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The Visual Code of Advertising: Covert Suggestion

ABSTRACT. *The present research focuses on visual stylistic devices as means of manipulation in commercial and social advertising within the novel and promising theory of visual communication. According to the theory, visual stylistic means possess the power to direct and manipulate the perception of the recipient. The study specifies the definitions of visual stylistic expressive means that are used in commercial and social advertising. When visual information is encoded in terms of linguistic stylistic means, it allows one to appeal directly to its recipient's emotions. Moreover, it minimizes information loss in case the commercial or social poster was designed in English and meant for a global recipient, who does not have to be a native English speaker. According to the analysis conducted by the authors, visual stylistic means are analogues of verbal stylistic means; however, recipients fail to interpret them as a means of influence, unless provided with information on their decoding. The covert character of the suggestive power of visual stylistic means is a powerful resource for manipulating the perception of the recipient. Thus, visual expressive means are tools that trigger desirable associations and evaluative judgments, create memorable advertising texts.*

KEYWORDS: *social advertising; commercial advertising; suggestion; manipulative effect; visual stylistic means; visual metaphors; visual similes; global consumers; advertising discourse; English.*

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Introduction

Mass migration, global market, cultural integration, and mass tourism have shaped new economic, social and cultural realia. In the socio-cultural aspect, we are witnessing the process of globalization in the sphere of those social issues that are relevant all over the world, e.g. environmental pollution, global warming, family violence, violation of women's rights, etc. As a result, experts in social advertising are facing a new challenge: they have to find a new nonlinguistic but equally effective means [Hall, 2002; Kover, 1995; Mackenzie, 1986] to target the global recipient of diverse cultural background and superficial grasp of English.

From a purely technical point of view, new communicative realia produced by technological progress cause old communicative processes to transform and give rise to new means and forms of information transfer. This transformation process occurs in the sphere of advertising as well. The need to influence the global recipient has led to creation and exploitation of visual expressive means in commercial and social advertising texts.

Finally, there is also an economic dimension to the issue: the Internet allows the so-called global consumer [Torelli, 2011; Torelli, 2013; Torelli, 2015] to purchase goods from any country in the world or find out about the service he or she needs and visit the country that offers it. It is the English language that makes this global trade possible. Unfortunately, English spoken by an average global consumer leaves much to be desired. This fact, again, poses a new challenge for the designers of commercial advertising: they have to develop some means to mitigate the loss of information, which inevitably results from the poor level of English their target audience possesses, and find a way to influence their consumer behaviour.

Despite the target differences between social and commercial advertising [Kameneva, 2015; Tupikova, 2013], they share a number of functions and employ the same principle of information delivery. The manipulative potential of the visual component of various creolized texts is not a matter of economics alone: it gets much attention from linguists, culture experts, political sociologists, psychologists, and historians [An, 2007; Arnheim, 1969; Feinstein, 1982; Lock

2003; Mishra 2017; Sifaki, Papadopoulou 2015; Torelli, 2013]. With every passing year, the issues in hand acquire new facets and set up new goals and tasks for scientists.

It is SA that first began to employ visual expressive means in terms of verbal stylistic devices, while in CA the process began approximately two years ago [Kameneva, 2015]. Obviously, SA needs a much stronger leverage to get its message to the global customer, who has no personal interest in the matter, since social ads offer neither goods nor services but demand an action from its recipient.

The analysis of social, social-commercial, and anti-commercial advertising has revealed a vigorous formation of a system of visual-cognitive units that are able to shape the desired attitude to the social problem in question. The process first began in those English language ads that aim at the so-called global recipient outside his or her own ethno-cultural identity [Kameneva, 2015]. This resulted from the fact that the process of economic, political, and cultural globalization was accompanied by a rise of new global social problems and by invention of various global means and mechanisms to fight them. SA aimed at the global recipient appeared to be one of the most effective and significant of such tools. A review of relevant academic literature has shown that scientists are currently investigating local social ads without addressing those targeting global issues [Freimuth, 1985; Lynn, 1974; Rotfeld, 2002; Salmon, 2003; Wallack, 1995; Wolburg, 2001].

The analysis performed has allowed the authors to define some typical features of SA aimed at the global recipient.

First, global Internet SA touches upon those social matters that are urgent not exclusively for the citizens of the country where the text originated from. The list of targeted issues include: environmental protection, safe driving, site safety, crime prevention, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, healthy lifestyle, disease prevention, tolerance to various minorities, military conflicts, blood donation, problems of the poor, the elderly and orphans; behaviour in public places and transport; family violence. It is clear that the list of issues is not ethnically or culturally marked: these problems worry citizens of most countries.

Second, the language of such advertising is English, irrespective of the country it was developed in.

Third, it is the nonverbal information that carries the main emotional load. Creolized texts of SA incorporate signs of various semiotic systems [Ayer, 2016; Bell, 1990; Beasley, 2002; Goldman, 1996; Kameneva, 2018], of which visual stylistic means are relevant for the current research. According to Forceville and Johns [Forceville, 1996; Johns, 1982], the phenomenon of visual metaphor has officially been recognized by scientific community.

Unlike the verbal one, visual metaphor [Bolognesi, 2017] is scientifically interpreted from comparative and substitutional stand points, leaving behind the interactional approach. Substitutionalists see visual metaphor as a visual representation of one idea by means of another one [Forceville, 2002; Lock,2003; Tay, 2017]. They differentiate between visual metaphor and visual comparison [Горбачева, 2014]. Comparative approach advocates visual metaphor as a visual complex within a text or discourse fragment. The complex unites two visual, emotionally coloured images, which the recipient associates directly with the subjects of visualization [Sarna, 2005; Lagerwerf, 2012].

Another visual stylistic devise acknowledged by scientists is visual euphemism, which is an inoffensive image that represents an object or process that is considered obscene, unpleasant, indecent, or distressingly explicit [Allan, 1991; Burridge, 2005; Farr, 1992]. Our analysis of creolized texts of Internet SA has proven that metaphor and euphemisms are not the only visual devices.

Our analysis pursued the following goals:

1) to conduct an experiment that would confirm or disprove the hypothesis that visual stylistic means are built similarly to linguistic stylistic means and can be neither differentiated nor perceived by the recipients as a means of influence, unless the recipients are informed about their covert suggestive character;

2) to correct the definitions of the visual-cognitive units in question based on a comparative analysis with their linguacognitive analogues;

3) to specify their functional potential;

4) to verify the hypothesis that the system of visual-cognitive units is exploited in other kinds of advertising but the social one.

The current article contains a corrected evaluation of the numerous fragmented researches it took the authors several years to conduct. The theory was supported by the data obtained from the analysis of one hundred creolized texts of commercial internet English language ads.

Examples of CA there used to confirm the proposed hypothesis.

Methods

The goals mentioned in the previous paragraph presupposed a number of tasks the authors fulfilled in the following succession.

1. We employed continuous sampling method to choose 850 texts of SA originally designed in

English and available for the global Internet user. All the samples were poster-like ads, i.e. they were static, had no active hyperlinks, and were not accompanied by audio or video files.

2. We defined and analysed cases of visual metaphor, visual comparison, visual allusion, visual synecdoche, visual hyperbole, visual litotes, visual graphon, visual personification, visual depersonification, and visual gradation.

The analysis included the methods and the terminology of communication theory and text theory. The basic methods of analysis were: the method of quantitative analysis, as well as the methods of stylistic and discursive analyses.

The analysis of the visual-verbal material followed the following procedure:

a) We decided whether the poster ad in question contained a visual stylistic device.

b) We described how the visual device contributed to the message the ad was meant to convey.

Examples of analyses are given in the Discussion section.

3. Based on the results of the analysis, we compiled and corrected the definitions of the visual-cognitive units in question based on a comparative analysis with their linguacognitive analogues.

4. Finally, we established their hierarchy and specified the contexts visual stylistic means were used in.

We used the following procedure to identify an image as a **visual metaphor**:

a. We defined the target domain and the objectives of the metaphorical expansion;

b. After that we established the absence or presence of evaluativity in the transfer of characteristics associated with the source domain into the target domain;

c. If evaluativity was detected, it was assessed according to the good — bad scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual metaphor to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

In this study, *evaluativity* refers to an explicit, easily decoded expression of an emotionally colored judgment about the advertised object. Evaluativity is needed to identify a particular image as a visual trope. The good — bad vector scale is required to establish the pragmatic function of the visual trope.

To define such a case of metaphor as **visual personification**, we followed steps:

a. The inanimate subject of advertising was checked for any animate characteristics;

b. If any animate traits were detected, we decided whether they added to the evaluativity of the advertised stuff;

c. The presence of the animate characteristics were assessed according to the good — bad vector scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual personification to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

To detect a case of **visual depersonification**, we undertook the following steps:

a. The animate subject of advertising was tested for any signs of originally alien inanimate characteristic;

b. If detected, the inanimate traits were checked for evaluativity it might add to the original image;

c. The inanimate traits were assessed according to the good — bad vector scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual depersonification to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

To identify an image as a **visual comparison**, we used the following procedure:

a. Two opposed images were singled out in the ad;

b. We defined their similarities and differences;

c. Similarities were evaluated according to the good — bad scale;

d. Differences were evaluated according to the good — bad scale;

e. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual comparison to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

Procedure for **visual allusions** looked as follows:

a. We identified presence of a well-recognized character or object with certain easily reproduced traits and associations;

b. After that we established whether the recognizable image added to the evaluativity of the ad;

c. The good — bad scale was used to define the relations between the evaluativity of the advertised object and the evaluativity of the recognizable image;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual allusion to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

To detect a case of **visual gradation**, we used the following procedure;

a. We tested the image for presence of any stages that reflected a change in the quality of the subject of advertising;

b. If a certain graduated change of original qualities was detected, it was checked for evaluativity it might add to the image;

c. The graduated change was assessed according to the good — bad scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual gradation to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

To classify a visual image as a **synecdoche**, we used the following procedure:

a. We decided whether the image under analysis revealed any incongruity between the

poles of the part — whole or particular — general oppositions;

b. If a certain incongruity was established, we decided whether it added any evaluativity to the image;

c. The incongruity was assessed according to the good — bad scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual synecdoche to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

The following procedure was adopted to identify the image as a **visual hyperbole:**

a. The image was studied for exaggerations in quality or any other characteristic;

b. If an exaggeration was detected, it was studied for signs of evaluativity that it added to the image in general;

c. The exaggeration was then evaluated according to the good — bad vector scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual hyperbole to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

The following procedure was used for **visual litotes**:

a. The advertised image was investigated for any signs of unnatural understatements of its quality, volume, etc.;

b. If the result was positive, the understated characteristic was checked for evaluativity;

c. The evaluativity was then assessed according to the good — bad vector scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual litotes to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

Procedure for **visual graphon** looked similar:

a. The advertising was checked for visual imitations of sound peculiarities of the advertised object;

b. If detected, the imitation was checked for evaluativity;

c. The visually coded sound characteristic of the advertised object was then assessed according to the good — bad vector scale;

d. Finally, we studied the linguistic context of the visual graphon to define the coherence between the visual and the verbal.

To confirm the integrity of the visual-cognitive system, an identical set of tasks was performed for 100 static texts of commercial English language ads.

We developed and conducted three experiments in order to confirm or disprove the following hypothesis: visual stylistic means are constructed similarly to linguistic stylistic means, but recipients do not perceive them as a means of influence unless informed in advance, three experiments were developed and conducted.

Each experiment included 25 people aged 18 — 22 split into two groups. 100% of the participants majored in linguistics and thus had knowledge of verbal stylistic means. They were presented with a slide show of 16 SA texts with visual stylistic means, 16 CA texts with visual stylistic, and one text of SA and CA that did not contain any visual stylistic means. The task was explained to the participants before the demonstration: they had to mark the advertising texts as lacking or containing visual stylistic means, in which case they were to determine the type of the stylistic device. The participants were given numbered lists they filled in after each slide. At the end of the experiment, they were asked to clarify which advertising text they remembered best.

The difference between the experiments was in preliminary information. In the first experiment, there was none: the slide show included no additional information and started directly with the advertising texts. In the second experiment, there was an introductory slide that contained a list of all possible stylistic means. In the third experiment, the list included definitions.
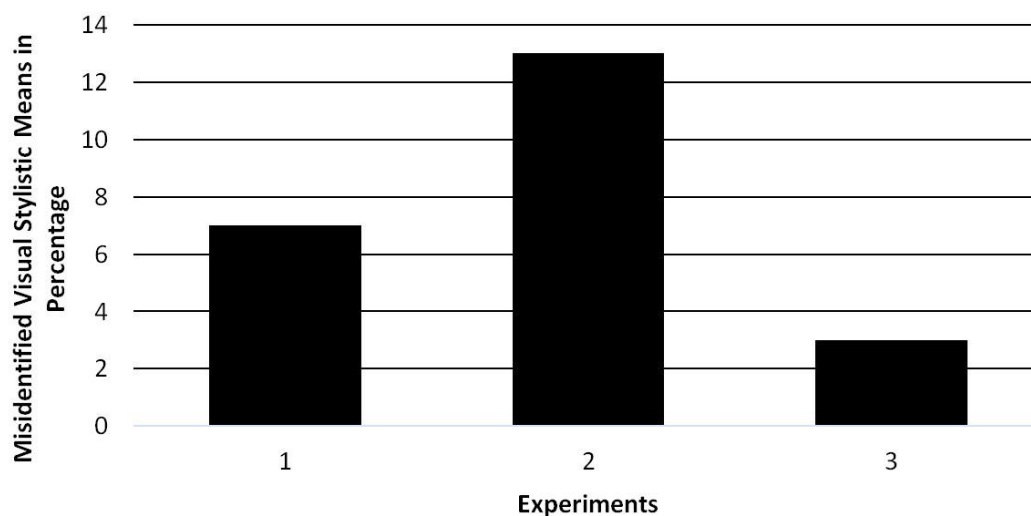
The results obtained have made it possible to improve the communication theory and isolate the theory of visual communication as a separate branch. The data can be of practical assistance in creating various social, social-commercial, commercial and social-political ads.

Results

The research has revealed that the system of visual stylistic means represents a new integral communicative system which includes: visual metaphor, visual comparison, visual allusion, visual synecdoche, visual hyperbole, visual litotes, visual graphon, visual euphemism, visual personification, visual depersonification, and visual gradation. The design principle displayed by these visual stylistic means proved to be identical to that of the corresponding verbal stylistic devices.

According to the experiments, the visual stylistic tools were easily recognized and classified as means of manipulation only if the participants received information on their decoding and classification in advance. Otherwise, all the visual stylistic means were interpreted as metaphors or comparisons. Thus, the covert nature of the suggestion employed by this methodof encoding information makes it possible to directly appeal to the emotions of the recipient, to avoid blocking the desired emotions, associations, and critical perception. This property of visual stylistic means makes advertising texts memorable and increases their impact potential.

Misidentification Rate in Percentage

According to the data obtained from the first experiment, the participants kept confusing comparison and metaphor and comparison and gradation. Besides, when the participants were not sure that they had correctly identified the visual stylistic tool, they tended to mark it as a coded metaphorical transfer. Surprisingly, depersonification turned out to be the biggest challenge. In most cases, the participants identified it as a comparison or metaphor. The most memorable advertising texts included those with visual hyperbole, depersonification, and personification (ranked in descending order), the last position belonged to advertising texts with comparison and metaphor in equal proportions.

The data obtained from the second experiment gave similar results. The greatest difficulties were also connected the distinction between comparison and metaphor. However, when the participants hesitated to identify the visual stylistic tool, they tended to indicate it as a comparison. Similarly, the advertising texts with visual hyperbole proved to be the most memorable ones, followed by comparison and depersonification, while the fourth position was occupied by advertising texts with personification and metaphor in equal proportions. The main difference in the results of the two experiments was in the percentage of non-identified devices. In the first experiment, when the participants were not reminded of all possible stylistic means, the percentage of non-identified means was 3%.

However, in the second experiment, when the participants were allowed to recall the entire spectrum of stylistic means, the failure rate was about 15%.

The graph shows that when the recipients possessed detailed information about the graphic specifics of each visual means, the number of correctly identified visual devices was high. However, when the recipients were given nothing but names of the devices they were going to look for, the percentage of misidentified devices was higher.

The results also differed in the number of misidentified visual stylistic means: in the first case there were 7% of misinterpreted devices, in the second — 13%. As for the third experiment, the percentage of non-identification was 0% and that of misidentification was 3%.

Similarly, the participants experienced difficulties in differentiating comparison and metaphor. According to memorability, the advertising texts with a visual hyperbole were also on the first place. According to the data obtained from all three experiments, there were no differences in the recognition of visual stylistic means related to their belonging to CA or SA. Visual metaphor, visual comparison, and visual allusion proved to be the predominating visual stylistic means exploited by both SA and CA. As for the visual personification, this device was among those least popular in SA and one of the leading tools of CA. Synecdoche, hyperbole, litotes, graphon, euphemism, personification, and gradation were used by both SA and CA equally.

In the texts of SA and CA, visual stylistic means performed some similar functions, i.e. evaluative, argumentative, agitational, modelling, aesthetic, and heuristic. The difference was that visual stylistic means employed by CA fulfil manipulative function. This fact can be proved by the use of visual euphemisms in this type of advertising, which were absent in SA. Visual stylistic means also strengthened the impact exerted by the verbal information represented in the creolized text. The main function of visual stylistic means in SA and CA was to

prevent the information loss caused by the global recipient's poor grasp of English.

Discussion

Visual stylistic tools have been actively studied for two decades. At the moment, visual metaphor, visual comparison and visual euphemism remain the most studied visual stylistic means. To date, there have been no studies in the correlation of visual stylistic tools and their language analogues. The present research was based on the hypothesis about the correlation between linguistic and visual stylistic means. In our opinion, visual stylistic means are built by analogy with linguistic stylistic means. Their goal is to increase the impact potential of the advertising message. However, their use does not depend on whether they are used in social or commercial advertising. At the same time, an excessive use of a visual stylistic means triggers its stereotyping and lowers its impact potential. According to our hypothesis, visual stylistic means are easily recognized as manipulative and can be clearly classified by type only if the recipient is given some information on their decoding and classification. The covert nature of the suggestion employed in this method of encoding makes it possible to appeal directly to the emotions of the recipient, while avoiding blockade of the required emotions, associations, and critical perception.

To confirm or refute our hypothesis, we generalized the theoretical data on all the visual stylistic means in question and offered our own interpretation based on the analysis of advertising texts. Our review of scientific papers has revealed that specialists both in SA and CA highlight the problem of differentiating visual metaphor and visual comparison [Carroll, 1994; Carroll, 1996; Forceville, 1996; Forceville, 1999; Forceville, 2000; Forceville, 2002; Bzhitskikh, 2014; Горбачева, 2014; Mulken, 2010; Terskikh, 2014; Vaygandt, 2018].

Some researchers believe that visual metaphor unites two visual images that together create a new concept by actualizing in the mind of the beholder those traits that are inherent to the comparison object [Terskikh, 2014]. As an example, they offer a poster advertisement of paint, which is positioned as natural and environmentally friendly. To trigger the necessary associations in the mind of the recipient, the visual part of the creolized text features two compared objects: a white billboard, partially painted blue, and the equally blue sky. We consider this case to be an example of visual comparison.

Our study of social and internet CA states a need for differentiation between visual metaphor and visual comparison. In SA, visual metaphor can be interpreted as a substitute for visual information: visual metaphor obscures the social problem it depicts while representing it in such a way that the recipient immediately grasps the consequences of social inaction or ignoring the social problem. The text of social Internet-advertising features the visual image of the sphere in whose terms social organizations or the government would like people to perceive, assess and correct their behaviour.

Figure 1 is a part of social campaign against passive smoking. The images exploited visual metaphor that merged the image of smoke with that of a weapon (gun, knife, or strangling rope). The source domain is that of weapon, the target domain is that of smoking. The message the poster in question is used to convey is that passive smoking slowly kills those closest to the smoker. In this aspect, its evaluativity is obvious. Its goal seems to make the smoker identify himself / herself with a killer of his / her loved ones and hence stop the harmful habit under the impact of strong emotions the poster serves to evoke.

In CA, visual metaphor serves as a sales raising tool: it is a complex image that makes the consumer link two separate concepts, thus attributing external attractive traits to the advertised item.

Fig. 1. Example of visual metaphor in social advertising
Available at: *https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/cancer_aid_research_foundation_rope*
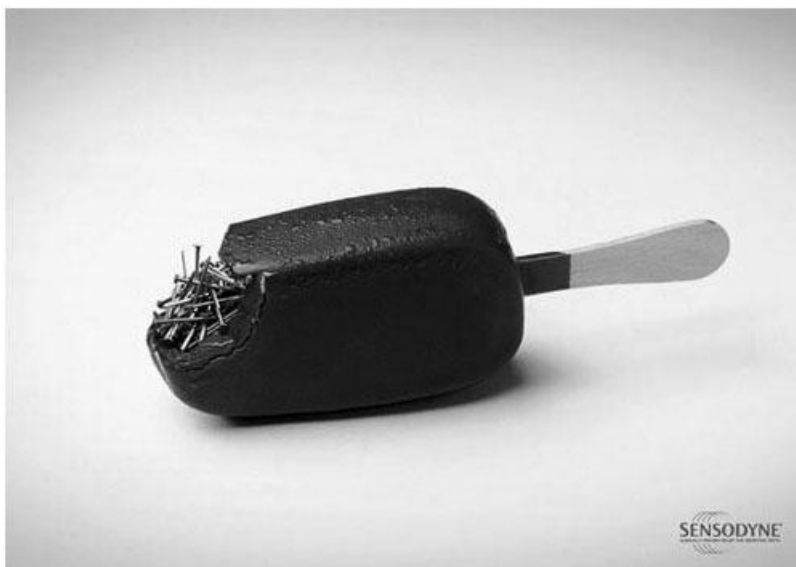
Fig. 2. Example of visual metaphor in commercial advertising
Available at: *https://www.ateriet.com/sensodyne-toothpaste-ads/*

Figure 2 shows an ad of tooth paste for sensitive teeth. It combines a mouth-watering image of soft, sweet ice-cream with an image of hard steel nails. The source domain is that of portentously dangerous tools, the target domain is that of food. The chimerical image evokes associations with danger and pain: nails, if swallowed, can inflict a mortal injury to the soft digestive tract. The image of the ice cream, however, brings in opposite associations: sweetness, softness, pleasure, etc. Combination of these two images results in a clash of associations. The message is that the consumer cannot enjoy such basic pleasures of life as tasty food unless he / she starts using the tooth paste. By combining the two opposite images of pleasure and danger, producers elevate the minor discomfort people experience when eating cold food to a lever of life threat, thus turning the advertised product from a simple hygiene product to a life-saving medicine.

The definitions show that, regardless of the type of advertising text, visual metaphor is a complex image that allows the recipient to link the source of the metaphor with its target; visual metaphor aims at changing recipients' emotional state to make them perceive the advertised item in a desired way, which is supposed to direct their behaviour, i.e. encourage them to purchase the item.

Visual metaphor is exploited by Internet SA featuring the following social issues: public behaviour rules, environmental protection, road safety, smoking, alcoholism, AIDS / HIV, healthy food, problems of senior citizens. Metaphoric images in these ads are adopted from various spheres.

In CA, visual metaphor has a much wider range of advertised items. It advertises foods, all sorts of manufactured goods, and various services. Such popularity can be explained by the universal character of the metaphor, which can unite concepts that otherwise would have nothing in common. The mechanism of the metaphor makes the recipient see and assess the advertised object the way it was intended by the text designers. One of the interesting results of the analysis was the way zoonimic metaphor is used in SA and CA. In SA it visualizes the need to observe the rules of conduct in public transport.

A good example features in its visual part a frog-headed fare jumper who is leaping over the ticket barrier on the subway. The image makes the recipient think of the human in animal terms because his behaviour is unworthy of a civilized person. Another example in the series features a hen-headed girl talking on her mobile phone in public transport. The image also demonstrates a kind of behaviour society disapproves of and allows its recipient to see how such bad manners are evaluated by the community. The hen is often associated with stupid and useless behaviour. By extending the negative associations of the human character, designers aim at preventing the unwanted behaviour in public places.

Fig. 3. Example of zoonimic metaphor in social advertising
Available at: *https://www.adforum.com/talent/45535-barberine-reyners/work/34474870*

In CA, on the contrary, zoonimic metaphor, is used to promote vehicles. Countless auto groups treat it as their favourite visual stylistic device. New car models are metaphorized as various animals. The images of tigers, bulls and mustangs stress the power of the vehicle; African antelopes, cheetahs and jaguars help to bring it to the consumer that the main advantage of the advertised car is its speed and exquisite design. Vehicle's capability at travelling and manoeuvring in off-road applications is revealed through the image of a shark ray, small reptiles and cats. Bugs denote compactness and easy maintenance.

The share of visual zoonimic metaphors in CA and SA is almost equal: for every 100 texts taken for 100% there are 0.6% of zoonimic metaphors in SA and 0.7% in CA. As for the source metaphor in SA, 83% out of 100% are negative, be it zoonimic or other type of metaphor.

Visual metaphor targeting the problem of passive smoking exploits images connected with crime, murder and suicide. Destructive influence of smoking is revealed through the images of a gun, a skull, a gallows, a noose, a knife, a slingshot, or a set of playing cards. The same images of murder, war and crime are used in SA featuring environmental problems.

On the contrary, CA uses both positive and negative metaphoric images. At the same time, modern CA demonstrates a certain commonality of metaphoric images. On the one hand, it makes the description of the goods more comprehensible; on the other, it weakens the advertising effect and makes it almost impossible to create a memorable image that would be different from those used by competitors. For example, detergent ads often exploit the sphere of

war and combat. Dirt, filth, grease and rust a metaphorically depicted as enemy agents or invaders, and cleansers — as weapon. Chocolate and sweets are associated with the concept of dolce vita, whereas camera posters use images of sport winners and happy families.

This commonality of metaphoric images in CA is one more reason why a research in visual stylistic means and their potential market effectiveness would be relevant for modern science.

Visual personification and depersonification are also frequent visual stylistic means in the modern multi-faceted and multichannel communicative space. As a rule, the object employed for the personification / depersonification act is directly related to the lexical-semantic field of the text. As it has been mentioned, both devices are used more often in CA than in SA.

In CA, visual personification is a visual representation of an inanimate object as a human being to create the necessary associations and realize communicative goals of the creolized text. Visual personification is popular with food advertising posters: various foods (chocolates, cookies, etc.) have anthropomorphic features, experience emotions, and, in general, live a full human life. In a likely manner, human teeth get personified in dentist surgery advertising.

Visual personification in CA can be part of a more complicated metaphor. It was the key device in a series of posters of a popular beer brand [Rabkina, 2013]. Thy featured personified beer bottles and bottle openers. Unlike more primitive personifications of sweets and teeth, these objects lack any anthropomorphic features: what makes them personified is the precedent situation they are depicted in. Remarkably, these situations are mostly based on

gender interrelation, the opener playing an obviously masculine role. For example, an opener is "studying" a call-me advertisement that depicts a beer bottle lying in a bottle cooler as if in a bubble bath; an opener stalks a beer bottle in a dark alley; a beer bottle looks at various openers through a one-sided glass during a police identification. Though the personification itself is unobtrusive, the situations mentioned above are anything but ambiguous: since a beer bottle is as desirable as a beautiful woman (and very easy to get), a simple act of beer drinking acquires the meaning of a sexual act. It is obvious that the advertising campaign targeted mostly male audience by victimizing the female image.

This M&M's ad features the latest addition to the famous mascot series. The idea with an-thropomorphic drops, each of which has its own character, proved enormously successful. This is a feminized image of the chocolate piece. By merging two images, designers intended to double the desirability of the product. The image radiates positive evaluativity: it associates with a "sexy sophisticated" girl, appealing both for male and female audience. Each detail bears some social message: the high-heeled shoes signify the sexual appeal of the personage, whereas the glasses point at her status of a lady-boss.

In SA, personification often clarifies environmental ideas, e.g. the Earth can be depicted as a person suffocating with exhaust fumes or as a person with amputated limbs in an anti-deforestation poster.

Fig. 4. Example of visual personification in commercial advertising
Available at: *http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2012/mms-just-my-shell/*

Fig. 5. Example of visual personification in social advertising
Available at: *https://motivatingforpositivechange.wordpress.com/2013/02/23/need-money-for-my-family-in-the-rainforest/*

Fig. 6. Example of visual depersonification in social advertising
Available at: *http://www.englandagency.com/drinkheads*

In Figure 5, two images have merged: that of a tree and that of a refugee collecting money for his family. By giving the tree some anthropomorphic features, designers elevated the problem of deforestation to the level of human suffering, thus making the recipient sympathize with the tree the way they would sympathize with a suffering human.

According to the analysis performed, visual personification correlates with visual depersonification as 2 to 1. Visual depersonification likens a human image to that of an inanimate object that evokes necessary associations in the recipient. In anti-alcohol SA a human being is likened to such objects as a broken bottle, cracked glass, or a crumpled foam cup. The recipient easily deciphers the logic chain "alcohol = danger = destruction = death".

In SA, both visual personification and depersonificationfulfil evaluative, argumentative and agitation functions. They also share common topics, i.e. environmental pollution, reckless driving, bad habits, healthy lifestyle promotion. They even have the same percentage ratio: 80% of texts with visual personification or depersonifocation are related to environmental problems, whereas the remaining 20% split between traffic rules and unhealthy habits.

Figure 6 comes from a series of social ads against binge drinking. Drinking is rightfully associated with stupid or unsocial behavior. By merging a female image with that of a glass of strong alcoholic beverage, designers added negative evaluativity to the careless behavior some drunken people may display. The image is a literal illustration to the notion of "drunkhead" mentioned in the verbal part of the text.

In Figure 7, the female image is used in the environment typical of a camera. The visual depersonification adds to the positive evaluativity of the message: when you watch the advertised channel, you feel as if you were there.

Visual comparison is one of the three most wide-spread visual stylistic devices exploited by modern advertisers. Unlike a visual metaphor poster, it is an ad based on two contrast image that uses a direct approach in promoting the item it represents. Visual metaphor, on the contrary, represents a complex image that manipulates recipients' perception in a subtle, surreptitious manner while encouraging them to purchase the item.

In CA, visual comparison can be defined as a visual complex made of two images within a single advertising text. One image gives a negatively coloured visualization of a situation in which the customer has no advertised item. The other depicts an after-purchase situation, which is almost 100% positive. The mechanism requires both images to explain it to the customers that the item will bring some positive change in their life. In SA, visual comparison represents a visual complex that incorporates two images within a single advertising text. One image visualizes the social problem, while the other depicts possible consequences that will take place if the recipient continues ignoring the social problem. Once again, the advertising text needs both images to bring it to the recipients how exactly they should perceive and assess the situation.

Fig. 7. Example of depersonification in commercial advertising
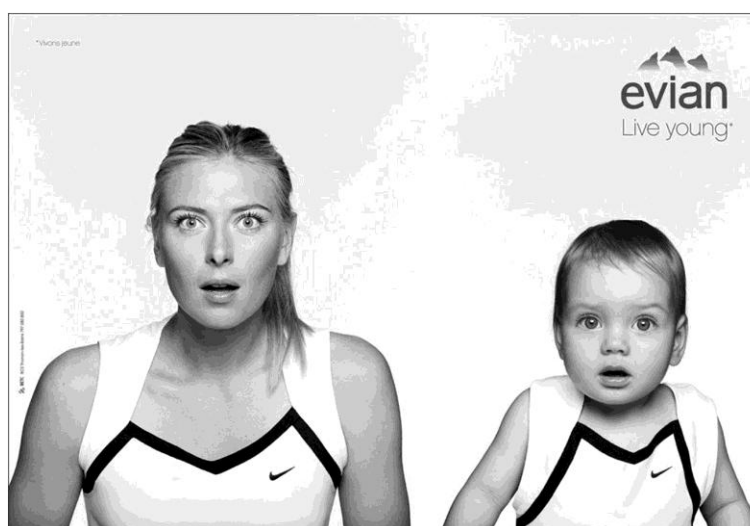Available at: *https://visme.co/blog/visual-metaphors-examples/*

Fig. 8. Example of visual comparison in commercial advertising
Available at: *https://www.adforum.com/agency/1545/creative-work/34497200/live-young/evian*

As both definitions show, a visual stylistic device has to include two visual images to be considered a visual comparison. The contrast images simultaneously depict two situations which can be assessed as either "good" or "bad".

CA uses visual comparison to promote detergents and various cleansers, household appliances, gardening and fitness equipment, — all kinds of products that do not produce an immediate result. Visual comparison uses montage technique to cut out the application process between the act of purchase and the result. It creates an illusion that the consumer can achieve the desired positive result by simply buying the advertised item.

Figure 8 shows two images: that of a woman and that of a toddler. Identical clothes suggest that it is one and the same person at different age. Since youth is associated with health, the comparison adds to the positive evaluativity of the product and supports the verbal text: drinking the advertised water makes you feel young.

In SA, visual comparison usually covers the following social issues: smoking, racism, family violence, and non-enforcement of traffic rules.

There are two mechanisms of visual comparison in SA. The first one implies two opposed images that give a general description of the social problem. For example, an Internet poster against family violence can be visually split into two parts, the first one giving a picture of a perfect family, the other one — a picture of violence, child abuse, fear and helplessness. The same mechanism is used in ads aimed at reckless driving: two images show a biker vs. a wheel-chair user. The juxtaposition allows the recipient to restore the omitted chain of logic: reckless driving leads to sad consequences. Another social problem that is often brought up

to the recipient via visual comparison is environmental pollution, e.g. two images make up a sundial, the upper image depicts a clean Earth, the bottom one — the planet stricken by an ecological disaster.

The second mechanism of visual comparison is metonymic: it contrasts two objects that are universally associated with the social problem. For example, antismoking internet posters contrast images of a cigarette and a bullet / skull / gallows / grave / coffin, etc. It shows smoking in terms of suicide and allows the recipient to draw an inevitable conclusion about the damage smoking can do to his or her health.

The poster in Figure 9 features a human leg and a prosthesis. A brief comparison of the visual images confirms the idea of the verbal text: while a car can be repaired after a collision, no prosthesis can substitute a real limb. The negative evaluativity that results from the comparison of real and artificial limbs brings forward the idea that drunk driving can lead to irreversible consequences.

Another popular visual stylistic means in CA and SA is **visual allusion**. In SA, visual allusion is a universally recognizable image from the sphere of politics, economics, sport, etc., incorporated into the advertising text as a photo or a drawing. It fulfils a number of functions, e.g. evaluative, intertextual, coherent, etc. When a globally recognizable image from the sphere of culture and politics, a celebrity, or a fictional character is used in SA texts, it helps to attract attention to a particular social matter and suggests the line of reasoning for the evaluation of the social problem. Researches in the field of CA study how the use of celebrity images in CA raises its effectiveness [Erdogan, 2001; Agrawal; Amos, 2008; Atkin, 1983; Ohanian, 1990]. Still, there have been no studies of the visual image as a verbal analogue.SA resorts to visual allusion when it features such social issues as AIDS / HIV, smoking, illiteracy, and blood donation. For instance, the popular internet campaign for HIV awareness features the image of Superman on a drip, which might warn the young target audience that no one is safe.

Fig. 9. Example of visual comparison in social advertising
Available at: *http://www.subastas-coches.es/noticias/car-ads-easter-drive-safely*

Fig. 10. Example of visual allusion in social advertising
Available at: *https://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2017/09/14/the-fear-appeal-advertising/*

Fig. 11. Example of visual allusion in commercial advertising.
Available at: *http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2006/rush-milk-just-a-little-naughty*

Fig. 12. Example of visual synecdoche in social advertising
Available at: *https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/hemosc_hero_8*

Figure 10 comes from a set of posters on AIDS awareness. The recognizable image of the Superwoman is put into alien environment of a medical ward. According to comic books and films about superheroes, they are superior to ordinary humans and associated with power. The poster, however, suggests that there are no superpowers when it comes to AIDS.

In CA, visual allusion is a recognizable image (a celebrity or a fictional character) integrated in the text as a photo or a drawing. In CA it serves to attract attention to the advertised object and agitates for purchasing it. The cognitive mechanism behind the visual allusion triggers the following association in the mind of the recipient: success + admiration + money + the advertised object. While the first three components are hard to achieve, the advertised object becomes the only option to associate oneself with the celebrity. Thus, by purchasing the item,

the consumer acquires not only the goods but also the so called "social currency".

Figure 11 shows Rapunzel cutting her hair — something the real Rapunzel, bound by the fairy-tale plot, would never do. However, the personage is associated with a strong, independent female character from the recent dismay animated film. Her image is used to advertise fat free yoghurt with the "just a little naughty" slogan. By adding the positive evaluativity to the product image, designers seemed to transfer the idea of freedom: the yoghurt set Rapunzel free from the binding fairy-tale rules, and the same will happen to you if you purchase the drink.

The analysis has shown that the less used visual stylistic means are visual synecdoche, hyperbole, litotes, graphon, euphemism and gradation.

As for **visual synecdoche**, in SA it depicts an image of a part instead of an entire object, or

a particular concept instead of a general one and vice versa, which explicates an acceptable social assessment of a particular social problem or phenomenon. SA resorts to visual synecdoche in texts that target the problems of environmental protection, violation of traffic rules, or those promoting healthy lifestyle.

The poster in Figure 12 promotes the idea of blood donation. For many people, fingers may be associated with finger stick testing and thus with blood (although no finger can be used for blood donation, of course). By dressing the index finger in a miniature superman gear, designers evoke associations with the power of good and heroism. The idea is that of glorification of blood donation: you do not have to look like a superhero, because a part of your organism can make you one.

In CA, visual synecdoche is an image of a part instead of an entire object, or a particular concept instead of a general one and vice versa, which is used to highlight the most attractive parts of the advertised item or the worst aspect of the problem the advertised item is supposed to solve. In this way, posters advertising ketchup, tea, coffee, and juice quite often depict ingredients instead of the whole product, thus underlining the environmentally friendly character of the product and absence of chemical additives. In CA, synecdoche can be com-

bined with other visual stylistic means, such as personification, e.g. a beer poster may feature curvy parts of two upside-down beer bottles, which, at a certain angle, resemble female legs.

In this ad, hand shake stands for the idea of any physical contact and give a clear vision of the chain that connects the image of a sticky pet and the advertised soap. By putting the pet and the soap on opposite ends of the chain, designers opposed the negatively evaluated image of the pet with the positively evaluated image of the soap.

Visual hyperbole in SA is a deliberately exaggerated image of a social object or phenomenon, usually exploited to demonstrate the scale of the social problem or disaster. In CA it presupposes a deliberate exaggeration of the advantages ascribed to the advertised object.

Figure 14 shows an exaggerated image of a chocolate bar combined with that of a truck. The size of the bar suggests that the customers get much more for the money they spend. The exaggerated volume of the chocolate adds to the positive evaluativity of the advertised product.

As for **visual litotes**, in SA it is an intentionally reduced image of a social object or phenomenon, usually demonstrating the futility of disparate actions in dealing with certain social problems.

Fig. 13. Example of visual synecdoche in commercial advertising
Available at: *https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/dettol_huron*

Fig. 14. Example of visual hyperbole in commercial advertising
Available at: *https://www.designspiration.net/save/14322375027530/*

Fig. 15. Example of visual litotes in social advertising
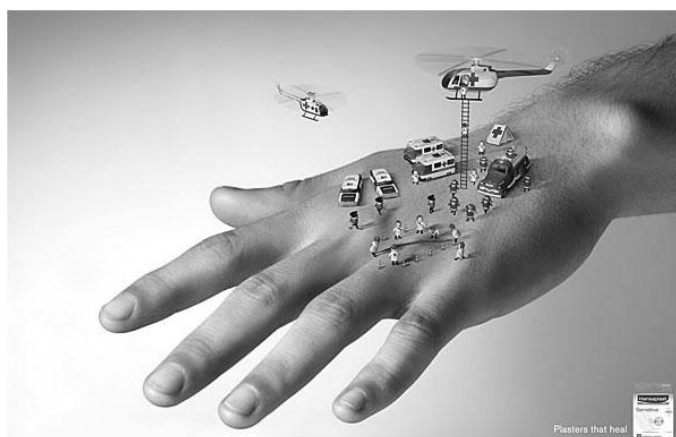Available at: *https://www.pinterest.ru/pin/424605071095571315/*

Fig. 16. Example of visual litotes in commercial advertising.

Available at:
https://designtaxi.com/news/356381/Creative-Ads-That-Use-Hands-To-Bring-Their-Messages-Across/

In Figure 15, the miniature boy's head combined with the body of an adult man illustrates the idea that the problems of the man have their roots in his abused childhood. Childhood associates with helplessness, but in this poster helplessness of an abused child is extended on the image of the grown up.

In CA it often signifies a deliberately reduced amount of advertised product to stress its effectiveness. In CA visual litotes and hyper-

bole often come hand in hand, e.g. the familiar image of an enormous heap of dirty dishes that can be cleaned with a tiny drop of dish soap.

In this ad (Figure 16), the diminutive figures of doctors and firemen show that the plaster will effortlessly cure any cut. It brings across the positive idea that the plaster is as good as a miniature emergency brigade, whose image associates with consolidated effective work.

In SA, **visual gradation** is an image that incorporates a series of images that differ from one another according to certain characteristics, consistently forcing or, conversely, lowering the emotional perception and allowing unequivocal interpretation of the desired social assessment of the social problem in question. It is often used in creolized texts that target environmental pollution, traffic rules violation, and healthy lifestyle. In CA, visual gradation is an image that incorporates a series of images that differ from one another according to certain characteristics, and demonstrating the effectiveness of the advertised product. Like litotes and hyperbole, it is most often used in posters that promote various detergents.

The poster in Figure 17 show the effect of skin colour on the number of police checks per year. Although the image may associate with an innocent colour scheme from a powder or a make-up concealer, the verbal message explains it all. The idea is that the darker the skin

of the citizen, the more often he or she is stopped by the police for no reason.

As for **visual euphemism**, it has been observed in CA, but not in SA. It substitutes the image of the advertised item whose depiction is tabooed by the society as it is connected with sexual sphere of life, certain parts of body and bodily functions, death or diseases. Visual euphemism cannot be avoided in personal hygiene products, pharmaceutical products connected with the diseases of the genitourinary system. The absence of visual euphemism in SA may result from the fact that the main goal of SA is to disclose social problems by speaking openly about what has been suppressed.

The ad in Figure 18 advertises a gel for intimate hygiene and uses an image of a beaver as a substitute for the taboo meaning of the word "beaver". Designers obviously intended to use the power of taboo words to humour and flatter the audience who know the taboo meaning by making them feel part of a group. The word appears in the verbal part of the message, thus doubling the effect.

The least used visual stylistic device is **visual graphon**, which is a visualization of communicative peculiarities of individuals with speech disorders in order to promote tolerance to such people. For instance, in Figure 19 the reduplicated poster imitates stuttering.
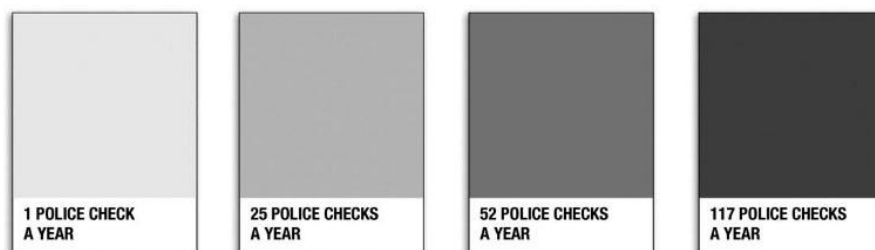

Fig. 17. Example of visual gradation in social advertising
Available at: *https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/licra_police_checks*
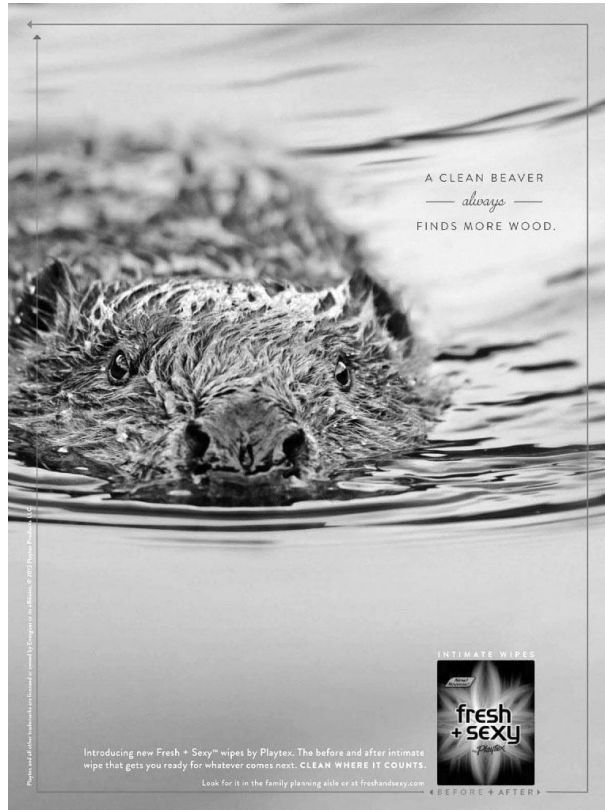
Fig. 18. Example of visual euphemism in commercial advertising
Available at: *https://eaeng3114.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/a-clean-beaver-always-finds-more-wood/*

Fig. 19. Example of visual graphon in social advertising
Available at: *https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/outdoor/nfs_stutter_billboard*

Three experiments were developed and conducted in order to confirm or disprove the following hypothesis: visual stylistic means are constructed similarly to linguistic stylistic means but not perceived as a means of influence unless the recipients are warned about it. The conducted experiments proved that visual stylistic tools are easily recognized by recipients as means of manipulation and are clearly classified by type only if they are presented with some information on their decoding and classi-fication. Without information on their decoding, visual stylistic tools are perceived as metaphors or comparisons. The method of decoding information by means of visual stylistic devices reveals a covert suggestive nature, which allows advertisers 1) to appeal directly to the emotions of the recipients, 2) to avoid blocking the required emotions and associations, 3) to avoid blocking the critical perception. Such a property of visual stylistic means 1) makes advertising texts memorable, 2) increases their impact po-

tential in the texts of social and commercial advertising.

According to the data obtained from the first experiment, the participants kept confusing comparison and metaphor and comparison and gradation. Besides, when the participants were not sure that they had correctly identified the visual stylistic tool, they tended to mark it as a coded metaphorical transfer. Surprisingly, depersonification turned out to be the biggest challenge. In most cases, the participants identified it as a comparison or metaphor. The most memorable advertising texts included those with visual hyperbole, depersonification, and personification (ranked in descending order), the last position belonged to advertising texts with comparison and metaphor in equal proportions. The data obtained from the second experiment gave similar results. The greatest difficulties were also connected the distinction between comparison and metaphor. However, when the participants hesitated to identify the visual stylistic tool, they tended to indicate it as a comparison. Similarly, the advertising texts with visual hyperbole proved to be the most memorable ones, followed by comparison and depersonification, while the fourth position was occupied by advertising texts with personification and metaphor in equal proportions. The main difference in the results of the two experiments was in the percentage of non-identified devices. In the first experiment, when the participants were not reminded of all possible stylistic means, the percentage of non-identified means was 3%. However, in the second experiment, when the participants were allowed to recall the entire spectrum of stylistic means, the failure rate was about 15%. The results also differed in the number of misidentified visual stylistic means: in the first case there were 7% of misinterpreted devices, in the second — 13%.

As for the third experiment, the percentage of non-identification was 0% and that of misidentification was 3%. Similarly, the participants experienced difficulties in differentiating comparison and metaphor. According to memorability, the advertising texts with a visual hyperbole were also on the first place. According to the data obtained from all three experiments, there were no differences in the recognition of visual stylistic means related to their belonging to CA or SA.

In conclusion, it can be stated that:

– visual stylistic means are rather extensively used both in SA and CA since modern advertising target the so called global recipient who belongs to various cultures;

– their goal is to strengthen the potential effectiveness of internet advertising and prevent the information loss;

– visual stylistic means can be easily recognized by the recipients as means of manipulation and are clearly classified by type only if there they were preliminarily presented with information on their decoding and classification;

– the covert suggestive nature of this coding method makes it possible to appeal directly to the emotions of the recipient while avoiding blocking the desired emotions, associations, and without hindering the critical perception;

– as for the most wide-spread visual stylistic devises in SA and CA, they are visual metaphor, comparison and allusion;

– the popularity of this or that particular visual stylistic means depends on whether it is commercial or social advertising;

– visual stylistic means are created according to the principles of their verbal analogues, which allows one to raise its impact in information transfer;

– visual stylistic means can lose their potential impact when their use becomes stereotyped. As a result, the least common visual stylistic means have a greater impact potential.

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АННОТАЦИЯ. *В данной статье на материале коммерческой и социальной рекламы визуальные стилистические тропы рассматриваются с позиций теории визуальной коммуникации как средства манипуляции. Согласно данной теории, визуальные стилистические средства обладают способностью направлять восприятие реципиента*

и манипулировать им. Кодирование визуальной информации на основе средств вербальной стилистики позволяет апеллировать непосредственно к эмоциям реципиента и минимизирует потерю информации в тех случаях, когда рекламный интернет-постер проектировался на английском языке, но предназначался для глобальной аудитории, чье владение английским существенно варьируется. Исследование позволило уточнить определения различных визуальных стилистических приемов на материале коммерческой и социальной рекламы. По мнению авторов, визуальные стилистические средства являются аналогами вербальных, но реципиенты не в состоянии увидеть в них средство воздействия. Скрытый характер суггестивного воздействия, которое средства визуальной стилистики оказывают на реципиента, является мощным манипулятивным ресурсом и инструментом, позволяющим вызывать заданные ассоциации и оценочные суждения, продуцируя более эффективную рекламу.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: *социальная реклама; коммерческая реклама; суггестия; манипулятивное воздействие; визуальные стилистические средства; визуальные метафоры; визуальные сравнения; глобальные потребители; рекламный дискурс; английский язык.*

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