
VISUAL COMMUNICATION OF SOCIALLY ORIENTED EVENTS WITH RELIGIOUS THEMES

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Abstract

This article deals with analysis of visual communication of promotional tools used in event marketing. The aim of the research examination was to analyse the content and visual elements of posters used in communication of socially oriented events with religious themes. We carried out the research of content of the events in the form of content analysis which examines pre-disposition determinants of motivation of the event participants. The second part of examination is a semiological interpretation of images - photographs. Finally, we present descriptive-interpretation analysis of graphic expressive elements, such as font, colour, and composition that create both quantitative and qualitative relations in the adverb. Together, the content and visual elements create a complex visual picture whose task is to motivate recipient to participate on the event and which at the same time form a penetration between the marketing and social communication in the form of visual culture.

Keywords: visual communication, socially oriented, event, graphical, expressive means

1. Introduction

Visual communication is a wide platform of contemporary visual culture which examines all forms of image realized in our society [1]. Visual culture expressions can be seen not only in traditional forms of art, but also in new forms introduced by graphic design, video, film, advertisement, Internet or computer games [2].

In this article we deal with printed promotional tool - a poster which belongs among outdoor advertising media. It is one of the oldest forms of advertising, because it was used at the turn of the 18th and 19th century. Development of the poster as a marketing medium was caused by technological changes in industry which led to increased production of goods, as so there was higher demand on advertising. The poster as advertising tool is used up today. Despite the fact that it is not a dominant tool, it still forms an important part of advertising space.

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In our article we concentrated our attention on posters which promoted socially organized events with religious themes. These posters were created by organizers of events and their task is to inform churchmen about future activities in the church diocese. The posters were located in churches, diocese centres and on the Internet. If we have to evaluate whether a poster is used as a promotional tool, we mostly consider it within the context of the activity which was promoted by the poster, it means within the social event. Involvement in the event depends on the effort of a potential participant to pay attention and carry out activity in certain themes in which the participant is interested. In the event marketing we distinguish the Model of predisposition determinants of consumer's motivation, which defines dimensions of involvement in the event marketing activities [3]. We used dimensions as a main criterion which we examine in visual communication and at the same by which we assess the content of the posters. In the next part of our article we deal with graphical expressive means creating a complex visual image of posters.

2. Analysis of visual communication of socially oriented events

The aim of our research is to analyse the content and visual elements of the posters used for promotion of socially oriented events with religious themes. A research file of content analysis consists of twenty-five posters that were used by different religious organizations for the promotion of their events. The sampling unit of the file was an Internet web page of Roman Catholic Church - Nitra bishopric [www.nrb.sk], namely the web page 'Events' which provides complex information about different events held at Nitra diocese. These are particularly announcements of different liturgies held during the church year, pilgrimages, festivals, thematically focused days, visits of religious monuments, memories of important persons and other events that are part of Church life in their diocese. A recording unit of the research file was an invitation to a religious event which also contained by the promotional poster. A role of the promotional poster was to attract attention and motivate potential candidates to participate in the event. We did not include invitations without a poster into analytical units. All these invitations had a form of brief text information which did not fulfil criteria of involvement and motivation to participate in the event. Invitations were created by different religious organizations - parishes, associations, communities, or by the Episcopal Office itself. These events were not traditional and recurring liturgies during the church year, but particularly thematic pilgrimages, festivals, revivals or events for families with children or young churchmen. We collected the documents from 1 January until 31 May, 2015. The invitations and posters were publicly available for all potential participants who wanted to participate on the religious event.

In our research we used a method of semantic content analysis of themes according to a typology of methods of content analysis of Klaus Merten [4]. This method is used for determination of content of semantic properties of the text and text elements, which are sorted according to the content. Analysis of themes

is a method which is used for interference towards a communicator - in our case towards associations, communities and religious organizations. We completed a method of content analysis with a semiological interpretation of graphical expressive means [5].

3. Content analysis of social events posters

We have analysed the posters at two levels. The first level was the content level and the second one was visual. The content level was based on conceptual Model of predisposition determinants of consumers' motivation proposed by J. Drengner [3]. The model has three dimensions of predisposition connection of consumers to the event - content, object and the event itself. Wohlfeil and Whelan completed the Drengner's model with another dimension that is a social interaction within the event [6]. Dimensions explain the main reasons of involvement in the event. We defined three areas of content analysis on the basis of dimensions:

1. specific content (program) of the event,
2. presentation of the object (brand) of the event,
3. impulse to participate in the event,
4. impulse to social interaction.

The specific categories were chosen for each area. Within the first area '*Specific content (program) of the event*' we defined the following categories: *religious pilgrimage, spiritual revival, thematic mass, evangelist meetings, religious festivals, religious activities of young people, religious activities for families, religious activities for children, thematic days - from life of the Church*. These categories were defined on the basis of Christian Catechism which specifies other liturgical celebrations (Part 2, Chapter 4, Article 1). It includes worshiping of relics, visits of sanctuaries, pilgrimages, Stations of the Cross, religious dances and rosary prayers. We add activities for young people, children and families to this category, because they form important part of evangelistic activities of the Church.

In the second area of the content analysis '*Presentation of the object (brand) of the event*', we created categories focused on the way of presentation of the object of the event. To be more specific, we were interested whether the main content of the event has got its own visual identity in the form of a brand. Visual sign presents an effective form how to present an object of the event to the public which can be a product, thought or service.

Besides the brand we will also examine whether new media, such as Internet and social networks are used for communication, because currently it is an effective way of communication. We concentrate our attention on finding whether such web pages, e-mails and social networks are used provide the churchmen further information and can enrich communication with them. In our analysis we would like to find out not only a way of presentation of the content of event, but also its organizer. On the basis of this we created the following criteria: graphic logo of the event, graphic logo of the organizer, web page

address, e-mail address, social network reference. We are also interested in use of picture on the poster. We understand picture as a presentation of the object of event by using a suitable image.

In the third area of the content analysis – *‘Impulse to participate in the event’* - we will find out the way how the churchmen are inspired and stimulated to participate in the event. We will focus on a text part of the poster and forms being used. Whether it is just simple invitation or it is an expressive appeal to participate. An impulse to participate in the event can be also given by a certain special occasion or experience which will happen within the event. Communication of the experience is very important because it answers the question ‘why?’ a person should attend the event.

Classification of experiences is again based on Christian liturgy and evangelization activities. We created the following categories: mass, common prayer, adoration, pilgrimage, catechesis, visit of a church, seminary or a monastery, rosary prayers, testimonies, Stations of the Cross, blessing, procession. We added other categories which are connected with evangelization: Christian lecturers, projection of Christian films, musical concerts, theatre, sport and educational activities, activities thematically focused on families, children and young people. In connection with the category of mass we realize that if the main content of the event is focused only on the mass itself, the experience and the content will be identical. However, in case of a pilgrimage or evangelization meetings, mass is one of the experiences offered by the event. Therefore, we also included mass into the category of experiences.

In the fourth area – *‘Impulse to social interaction’* - we will focus on impulses which promote a possibility of social interaction within the event. In this area we must distinguish interaction during a mass which is a natural part of each religious event and other forms of social interactions. Therefore, we focus on the forms of interaction, where the churchmen can meet and communication to each other by different common activities. We specified the following categories within this area: *meeting in the community of young people, common sport activities, and games for children and families, common visits of memorials, Christian concerts, discussions with famous guests of the event.*

4. Content analysis of themes according to the model of predisposition determinants of motivation

In the first part of the content analysis we examined specific content (activity) of the social events with religious themes. We classified the content of separate posters into categories and then we quantified them by one version of calculation.

The most often used content of events within the examined period was thematically oriented pilgrimage - in 40 % of cases, then thematically oriented masses - 15%, spiritual revival - 10% and thematically oriented day - from the life of the Church - 10%. The remaining content, such as evangelization meetings, activities for children, families and young people and Christian

festivals were at the level of 5%. Significant prevail of pilgrimage shows that Christian communities are focused on this content and they offer this kind of events with a theme of different pilgrimage. It is interesting that based on the abovementioned order other contents are quite far behind the pilgrimages. Particularly organization of events for children, young people and families are minimal. Involvement in religious pilgrimages is an important part of the life of a Christian. Tradition of pilgrimage is contained in each religion and it has strong roots in case of Christian religion. Christian religion followed Jewish tradition of pilgrimage from one place to another. Organization of pilgrimages is a form of event which was often used in the past and which, as proved by our research, still has a dominant position.

In the next part of our research we examined the way in which the object of the social event is promoted. We will assess the object as a brand within the intentions of event marketing. More than two-thirds of posters, exactly 67% presented the main object of the event in the form of a text; it means that they used only the name or a specific name of the object as an element of the brand. Graphic form of logo of the event object was used on 33% of posters. Graphic design specifies two forms of logo. The first form is a graphic brand which uses non-verbal symbolic shapes together with the text. The second form is a logotype which uses a specific font as a graphic element and which does not use non-verbal brands (e.g. logotype Coca-Cola). According to this division we found out that 21% of posters use logotypes and 12% of posters use logo of event objects. Most events use mainly specific names, such as ‘Turičná pút’ (Pilgrimage Turičná), ‘Oroľská cyklistická Cyrilo-metodejská pút’ (Oroľská cycling pilgrimage of Saints Cyril and Methodius), etc. and they use the same font for visual image as in the remaining part of the text. It is evident from the result that 67% of events do not have their own brand, and so a settled and consistent visual form.

Use of logo in communication can increase awareness of the brand among the consumers. The same applies in case of social communication. One of criterion in selecting elements of the brand is its memorability which subsequently simplifies evocation or recognition of the brand. Semantic content of the brand can attract more attention, simplify its remembering, and so it helps to build the value of the brand. We achieve this by using a suitable symbology which is expressed by graphic symbols. We are able to create a strong brand by the connection of the name, logo and symbol. Findings of the research point out that creators of posters do not fully use the potential of logo for presentation of religious events.

On the other hand, organizers of the events present themselves in other way. 58% of organizers have their own logo, 4% of organizers use a form of logotype brand and 38% of organizers do not use any visual form of brand. In total 62% of organizers have a graphical brand in contrast to events that have the graphical brand only in 33% of cases. Differentiation of a brand in logo - logotype intentions is also significantly in favour of brands of the organizers -

logo of an organizer - 58% versus logo of an event - 12%. Organizers use logotype less (4%) than in case of events (21%).

There can be several reasons why events do not have their own logo. At first, it is a time aspect. Preparation of the poster is often limited for a short time which does not enable to prepare a good proposal. The second reason can be the more difficult abstraction of symbology of the event into the form of a graphic brand. Therefore, most of the events use a form of logotype, the creation of which is easier. We think that the Christian symbology is very rich and it provides many opportunities how to depict an object of the event.

Nowadays presentation of the object of the event by using new media is very effective. We researched in our analysis, whether this form is also used in promotion of religious events. Web page of the event or organizer was defined on 50% of posters, e-mail address was used by 17% of events and the social network was used only by 12% of events - it was the lowest number. We reported that 42% of posters did not use any new media as form of communication. According to our results new media were represented mainly by a web page and e-mail (67%), while social networks were used only seldom. Regarding the social networks, we reported only Facebook, while the other networks such as Twitter or Instagram were not used at all. We consider non-using of social networks as a lack of communication, because in contrast to a web page, social networks have a high level of interactivity. It is very good to use this potential for spreading communication with the religious communities.

An impulse to participate in the event in the form of inspiration or direct incitation is another determinant of motivation. There were two types of direct impulses on the posters. The first impulse was in the form of standard invitation (e.g. We would like to welcome you), which we found out on 37% of posters. Impulses in the form of appeal (e.g. Come to experience the event, Come and say it, etc.) were used in 37% of posters, it means at the same level. Remaining posters, it means 32%, did not contain any direct verbal impulse. In terms of motivation an appeal which invites you directly to carry out some active is more effective than just standard invitation that can be perceived only as a formality. It is interesting that one third of organizers do not use impulse to participate on the event - not in formal form, not even as an appeal.

Another impulse to participate in the event is an offer to experience an attractive event. In case of religious events, most of the experiences are connected with faith. Organizers of these events inform about these experiences on the posters either in the form of a program or in the form of significant indication of a particular experience. In the category of experiences, a mass was most often presented - at the level of 70%. It is connected with the fact that the mass is a traditional form of experience and act of faith; therefore it is presented as the main experience of the religious event. We also noted other forms of experiences with a significant distance - a common prayer and blessings that were mentioned on 30% of posters. It is interesting that a Christian concert was also mentioned on 30% of posters. Singing of religious songs is an integral part of each mass, but a concert form added can be attractive for churchmen. As

shown by our research, this form gained considerable attention. Another experience was adoration (25%) and Stations of the Cross (20%). They were followed by other forms of experiences which are not directly part of religious liturgy: visit of monastery or church (19%), sport activities (18%), activities for children (18%) and theatre performances (18%). Activities for families and young people formed 15% of experiences within the religious events. The less interesting were projections of movies and lecturers - both of these experiences were at the level of 10%. We see that the spectrum of experiences is quite rich. Experiences which are directly connected with religious liturgy are dominant. Less represented are experiences which concentrate on a specific target group, such as families with children and young people. Relatively high representation of Christian concerts within the category of experiences is also interesting.

We examined impulses to social interaction within the event in the last area. The best possibilities were offered to young people, because meeting with young people was stated in almost in 40% of programs of the events. These meetings were followed by Christian concerts (25%) and dancing performances (20%). The form of interaction by dancing is interesting, because most modern form of dance were presented. Some events promoted performances of dancing groups and in one case we met with an invitation to so called 'kristotéka' (Christian disco). Common sport activities were next in order (15%). Discussion with guests, common games for children and common sightseeing were least represented (10%).

Visual component of a poster is important in case of impulses which give reference to social interaction. We focused on finding out the extent to which impulses are represented in the form of images. Images used on the posters were photographs whose role was to motivate recipients to participate in the event by things presented on them. Characteristic element which we were searching for on the photos was an image of the event, community or common activities with a religious frame in terms of the connotation. We identified 47% of photos which fulfilled the above mentioned criteria, it means almost half of the posters tried to depict social interaction and so motivate recipients to participate in the event.

It was also interesting to find out how the images and verbal impulses for involvement were combined. At first, we focused our attention on a group of posters which used an image expressing interaction (47% of cases). 26% of posters from this group used both forms of impulses - it means a picture (photo) and a text. In 16% of cases we met with a combination linking formal standard invitation and a picture or a combination of verbal appeal and a picture which we depicted in 10% of cases. Some posters contained a photo, but they did not contain any verbal impulse - it was in 21% of these cases.

A picture as an impulse to social interaction was not used on 53% of posters, while verbal impulse was used in 42% of these cases. Absolutely no impulse - in the form of picture or text - was used on 10% of posters. Regarding separate verbal impulses, formal invitation (26%) prevailed over appeals (16%).

Connection of verbal impulse to involvement and image of social interaction is the best way how to capture attention of recipients. The above mentioned method was used only by one-third of posters, what is a quite small number. Therefore we think that potential of linking the photo and the text was not sufficiently used.

5. Semiological interpretation of images

Possibilities of a photograph as a mean of expression cannot be expressed by basic quantification. Therefore, it is necessary to find out what they contain and how they can be perceived by recipients. In this case we speak about interpretation of meaning of an image. The extent of our article enables us to concentrate our attention only on one selected example which illustrates the use of a photograph as an expressive mean.

We chose semiological interpretation of images for detailed analysis of photographs [5]. We concentrated our attention on character functions of image by which we can interpret the cultural and social meanings and which are expressed by a system of signs. For interpretation of separate signs on photographs we used typology designed by Charles Peirce [7]. We divided the signs into three groups: Sign - Icon (iconic sign), Sign - Index (index sign) and Sign - Symbol (symbolic sign).

The subject of interpretation was a poster which promoted Cyril - Methodius pilgrimage. In terms of social event, the object of the event was thematically focused on 'Oroľská cyklistická Cyrilo-metodejská púť do Nitry' (Oroľská cycling pilgrimage of Saints Cyril and Methodius to the city Nitra). When analysing pictures and the text we found out that all photographs used on the poster exactly depicted all meanings contained in the name of the pilgrimage. The first photo depicts the missionaries, Saints Cyril and Methodius who are important personalities in Slovak history. The photo showed a fragment of the sculpture of two persons with bishop's insignia, while one person is blessing by his gesture and holds the cross and the other person holds the Holy Scripture. However, picture of the missionaries does not correspond with current knowledge of history, because only Saint Methodius was a bishop, but both saints have bishop's insignia. This picture relates to the origin of the sculpture. The sculpture was made in 1885 by Bernard Otto Seeling according to the design of Ludvík Šimek. Building of the sculpture was ordered by inhabitants of the Czech city Třebíč on the occasion of celebration of 1000 anniversary of their coming to Moravia. The sculpture is situated on the Charles's square in Třebíč. The sculpture of missionaries depicts romantic visualization of the missionaries of that time without accepting of historical facts. However, in relation to the poster it is interesting why the author did not use a photo of the sculpture of missionaries located in Nitra, which is a significant monument of this city. According to our opinion, a reason is that in 2013 an attractive photo of the sculpture of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Třebíč was published on the Internet and it substituted existing pictures. This photo has been used in case of various

events connected with the missionaries since then. For identification of the persons it was enough just to name the digital photo correctly and that it depicts a pair of saints. The photo uses iconic (saints) and symbolic signs (book, cross, hand gesture). Connotations refer to historical tradition of Christianity in Slovakia.

Another photo used on the poster is a photo of the tower of Saint Emmeram's Cathedral in Nitra, which shows a geographic pilgrimage point of destination on the poster. Tower of the cathedral is on the photo in the form of a fragment which cannot be clearly identified with Nitra. Baroque tower on the fragment is not typical for Nitra, it is not different from other towers in Slovakia that are quite similar. The Saint Emmeram's Cathedral has characteristic features connected with architectonic complex of Bishop's Palace and the castle hill located above the river Nitra. And this makes this Cathedral unique within the church architecture in Slovakia. The author assumed a substantially indexed moment of this sign, but it is mostly familiar only to the inhabitants of the city Nitra. Therefore its use as a geographical visual aid is for discussion. According to Pierce typology we can classify this sign as iconic, which depicts a clock tower. Symbolic sign which would refer to Christianity or faith is missing here, because the author deleted the cross placed on the top of the dome on the photo. This caused that on the photo is just a clock tower, and so connotations and functionality of the photo are disputable.

Then, there is a pair of photos on the poster that depict a group of cyclists - on one photo they are moving as a peloton and on the other photo they are standing behind of a pair of two policemen on motorbikes. Both photos use iconic signs with significantly denotative character of the documentary type. The fifth photo is a map of the pilgrimage route to be passed on the bicycles. The author named a shape of the cycling pilgrimage route as 'Oroľská hviezdica' (Oroľská sun star), because it has got several 'arms' that meet in Nitra. This message is not accurate, because sun stars have five arms and not six as shown on the photo. On the other hand, meaning of the hexagram or six-pointed star is associated with Judaism, and we know it as the Star of David.

The last photo shows a group of people who we can be identified with cyclists, because they have the same clothes as on the previous photos and who are blessed by the Bishop. Similarly as in case of two previous photos, it has significantly denotative character of a documentary type and it uses particularly iconic signs.

All analysed photos 'explain' the object of event in descriptive way, which is already presented in the form of the text. Connotations of photos are different; sometimes they refer to objects and situations that are not connected with the event.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of visual communication of socially oriented events with religious theme showed certain particularities which are connected with the

trends of current graphic design. We particularly mean so called democratisation of graphic design analysed by several authors [8]. Its essence is free and unlimited access to means of visual communication what enables designing of high amount of visual communication messages in different areas. Our research analysed the area of visual communication of socially oriented events with religious theme and found that data confirmed this trend in graphic design.

Most posters that were included in the content analysis and semiological interpretation showed ambivalence of graphic expressive means which were often used randomly and did not fully use all possibilities of visual expression. Final appearance of the posters was strongly influenced by technical skills in respective graphic application. Authors relied on possibilities of computer program that determined their degree of creativity. It is similar as in the case of fine arts, when our ability to create a picture is limited by our ability to draw. Similarly, also semiologic interpretation of picture showed descriptive discourse in the ability to use the picture's potential. Connotations of pictures were different, sometimes even contradictory and signs of the picture had mainly iconic character. Indexing of sign was used only minimally, while indexing would significantly help in communication with recipients [9].

In terms of predisposing determinants of motivation, most of the posters depicted particularly main specific content which formed a dominant in the structure of the poster. Presentation of the object was conditioned by a level of visual communication, while the potential of a brand was used to a small extent. In terms of communication it will present lower level of knowledge and value of the brand. In case of impulses to social interaction the posters contained also these elements, but again at different expressive level [10]. Motivation of involvement of churchmen in the religious event will be conditioned by predisposition involvement in at least one of categories of motivation determinants [11]. Most of posters communicated several determinants at the same time; however they were often lost in markedly structured space of expressive elements that complicated visual reading. The authors should focus their attention to one or no more than two determinants which will be presented on the poster. It is possible to increase effect of visual communication in this way.

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