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THE ROLE OF THE AESTHETIC FUNCTION IN PRINTED ECOLOGICAL ADVERTISING



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The Role of the Aesthetic Function in Printed Ecological Advertising

Abstract. The aesthetic dimension in ecological advertising plays a crucial role in establishing an emotional connection between the audience and environmental issues, stimulating involvement and commitment to conservation efforts. The aesthetic function embedded in ecological advertising serves as a foundation for raising awareness and mobilizing the public regarding environmental issues. This aesthetic approach fosters deep emotional connections, motivating active involvement in environmental initiatives and significantly contributing to leaving a lasting impression and focusing attention on the ecological message conveyed. The use of visually captivating imagery, including landscapes and vibrant colors, grabs attention and sparks curiosity among viewers. Their distinctive style, together with origindesign elements, elevates them to an artistic level, enriching their impact and resonance. Ecological advertising draws inspiration from diverse aesthetic influences, similar to those found in fine art, with deliberate reinterpretations and realignments to serve its purpose. Adherence to fundamental design principles ensures impactful and memorable ecological advertising campaigns. By presenting aesthetic means, namely disturbing aspects of environmental degradation, ecological ads can evoke a strong emotional response among the audience, prompting them to take action or support initiatives for nature conservation. However, it is essential for such imagery to be used judiciously and accompanied by messages/texts that provide solutions or inspire hope and positive action in the face of environmental issues. We will observe how techniques like unity, harmony, and balance, along with intentional emphasis and contrast, enhance the effectiveness of ecological advertising in conveying its message to the public.
Keywords: aesthetic function, ecological advertising, image, style.

Rolul funcției estetice în reclama ecologică tipărită

Rezumat. Dimensiunea estetică în publicitatea ecologică joacă un rol crucial pentru stabilirea unei conexiuni emoționale între public și problemele de mediu, stimulând implicarea și angajamentul în eforturile de conservare. Funcția estetică încorporată în publicitatea ecologică servește ca o bază pentru creșterea conștientizării și mobilizarea publicului în privința problemelor de mediu. Această abordare estetică favorizează conexiuni emoționale profunde, motivând implicarea activă în inițiativele de mediu și contribuie semnificativ la lăsarea unei impresii de durată și la concentrarea atenției asupra mesajului ecologic transmis. Utilizarea imaginilor captivante vizual, inclusiv a peisajelor și culorilor vibrante, atrage atenția și stimulează curiozitatea în rândul receptorilor. Stilul lor distinctiv, împreună cu elementele originale de design, le ridică la un nivel artistic, îmbogățindu-le impactul și rezonanța. Publicitatea ecologică se inspiră din diverse influențe estetice, asemănătoare cu cele găsite în arta fină, cu reinterpretări și realiniere deliberate pentru a-și servi scopul. Respectarea principiilor fundamentale de design asigură campanii de publicitate ecologică impactante și memorabile. Prin prezentarea mijloacelor estetice, si anume a unor aspecte tulburătoare ale degradării mediului înconjurător, reclamele ecologice pot determina o reacție emoțională puternică în rândul publicului, îndemnându-i să ia măsuri sau să sprijine inițiative pentru conservarea naturii. Totuși, este esențial ca astfel de imagini să fie folosite cu discernământ și să fie însoțite de mesaje/texte care să ofere soluții sau să inspire speranță și acțiune pozitivă în fața problemelor de mediu. Vom observa cum tehnici ca unitatea, armonia și echilibrul, împreună cu accentuarea și contrastul intenționat, îmbunătățesc eficacitatea publicității ecologice în transmiterea mesajului său către public.
Cuvinte-cheie: funcția estetică, publicitate ecologică, imagine, stil.

The aesthetic function is integrated into the context of social phenomena, regardless of whether it is attributed to an object or activity, whether it falls within the artistic sphere or not. The decision as to whether a particular object can be considered art depends on the importance of the aesthetic function and how it is perceived within different forms of society. The boundaries of this concept are often a subject of debate, and their delineation can be difficult. The evaluation of the aesthetic function is influenced not only by objective criteria but also by subjective ones, so what may be considered aesthetic by one individual may not be appreciated in the same way by another. Certainly, there are artifacts for which the aesthetic function is undeniable, such as the famous works of art by Da Vinci that have been appreciated over time. However, even art, which should primarily focus on the aesthetic aspect, can attribute the label "beautiful" to things that may be difficult to appreciate at first glance.

The boundaries between art and advertising have blurred increasingly in modern times. Artists, designers, and advertisers often draw inspiration from each other's domains, leading to a fusion of artistic elements in advertising campaigns and vice versa. Art itself has been used as a powerful means for advertising various products, causes, and ideas.

Just as realism in art aimed to mimic reality through visual representation, ecological advertisements strive to depict environmental truths through printed media. However, realism in art, as noted by film theorist Christian Metz, is a constructed illusion rather than an exact reflection of reality [1]. Similarly, printed ecological advertisements may employ visual codes to convey environmental messages, but they do not directly replicate the complexity of ecological systems. Nelson Goodman's assertion that realism is relative to cultural standards applies to ecological advertisements as well [2]. The visual language used in these ads may seem natural over time, but viewers still need to learn how to interpret and decode their environmental messages.

Just as early viewers of Impressionist art struggled to recognize its subjects, viewers of ecological advertisements may initially find it challenging to grasp the full depth of environmental issues described. Like photography, which involves transformations and cultural adaptation, ecological advertisements require the audience to engage in a process of understanding and interpretation. In the world of ecological advertising, what counts as realistic representation of environmental issues evolves over time. Just as early film audiences were initially confounded by new cinematic techniques, viewers of ecological advertisements may need to adjust to evolving visual codes and conventions.

Modern advertising has been strongly influenced by artistic and cultural movements such as modernism, avant-garde, and postmodernism. These influences have shaped how advertisements are conceived, presented, and perceived by the general public.

Modernism, which particularly dominated the interwar period, brought about a change in the aesthetics of advertising, promoting the idea that form should follow function. As a result, advertising became simpler, more geometric, and more focused on functionality and efficiency. The emphasis was placed on message clarity and the use of modern technologies to convey it.

The avant-garde, with its focus on experimentation and innovation, introduced unexpected and non-conformist elements into advertising. Advertisements began to use artistic techniques such as collages, unconventional typography, and juxtaposition of images to attract attention and convey emotional or social messages.

Postmodernism led to a more ironic and self-reflexive approach in advertising. This style encouraged wordplay, irony, references to popular culture, and undermining of conventional norms. Postmodern advertising often attempted to manipulate and subvert audience expectations, to question authority, and to create an interactive dialogue with viewers.

The aesthetics of advertising considers the phenomenon of advertising not only as a type of social activity, a form of communication, but also as a phenomenon of modern artistic culture, which tends to gradually form and develop

as a new type of mass art that synthesizes means of expression from other types of art: cinema, theater, painting, literature, photography, music, and many others. Most experts acknowledge that advertising can be considered in the context of contemporary mass art. Étienne Souriau in the book "L'Avenir de l'esthétique". Essai sur l'objet d'une science naissante" continues and develops his father's theoretical concepts and considers that aesthetics must take into account the new forms that appear at an impressive rate depending on the requirements of industrial production [1].

Regarding advertising, the question of aesthetics is absolutely fundamental, especially concerning the creative part of advertising messages. To discuss the issue of aesthetics in advertising, it is necessary to define fundamental concepts, such as aesthetics and kitsch, and to analyze in more detail their role in advertising creation. Thinking about the role of aesthetic categories of beauty and ugliness in advertising, it is appropriate to try to find them through function, norm, and aesthetic value.

Both commercial advertising and social advertising, or in our case ecological advertising, according to researchers, actually fulfill a similar set of functions. However, it is evident that these functions are refracted in a specific way, depending on the sphere of implementation. Let's summarize these differences.

The informative function: in commercial advertising – informing the audience about a product or service, its features and benefits, about selling points, promotions, discounts; in ecological advertising – communicating with the public, where a problem is identified and a solution is proposed.

The economic function: in commercial advertising – promoting the sales of goods and services, increasing investments; in ecological advertising – the long-term economic task: eliminating various social problems leads to general welfare and is a means of economic stability for the state.

The educational function: in commercial advertising – spreading information about innovations in various commercial structures; in ecological advertising – promoting certain values, norms, social education of the public.

The social function: in commercial advertising – forming in the consumer's mind the image of a useful and socially relevant product or service; an indication of the brand's importance in society; in ecological advertising – forming public awareness, changing the behavioral model of society members.

The aesthetic function: in commercial advertising – shaping the consumer's taste; in ecological advertising – shaping the public's taste, but from the perspective of morality, aesthetics, and humanism.

While the content of an advertisement focuses more on the objective of "selling or convincing," the form aims to "capture attention." Therefore, the form contributes more to the aesthetic function. Advertising conveys information not only about goods and services but also about different types of attitudes forming in society. In ecological advertising messages, mostly where the image of nature is used, both messages with positive emotional impact and negative ones regarding human influence on the environment are employed.

The aesthetic function of ecological advertising is achieved by shaping consumer taste, using aesthetic means to convey messages that influence the perception and attitudes of the public regarding environmental issues and motivate action to protect the environment. Well-made advertisements and posters cultivate the sensitivity and taste of the public, having a decisive impact on consumer choices. This profound aesthetic experience, formed through sensory knowledge, allows advertising to exert a strong influence. Studies in the field of advertising aesthetics explore these aspects, highlighting the importance of aesthetic communication in advertising. It is noteworthy that advertising combining an emotional-sensory-intellectual feature, which has a regular and mass character, has a decisive influence on consumer choice. This sensory-intellectual experience is not just a reaction to an advertising message; it is a deep

layer of long-lasting culture – an aesthetic experience formed through sensory knowledge and allows advertising to exert a strong influence on a person. According to Bovee C., research in the field of advertising aesthetics is conducted in relation to these forms of sensory and intellectual experience, which actualize the significance of the advertising message for an individual.

Ecological advertising is oriented towards a mass audience, which may have difficulty understanding complex artistic and expressive images. Mostly conceived not just for the elite but for the general public, ecological advertising strives to be accessible and understandable to the average consciousness. Therefore, ecological advertising refers to simple, elementary, expressive spectacular forms and is directed not towards the complex existential experiences of a person but towards primary vital needs and interests. Focusing on an audience with low education, with low intellectuality, low-quality promotional products often appear on the domestic market, which can be considered impolite, kitsch. Therefore, the main function of advertising creativity is utilitarian-pragmatic. The aesthetic function has a subordinate character.

Advertisement, using the aesthetic function, separates the promoted product from others and presents it as an object of aesthetic perception. The pleasure for the promoted object, which appears beautiful and good, leads to the desire to possess it. If we see in the advertisement the image of perfect nature, it arouses our craving and desire to be there. "By presenting the product in a plastic way, attractive photographs, luxurious interiors, refined décors, and beauty of the body and face, advertising poetizes the product and the brand and idealizes what is common in commerce." [3, p. 291] The content of the image is often symbolically shaped in accordance with the aesthetic vision of the creative team; its symbolic dimension, along with the aesthetic one, manifests a psychological impact on the audience [1, p. 43].

In the context of ecological advertising, the semiotic character of art used in images is important, applied to convey messages with impact and awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. Through the use of appropriate signs and symbols, ecological advertisements can efficiently communicate issues related to the conservation of natural resources, pollution reduction, and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. The sign in ecological advertising can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of ecological values and behaviors. Through colors, shapes, and gestures, advertisements can convey powerful messages about the importance of protecting the environment. This sign thus becomes a tool of social communication, as it urges individuals to act for the benefit of the environment.

Ecological advertisements often use symbols such as trees, wildlife, birds, flowing waters, etc., to convey powerful messages related to nature and biodiversity. Metaphors are used to illustrate the impact of human actions on the environment. Ecological advertisements resort to emotional language to inspire empathy, sympathy, and action from the audience. They can use words and expressions that evoke strong feelings, such as "protection," "saving," "care," "responsibility," etc.

Ecological advertising is subject to time constraints and requires simplifying messages to be effective. Both the content and form of ecological advertisements can convey strong signals and can influence consumer behavior towards more responsible and environmentally friendly consumption.

The aesthetic value of ecological advertisements is particularly important because the products or actions promoted must attract and inspire consumers to adopt eco-friendly practices. Therefore, aesthetic elements such as the beauty and harmony of design can contribute to increasing the impact and effectiveness of ecological advertisements.

Although ecological advertising may sometimes be criticized for approaching the concept of "kitsch" or for overly simplifying messages, the presence of aesthetic value in ecological advertisements can contribute to increasing attraction and impact on the target audience.

Thus, in ecological advertisements, aesthetic value can play a significant role in sensitizing and mobilizing people to protect the environment. The emotional content of advertising images is diverse and can evoke both positive and negative emotions [4, p. 110]. These include happiness, enthusiasm, nervousness, discouragement, disgust, phobia, fear, etc.

In the context of ecological advertising, the concepts of beauty and ugliness can be interpreted in a specific and relevant way to promote ecological values and sustainability. Beauty is a concept that we can associate with nature in all its diversity and splendor. A well-preserved natural landscape, plants and animals in their natural habitat, clean water, and fresh air are examples of ecological beauty. These elements are often used in ecological advertising to draw attention to the importance of protecting the environment.

On the other hand, ugliness in ecological advertising can be associated with pollution, deforestation, waste, destruction of natural habitats, and other human activities that harm the environment. By presenting these aspects convincingly and impactfully, ecological advertising aims to sensitize and mobilize people to act in support of environmental protection and restoration.

So, in ecological advertising, beauty and ugliness are not just aesthetic concepts, but they become symbols of the health and balance of the environment, serving as powerful tools for awareness and promotion of responsible ecological behavior.

U. Eco distinguishes between two orders of ugliness. The first is ugliness itself, and the second is formal ugliness. In ecological advertisements, the concept of ugliness can be applied to underline the contrast between unsustainable practices and ecological ones. Ugliness itself could represent the negative impact of pollution on the environment, such as images of waste choking ecosystems or scenes of massive deforestation. These images should evoke a sense of disgust and discomfort in the viewer, emphasizing the urgency of the need for ecological changes. On the other hand, formal ugliness can be associated with practices or products that violate ecological standards, such as excessive plastic packaging or polluting production processes. In ecological advertisements, using these images or concepts of ugliness can serve as a strong contrast, highlighting the need for adopting more sustainable behaviors and practices. It is important for these advertisements to be constructed in a way that generates positive emotions and inspires concrete actions in support of the environment.

Furthermore, the rise of digital media and social platforms has expanded the possibilities for artistic expression in advertising. Interactive campaigns, immersive experiences, and user-generated content blur the boundaries between traditional advertising formats and artistic efforts, inviting the audience to actively participate in the narratives of the messages.

Analyzing the specifics of ecological advertising, it refers to aesthetic categories that create both positive and negative emotional charges, such as the beautiful, the comic, the tragic, the ugly, or the terrible. The main purpose of advertising creativity in this case is suggestion, influence, or even manipulation of the consumer, for exemple figure 1.

This ecological advertisement explores aesthetic aspects that generate both positive and negative emotional charges, addressing concepts such as beauty, tragedy, ugliness, or horror. The main purpose of advertising creativity in this case is to suggest, influence, or even manipulate the consumer. The semiotics of creative advertising is complex and full of profound meanings. The figure 404 is a symbol of error in the online environment and the absence of sought-after information. In the context of the advertisement, it indicates the absence or loss of certain species or biodiversity in general. And the transformation of the figure 404 into the shape of a rock suggests solidity and permanence, but also the lack of life or surrounding nature. The images of trees symbolize fragility and the lack of natural resources. The fact that they are small and dry indicates the lack of vitality and the state of degradation of the

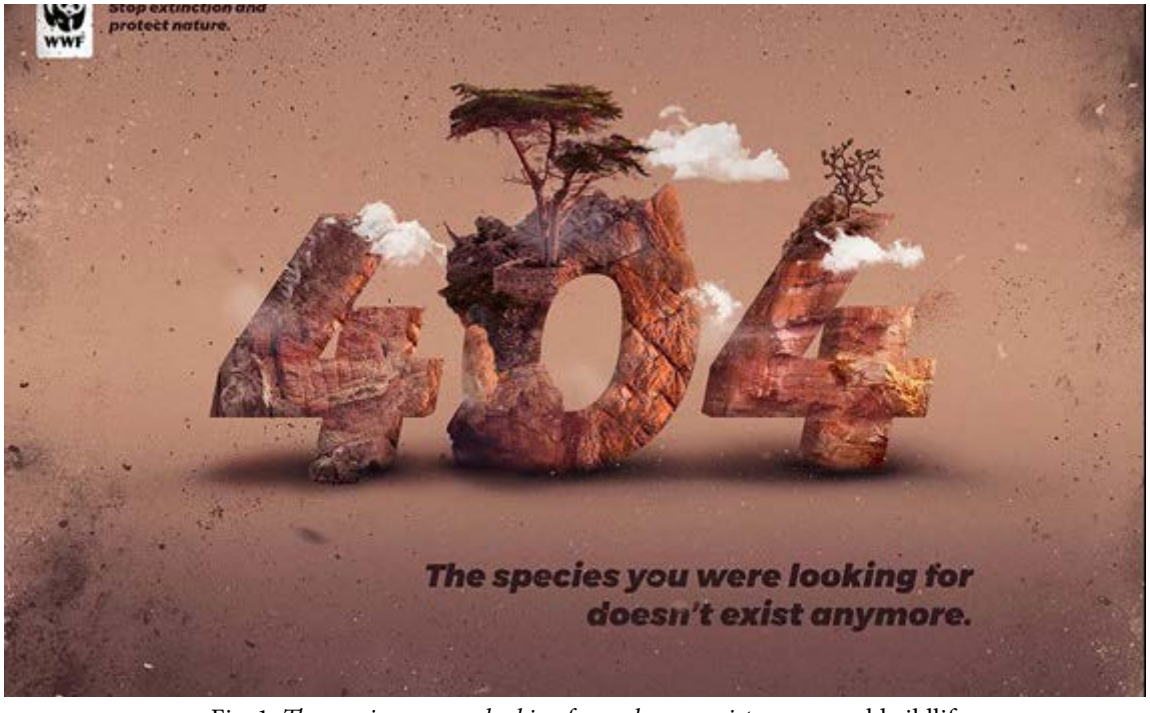


Fig. 1. *The species you are looking for no longer exist,* www.worldwildlife.org.

surrounding environment. The predominant brown tones in the image evoke aridity, lack of life, and lack of fertility in nature. These colors are associated with rock and desert, suggesting an inhospitable environment for life. While the absence of the sky may also symbolize the loss of freedom and the possibility of dreaming, in the context where nature is affected and ecosystems are destroyed. The quote is concise and direct, using simple and clear words to convey a complex idea. The construction of the sentence is simple, yet the impact is strong due to the connotations and meanings it evokes, suggesting that the species have disappeared completely and cannot be recovered. By emphasizing the contrast between the grim image and the powerful message, the ecological advertisement fulfills its purpose of sensitizing and raising awareness about environmental issues. The message aims to convey a powerful story about the loss and destruction of natural habitats and biodiversity. In this context, the message emphasizes the negative effects of human intervention on the environment and seeks to sensitize the public to the need to protect and conserve nature.

The graphic design of advertising images requires artistic creativity and originality. From a structural aspect, we observe that the design of advertising images adheres to a series of aesthetic principles: order, proportion, ratio, equivalence, size, unity, variety, etc. Together with these mentioned factors, aesthetic communication in advertising involves the application of aesthetic values, forms, and specific categories. These convey a pleasant aspect and at the same time of high quality. However, advertising images must not remain solely aesthetic objects; their practical value is validated by their ability to capture the interest of the public.

Overall, this advertisement uses powerful symbols and striking colors to emphasize the negative impact of human activities on the environment. Through the signs and symbols used, the ad aims to raise awareness among the public and urge them to take action in protecting and conserving nature. It seeks to draw attention to the devastating impact that human activities have on the environment, highlighting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems, and encourages the public to reflect on the importance of conservation and environmental protection. The content of the image is often symbolically shaped in accordance with the aesthetic vision of the creative team; its symbolic

dimension, along with its aesthetic dimension, has a psychological impact on the audience.

The semiotic nature of ecological advertising creativity is enhanced by the use of signs, symbols, and messages that convey not only information but also values, beliefs, and emotions related to environmental protection and sustainability.

Ecological advertising uses powerful images and compelling stories to attract attention and convey memorable messages. Photographs depicting the negative impact of human activities on the environment can have a strong effect on the audience. Through these methods and others, the semiotic nature of ecological advertising creativity is amplified, allowing advertising to become a powerful tool for sensitizing and mobilizing people to protect the environment.

The aesthetic function in ecological advertising plays a crucial role in forming an emotional connection between the public and environmental issues, thereby facilitating involvement and commitment to conservation actions. Therefore, it is important to attract attention and arouse the interest of the public. Beautiful images, natural landscapes, and vibrant colors are used to capture the viewer's gaze and arouse curiosity. These aesthetic elements help create a strong first impression and draw attention to the ecological message conveyed.

Ecological advertising highlights a creative and original expression of the environmental issue. Using symbols, metaphors, and aesthetics, it conveys a powerful and emotional message that goes beyond simply promoting a cause. The message evokes a wide range of emotions and reactions from the public, from sadness and concern to determination and the desire for action. This emotional aspect and deep connection with the audience reflect the potential of art to stimulate and provoke reactions and thoughts.

The evolution of representation in print ecological advertisements reflects the dynamic interaction between visual communication, environmental awareness, and cultural interpretation. As the audience engages with these advertisements, they participate in a dialogue that shapes perceptions and understanding of ecological realities in our modern world. Advertising can be interpreted in multiple ways and can provoke discussions and debates, which is typical of works of art. The subjective interpretation of the message and visual elements allows spectators to personally connect with the advertisement and reflect on their own perceptions and experiences. It also reflects and fits into a broader cultural context, addressing themes and issues that are relevant and current in contemporary society. This incorporation of social and ecological issues into advertising art highlights its importance and influence on culture and social consciousness.

In conclusion, the aesthetic function in ecological advertising plays a crucial role in sensitizing and mobilizing the public regarding environmental issues. Through aesthetic means, ecological advertising manages to create a deep emotional connection between the public and the cause of nature conservation, thereby encouraging active involvement and commitment to concrete actions for protecting the environment. The style of the images confers a personalized attribute, making them distinctive and unique, enhancing their identity and visual recognition. Originality in design can elevate the images to an artistic level, enriching them with metaphorical or symbolic qualities and aesthetic value. In this context, ecological advertising images draw inspiration from their aesthetic content, expressed in various artistic styles similar to fine art, with redefined and resignified intentions. The aesthetics of advertising images must adhere to fundamental design principles regarding compositional elements. These include unity, harmony, compatibility, and arrangement of elements, often emphasizing elements such as characters, objects, or colors. Additionally, contrast, variety in sizes, shapes, and colors, balance, the use of colors for emphasis and attention-grabbing, background, and spaces play crucial roles in creating impactful aspects.

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