]. Richard Sulik styled himself into the role of a fictional candidate for the President of the Slovak Republic and answered the questions of Martin Poliačik, who played the role of question-master. This parody reflected the ideological focus of the parties in the spirit of liberalism, in opposition to the socialist orientation of party SMER-Social Democracy represented by the Prime Minister Robert Fico:

Poliačik:

*Richard, as we sit here after work with free crew I just spontaneously realized that we know each other for a quite long time, but I do not know anything about your childhood. What was the really favourite toy of you?*

Sulik:

*You know, Martin, we grew up without a cell phone, no internet, no tablet. And thus there were less toys. I had, for example, a cockhorse. I liked him. You know the time then, it wasn't easy, especially not in my family. My parents were no great intellectuals, my father a dentist, mum a lawyer. It was not so that whenever they brought bags full of something home. Other boys who had a butcher in their family, a fuel-station assistant or at least someone who was selling sports shoes, there something was possible. It was just impossible.*

Poliačik:

*You know, I know you got me as a son, but I do not understand.*



Sulík:

*Well, you see, I will make you an example. I swore on the Oath of Pioneers, it was sometimes, it was very cold outside and I was dressed in short trousers made of tesil material, because long tesil material trousers were not available, as far as planned economy forgot to procure long tesil material trousers. That was the life. People worked from the early morning, with their own hands. It wasn't like now when any round-going yokel earns by his own head 30 or 50 millions. Not to mention the jeans. When you wanted jeans, at first you had to commit some offense and exchange the vouchers with some dealer.*

Poliačik:

*Okay Richard, let's turn the page. Just tell me something about the Church of those times. Did any of your relatives were nuns or priests?*

Sulík:

*Yea, fortunately we did not, because we would be persecuted by the communists, as they chased anyone else who had a different opinion. The communists stole people's freedom. Just turn the page.*

The end of the parody is formed by the headline 'We remember the past' with the logo of the party Freedom and Solidarity. Interpretation in terms of communicative intent of the parody requires knowledge of the political context of both political ads. Those important information are contained in the parody, in the pretext (Fico's propaganda video) and the context is completed by information and stimuli overlapping both the communication texts: the alleged statement of Róbert Fico on how to provide their political party funding for two years, the functioning of the communist regime, persecution of citizens being in disagreement with the regime and the shortcomings of the planned economy. Richard Sulík's aim was to draw the attention to the negative aspects of the previous regime, which contrasts with the glamorous presentation of Robert Fico.

According to Košková, in the context of media and publicity creation, the interior is most frequently presented in the position of the media scene [23]. Information creating the context represent the frame of the reference for parody, which operates under the pretext and its formal aspect: simulation of the dialogue between Robert Fico and Marek Maďarič is completed with scene-design simulation - in addition to a similar distribution of interior objects, in the parody (instead of bust of M.R. Štefánik, co-founder of Czechoslovakia) in the background appears bust of Klement Gottwald, the first Communist prime minister after the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948. The analyzed parody also pays for other audiovisual works and scenography in advertising in general; *"depiction of a scene, the atmosphere and impression is not only dependent on the expression and compositional elements, but on the overall approach to the dramaturgy of work"* [24]. The deliberateness, artificiality, fabrication of scenography of the video of Robert Fico explicitly warns just in the very beginning of his parody as question master Martin Poliačik: *"Richard, as we sit here after work with free crew I just spontaneously realized ..."* We can therefore conclude that even in the selected parodies some principle of the

pretext was made mechanised and it is evident in the parodist text (posttext), as the essence of parody seen also by Tyňanov [25].

## 5. Conclusions

Interpretation of the examples of parodies of political spots and billboards shows that such textual strategy may reveal weak points of the competing political entities at textual level, but also of the figurative element. Contextualization of the text by its figurative component creates the meaning of communication text and at the level of genre it develops a parody communicative intent.

Definition of a reference framework in the mass media, journalism and marketing communication allows considering the intertextuality and parody in relation to timeliness point as the starting category of action on rational and emotional component of the recipient by means of which they can catch one's attention and interest. The change of the attitudes is also induced. This also includes access to the formation of political promotional videos and propaganda that *"if too rational can become boring, if too emotional can affect the one idiotically. If propaganda makes not an effective balance between 'reason' (rationality) and 'feeling' (emotion), is losing its strength and effectiveness."* [26]

The principle of comicality is characterizing a parody, and it ranks it to the emotional appeals. It falls within the political humour, although in political marketing it primarily performs a different function than entertainment. In accordance with the intention of communications, such as in the analyzed videos, the argumentative and critical potential is applied in the argumentative plane. Compared with billboards, the video-parody has more possibilities.

Succinct texts on billboards can be interpreted by a recipient as an initiation to discourse on politician, or as a true picture of substance, essence of the video watched. These predicted types of communication situations may be relevant, but their research is beyond our interpretive plan, which was aimed at identifying text-creation practices and strategies, their illustrations using concrete examples and interpretation of the key importance of communication texts based on the theoretical knowledge of intertextuality and parody.

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