# Using Art in Promotion: Types of Commercial Communication with Visual Art

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### ABSTRACT

In a fiercely competitive globalized market where functional differences between products are minimal, brands are compelled to seek out novel communication strategies that offer value and foster consumer engagement due to the abundance of advertising. In this regard, it is suggested that incorporating references to visual art into commercial communications is a legitimate method that is supported by research on the phenomenon of "art infusion". The goal of this article is to classify the variety of forms that this strategy can take. It does this by defining eleven distinct typologies, including several examples, based on Hjemslev's model applied to the study of the advertising language signifier through the expression/content dichotomy.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Art, Typology, Commercial Communication

## 1. Introduction

The value of intangible assets has been rising at an alarming rate in a communication landscape that is changing due to the influence of new technologies on society and the opportunities and challenges that come with globalization. These include the brand and its management, which are now regarded as core principles in the business sector (Villafane, 2001). But up until a few decades ago, the dominant business model relied solely on supply and demand laws and the market's capacity to strike a balance between them (Munoz, 2008). This strategy is evident in the communication, which is dominated by tactics aimed at swaying the public with a large-scale, one-way message. These tactics are primarily drawn from Shannon and Weaver's

mathematical theory of information.

This focus is very different from the reality of today, where creative communication is enabling a company to differentiate itself from its publics, leading to a change in the relationship between the company and its publics (Costa, 2012). The primary cause is that modern consumers expect more from products in terms of quality and function—"an added value for which the consumer is wiling to pay" (Bocigas, 2011: 53). The market is recast as a consumer one, with the prosumer as the new main character. This person is more discerning, aware, and engaged, and they expect personalized care, excellence—not just quality variety, accessibility, and promptness at a fair price. According to Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010), this new customer is also a co-creator of the products since they are made to suit his needs and preferences and reflect his growing skepticism of traditional advertising language. Consumers who use multiple screens and channels demand communication that is pertinent, helpful, exciting, amusing, and encourages interaction.

## 2. Discussion of Theories

### 2.1 Art and Advertising: Their Interaction

The combination of art and advertising, while seemingly novel to some, is actually not. Around 1900, both disciplines first came together when avant-garde artists saw an opportunity to contribute to the development of a new urban space—one where products were displayed and even infiltrated the home—in advertising in the form of posters (González, 1997). At this point, art starts to play a role in shaping the brand image of the emerging consumer society. However, when advertising is incorporated into art as a crucial component of postmodern culture, decades would need to pass before the opposite phenomenon materializes.

Images of products and genotypes would not become a recurrent source of themes for art until the emergence of Pop Art (Díaz, 2010). However, "the iconographic content has oscillated between paying tribute, irony, and cultural critique depending on the nature of the work" (Reguera, 2014). In any case, it is undeniable that during the 20th century, the boundary between advertising and art has gradually eroded. To the extent that they both now co-create the iconographic universe of the modern consumer, which blends the worlds of pop culture and high culture (Brea, 2009). A phenomenon that reveals the dissolution of the artistic in the society of information in order to give way to the "visual culture" (Almela, 2004: 1), in which the iconosphere3, understood as the sum of the images disseminated by the visual culture of

the masses, "Not only is it made up of the physical objects carrying an iconic configuration, but additionally the pictures that the media reproduces and spreads (Brihuega, 2006: 399). Additionally, it can be claimed that, as in the past, when it was customary for the advertising industry to commission well-known artists to create pieces, advertisers now constantly consult the art world (Walzer, 2010). In the same vein, it is important to acknowledge that certain artistic movements have "a tendency in some artistic movements to use resources coming from the advertising world" (Pérez, 1998: 184), demonstrating the reciprocal influences that have existed between advertising and art.



Image 1: Source from Y&R (THE AD TO THE WORLD)(weebly.com)

Example 1

Image 1:  The French have a great appreciation for charcuterie, especially saucisson. However, it's exclusive to France. Cochonou is a saucisson company that chooses to parody the fact that the French are unable to live (or leave) without it.
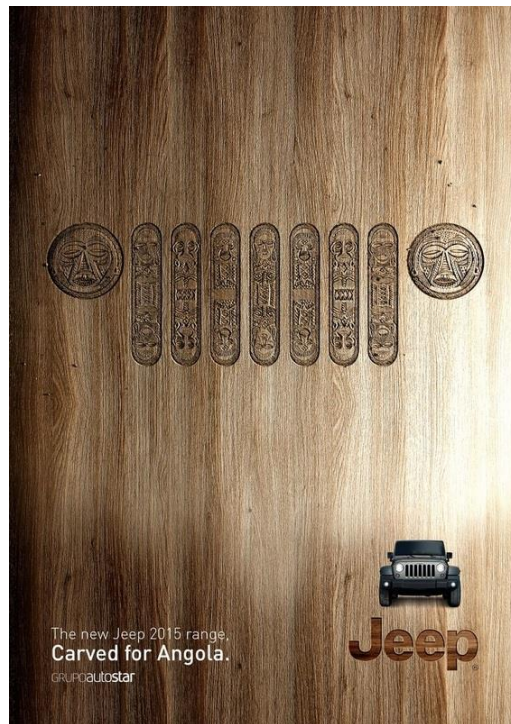
Example 2

To convey to the populace that the new Jeep was tailored for their region, Jeep combined elements of its visual identity with the direct codes of Angolan wood masks and sculptures.

**Example 3**

Finally, those print ads realized by an American student from Chicago for the Italian company Roma, directly refers to two visuals typically Italian. But this looks like to be more for an audience from another country because the Pisa Tower and the Venice gondola are touristic symbols. This is a good way to give a message to a particular culture by using the visual identity of another one.

Regarding the blending of art and advertising, most writers support an integrative vision (González, 1997: 81; Alberdi, 2002: 90; Hetsroni and Tukachinsky, 2005: 94). They support the democratization of culture, which is defined as putting cultural resources at everyone's disposal and enabling dialogue between popular culture and art (Eco, 2009: 27–28). They use the expansion of the art object field as justification for the convergence of "great art" and "popular culture" (Cruz, 2001: 167). This phenomenon suggests that everyday visual language is reviving, and advertising is one place where it naturally appears (Gúzner and Fernández, 1991: 62).

### 2.2. Using Artistic Expression in Commurcial Communications

Any proposal that examines the use of art as a tool for advertising ought to begin with an explanation of each term. In light of earlier research suggesting that consumers have broad preconceptions about art, a consumer-focused viewpoint will be used moving forward, with the understanding that art is defined as that which viewers identify as such (Joy and Sherry, 2003). Regarding the notion of advertising, the following definition will be applied from a marketing standpoint:

An impersonal, paid-for information transmission that is directed towards a target audience through a communication medium, with the transmitter6 identified, and with specific goals in mind—whether immediate or not—that aim to influence consumer behavior or opinion or stimulate demand for the product (Santesmanes, Merino, Sánchez and Pintado, 2009: 238). In this instance, it is necessary to delve deeply into the understanding of the connection between art and advertising from the perspective of brand management.

In this way, it can be summed up that there are three main reasons why advertising uses art: to inspire, to make the message easier to understand, and/or to set itself apart by adding value to the product (Cavalli, 2007). Undoubtedly, advertisers require images to serve as inspiration for their commercials. As a result, art is constantly incorporated into daily life through advertising

(Asenjo, 1998: 53). Conversely, advertising becomes easier for the general public to understand when it is motivated by universally understood themes, schemes of perception, and symbolism. Consequently, this reinforces the messages' effectiveness (Sarmiento, 2011: 138).

### 3. Methodology

The pieces that were included in the sample for analysis were limited to those that fell into the categories of TV advertising, print advertising, outdoor advertising, product design, and logoty pes10. The analysis has purposely concentrated only on visual art, even though the influence of art in advertising is not limited to graphic or audiovisual pieces because it is also found in non-conventional advertising techniques11, such as street marketing (Llorente and García, 2016), ambient marketing (Torre blanca and Lorente,2012:6), or "performance," flash mob-type advertising (Rodríguez-Pina, 2016), among other possibilities. The reason for this is that it is extremely uncommon to find non-visual art—without music—used as a marketing tool, and in this instance, it is dependent on the image.

We have turned to linguistic transposition to define the classification criteria of advertisement pieces. Hjemslev12 proposed studying the signifier through the expression/content dichotomy (Cifuentes, 2006: 6), which corresponds to the signifier/signified binominal of the Saussure School (Romero, 2014). The primary classification criteria can be defined by applying the form of expression and the form of content, two related arguments found in each of the semiotic functions of language, including, by analogy, advertising language, according to Hjelmslev. There are two main categories that arise from its application.

a) In accordance with the manner in which art is inserted into advertising, which will be applied to the text and image, the two distinctive elements of convention advertising pieces; and

b) Based on the content's format, which is limited by the nature of the relationship that is established—from the perspective of brand management—between the product/brand that uses the art referenced in its communication and the reference to art.

### Types of Visual Art usage in Commercial Communication

### 4.1. Types of Art-Based Advertising Based on Expression Method

There have been questions about whether the text comes first in advertising messages or the image comes first ever since the initial analyses of these messages (Hernando, 1994). Undoubtedly, advertising pieces with rare linguistic codes are rare and typically target luxury

products to highlight their exclusivity (Díaz-Soloaga, 2007). Conversely, the majority of advertising pieces feature both codes coexisting (Boscán and Mendoza, 2004). However, nearly fifty years ago, Roland Barthes (1977) wondered if the advertising text could be removed as unnecessary because, in his view, the image is what makes an advertisement persuasive.

### 4.1.1. Presence of References to Art in Advertising Text

The ability of advertising text to create differentiated communication is demonstrated by strategies that reference art. These can be as simple as naming a product with the name of an artist to link the artist's prestige and iconography to the brand, or as complex as using the term "art" in the slogan to increase perceived value. Of course, there are also allusions to art in advertising copy, most of which take the shape of well-known quotes from renowned artists.
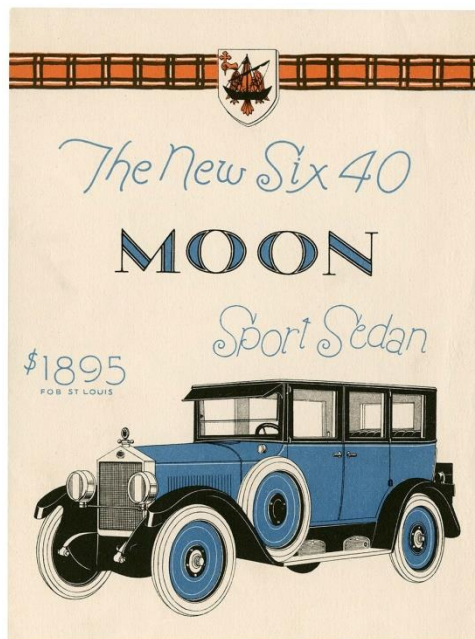


**Image 4: Source from wired (web)**

Image 4: Embark on a revolutionary journey with the Six 40 Moon Car - the epitome of cutting-edge technology and design. This extraordinary vehicle combines luxury, sustainability, and space exploration in a way that's never been seen before. Get ready to elevate your driving experience to new heights!

Image 5: Source from Guardian (web)

Image 5: "Discover the revolutionary power of Latices Cold Washing Soap, a game-changer in laundry care. Say goodbye to the traditional methods and embrace a new era of cleanliness and freshness for your clothes!"

It is presumably because it is the most efficient method of producing the effect of art transfusion, since the likelihood that the product will acquire the favorable connotations associated with the art increases with its explicit presence and degree of resemblance to the original work. Because of this, using the entire piece of art directly results in the best scenario. One notable example is the use of Vermeer's La Lechera (1658) painting in the company's advertising campaign.

### 4.1.2    Advertising shifts culture



**Image 6 :** Source from Prager Creative (web)

Advertising plays a significant role in shaping and influencing culture in various ways. As a powerful tool for communication and persuasion, advertising has the ability to impact societal norms, values, and behaviors. Here are several ways in which advertising shifts culture:

Reflecting Cultural Values:

Advertisements often reflect the prevailing cultural values and trends of a society. They showcase what is considered desirable, aspirational, or acceptable at a given time. By doing so, advertising reinforces existing cultural norms and attitudes.

Setting Trends and Standards:

Advertisements have the power to introduce new trends and set standards for what is considered fashionable, modern, or progressive. Brands often use advertising to position their products or services as cutting-edge or in line with the latest cultural developments

The visual becomes even more important than previously imagined when approaching web advertising given the smaller frames and challenges of keeping users engaged. Photomochi, founded by Christopher C. Lee, is one such agency that deals with the impact of how visual media today can quickly and succinctly capture an entire message within a single frame or a Image or short film. While Jean-Luc Godard in the 1980s pronounced that cinema is dead, what has become clear in this millennium is that messages are less auteur-driven than before, but that media messages are transcending earlier media language.

In a seemingly paradoxical move, what online advertisement needs to succeed at is in getting us, the consumer, to want to skip that bathroom break altogether while making us look forward to the next advertisement. Even Hulu has given viewers the choice of which advertisement to watch and more recently it is has announced plans to create different types of advertisements for binge watchers.

**Conclusion:**

Due to the current market's intense competition as well as the emergence of a new type of consumer that is more demanding, knowledgeable, engaged, multi-screen, and increasingly doubtful of the discourse surrounding conventional advertising to which he is overexposed, brands must seek to differentiate themselves through creative management techniques that raise the perceived value of their products in the eyes of the consumer. In this situation, it is imperative to have an emotionally charged and pertinent communication that the customer can engage with. As a result, it is suggested that using allusions to art in commercial brand

messaging is a legitimate strategy for building rapport with customers.

Since art and advertising have a long and growing relationship, there are an increasing number of supporters of an integrative vision that supports the convergence of art and advertising in a shared space where both benefit from each other, as opposed to the critical vision of those who deny an artistic dimension of advertising. An increasing number of brands are adopting this tactic as empirical evidence of the positive perception and assessment of consumer goods whose advertising incorporates visual art (the so-called "art transfusion effect") grows.

Based on how the art is expressed in the text and image and what kind of content it has—that is, the kind of relationship established, from the perspective of brand management, between the reference to art and the product/brand that uses it in its communication—the various formulas used in the implementation of visual art as an advertising resource can be divided into eleven categories. This is an elemental classification of the taxonomy of the use of art in commercial communication, but it is valid because it opens up new avenues for research for future development due to the abundance of available case studies and the ongoing evolution of advertising strategies.

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