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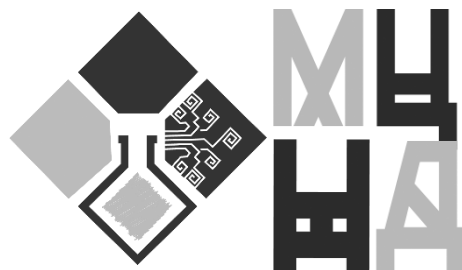
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**«НАУКОВІ ТРЕНДИ
ПОСТІНДУСТРІАЛЬНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА»**



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ПРАЦЬ З МАТЕРІАЛАМИ
XII МІЖНАРОДНОЇ
НАУКОВОЇ КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ



НАУКОВІ ТРЕНДИ ПОСТІНДУСТРІАЛЬНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА

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СЕКЦІЯ XXVI.

ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА, МЕДІА ТА СОЦІАЛЬНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND ART DIRECTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ADVERTISING CONTENT FOR INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK

Herashchenko I. M.297

СЕКЦІЯ XXVII.

МУЗЕЇ, БІБЛІОТЕКИ, АРХІВИ ТА КУЛЬТУРНА СПАДЩИНА

СКАРГИ В АКТОВИХ КНИГАХ КРЕМЕНЕЦЬКОГО ЗЕМСЬКОГО СУДУ XVI–XVII СТ.:
ДО ПИТАННЯ ВИДОВОЇ КЛАСИФІКАЦІЇ

Чорний І. В.306

СЕКЦІЯ XXVIII.

ВЕТЕРИНАРНА МЕДИЦИНА ТА ЗДОРОВ'Я ТВАРИН

БІОБЕЗПЕКА В МІКРОБІОЛОГІЧНИХ ЛАБОРАТОРІЯХ: РИЗИКИ, РЕАГУВАННЯ
ВПЛИВУ НА ДОСТОВІРНІСТЬ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

**Кравцова О. Л., Ординська Д. О., Придюк О. В., Мусієць І. В., Алексеєва Г. Б.,
Горбатюк О. І., Гераймович В. Л.310**

СЕКЦІЯ XXIX.

КЛІНІЧНА, СІМЕЙНА ТА ДИТЯЧА МЕДИЦИНА

ВІДСОТОК ВІЯВЛЕННЯ СИМПТОМА ПЕЧІЇ У ПАЦІЄНТОК ПІД ЧАС ВАГІТНОСТІ ЯК
ПЕРШОГО ПРОЯВУ ХРОНІЧНОГО НЕАТРОФІЧНОГО ГАСТРИТУ

Авраменко А. О., Магденко Г. К., Короленко Р. М., Васюк В. Л.319

ДИСФУНКЦІЯ PORT-A-CATH ЯК ПРОЯВ КАТЕТЕР-ІНДУКОВАНОГО ТРОМБОЗУ:
ДІАГНОСТИЧНИЙ АЛГОРИТМ ТА ТАКТИКА ВЕДЕННЯ

Собченко Д. А., Гонєць А. В., Урсол Л. Г.322

СЕКЦІЯ XXX.

СТОМАТОЛОГІЯ ТА ЩЕЛЕПНО-ЛИЦЕВА МЕДИЦИНА

ЦИРКАДНИЙ ТИП ТА ЯКІСТЬ СНУ У ПАЦІЄНТІВ ІЗ СИМПТОМАМИ БРУКСИЗМУ

Григор'єва В. О., Банін О. А.329

СЕКЦІЯ XXVI. ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА, МЕДІА ТА СОЦІАЛЬНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

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VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND ART DIRECTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVERTISING CONTENT FOR INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK

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Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to determine the role of visual communication and art direction in the development of effective advertising content for Instagram and Facebook, and to systematize the principal visual and compositional factors that shape consumer response to brand imagery on these platforms. Methodology. The study is based on a systematic generalization and comparative analysis of recent international scholarly publications, mainly issued between 2019 and 2024, concerning visual framing in public relations, platform-specific advertising formats, image composition, color complexity, narrative content strategy, and influencer-generated visual content. Methods of logical generalization, structural-functional analysis, and a systems approach are applied to construct an integrated picture of how art direction decisions influence advertising outcomes on Instagram and Facebook. Scientific novelty. The novelty of the research lies in bringing together compositional, chromatic, narrative, and platform-specific strands of visual communication research into a single framework for art direction practice, and in clarifying how these visual factors interact with brand strategy and influencer-mediated content rather than functioning as isolated design choices. Conclusions. The research demonstrates that visual communication functions as a strategic rather than purely aesthetic component of advertising, with composition, color complexity, narrative framing, and platform-specific formatting each exerting a measurable influence on audience engagement, while requiring coordinated art direction that aligns creative execution with brand identity and campaign objectives. The practical significance of the study lies in providing art directors and marketing managers with an evidence-based basis for designing visual advertising content optimized for the distinct formats and audiences of Instagram and Facebook.*

Introduction. Instagram and Facebook remain two of the most heavily

used platforms for organizational advertising and public relations communication, and both platforms foreground visual imagery over text in their core content formats. Dhanesh, Duthler, and Li [1] show that organization-generated visual content on Facebook and Instagram meaningfully enhances public engagement, with narrativity of images and specific compositional and interactive features producing measurable differences in likes and comments across both platforms. This finding underscores that visual communication on these platforms is not a peripheral design consideration but a central driver of how advertising and reputational content performs.

Despite the practical importance of visual content, the scholarly and professional literature addressing it remains fragmented across several distinct strands: theoretical accounts of visual framing in public relations, platform comparisons of advertising formats, empirical studies of specific compositional properties such as symmetry and color, and research on narrative and influencer-generated visual content. Art directors and marketing managers responsible for Instagram and Facebook advertising therefore lack a single, integrated account of how these different visual factors interact, which constitutes the central problem addressed in this article.

The purpose of the study is to determine the role of visual communication and art direction in the development of advertising content for Instagram and Facebook, while the specific tasks are to establish the theoretical foundations of visual communication relevant to advertising and public relations, to compare platform-specific visual advertising formats, to examine compositional principles such as symmetry and contrast, to analyze the role of color strategy and visual complexity, to assess narrative and storytelling approaches to visual content, to consider influencer-generated visual content as an extension of brand art direction, and to establish how these elements should be aligned with brand strategy and campaign objectives. The methods used include the systematic generalization of recent international research, comparative analysis of theoretical and empirical findings, and a structural-functional approach to organizing the identified visual factors into a coherent art direction framework.

The remainder of the article addresses each of these tasks in turn. It first establishes the theoretical grounding for treating visual choices as strategic rather than decorative, then works progressively from platform-level formatting decisions, through compositional and chromatic properties of

individual images, to narrative structures spanning multiple posts and the specific challenges of coordinating art direction with influencer-generated content, before concluding with a discussion of how these elements should be aligned with the organization's broader brand and business strategy.

Visual communication research provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how images function strategically rather than merely decoratively in advertising and public relations. Dhanesh and Rahman [2] develop the concept of visual frame building, showing that the selection, composition, and contextualization of images actively construct particular interpretations of events and brands for audiences, rather than passively illustrating a message that is already fully conveyed through text. Although their original analysis addresses visual framing in conflict-related news coverage, the underlying mechanism, namely that visual choices actively shape audience interpretation and emotional response, applies directly to brand advertising, where art directors similarly select and frame imagery to construct specific brand meanings and associations.

This theoretical perspective reframes art direction as an exercise in strategic meaning-making rather than purely aesthetic judgment. Every decision an art director makes, including subject framing, composition, and visual context, actively shapes how audiences interpret a brand, in the same way that visual frame building shapes interpretation of other communicated events. This suggests that art direction decisions for Instagram and Facebook advertising should be evaluated not only in terms of visual appeal but in terms of the specific brand narrative and emotional frame they construct for the audience.

This distinction matters for practice because it changes the questions an art director should ask when reviewing a proposed image or video for Instagram or Facebook. Rather than asking only whether an asset is visually appealing, a frame-building perspective requires asking what interpretation of the brand, product, or situation the specific framing, cropping, and context of the image invites the viewer to construct, and whether that constructed interpretation is consistent with the brand narrative the campaign is intended to advance. This reframing turns visual review from a matter of taste into a checkable communication objective.

Because Instagram and Facebook offer different visual advertising formats and audience experiences, art direction decisions cannot be applied uniformly across both platforms. Belanche, Cenjor, and Perez-Rueda [3]

compare advertising effectiveness on Instagram Stories and Facebook Wall, finding that Instagram Stories generates more favorable consumer attitudes toward advertisements but also higher perceived intrusiveness compared to Facebook Wall, with these effects further moderated by audience age and gender. Their findings indicate that the immersive, full-screen, temporary nature of Instagram Stories creates a fundamentally different visual advertising experience than the persistent, feed-embedded format of Facebook Wall, requiring distinct art direction approaches for each.

For art directors, this platform distinction has direct creative implications. Content designed for Instagram Stories can rely on the immersive, full-screen canvas to create high-impact, momentary visual statements, whereas content designed for Facebook Wall must compete visually with a denser, more persistent feed environment where restraint and clarity may be more effective than intrusive visual intensity. Applying a single visual treatment across both platforms without adapting to these structural differences risks underperforming on at least one of the two channels.

The age and gender moderation effects identified by Belanche, Cenjor, and Perez-Rueda [3] add a further layer of complexity for art direction planning, since a single visual treatment is unlikely to be equally effective across all audience segments a brand targets. This suggests that art directors working across Instagram and Facebook should consider not only which platform a given creative asset is intended for, but which segment of the brand's audience is most likely to encounter it there, and adjust the intensity, pacing, and intrusiveness of the visual treatment accordingly rather than applying a uniform creative standard across all campaign audiences.

Beyond platform-level format differences, specific compositional properties of images have been shown to influence consumer response in measurable ways. Kostyk and Huhmann [4] demonstrate through both an experimental study and analysis of field data from Instagram posts that vertical or horizontal symmetry and high image contrast increase consumer liking and engagement, with these effects mediated by processing fluency and aesthetic response. Their research provides empirical grounding for classical art direction principles, showing that structural properties long emphasized in graphic design and photography, such as balance and contrast, have a demonstrable effect on social media advertising performance rather than functioning merely as subjective stylistic preferences.

These findings offer art directors a concrete, evidence-based starting

point for composing advertising images for Instagram and Facebook: images composed with clear symmetry and sufficient contrast are more likely to be processed fluently by viewers, which in turn is associated with more favorable aesthetic response and higher engagement. This does not eliminate the value of creative experimentation, but it suggests that departures from symmetry and contrast should be deliberate stylistic choices made with an understanding of the processing costs they may impose on the viewer, rather than incidental outcomes of an unstructured creative process.

It is worth noting that the field component of Kostyk and Huhmann's [4] research was conducted specifically on Instagram posts, which strengthens the direct applicability of their findings to art direction for that platform, while the experimental component provides converging evidence that the underlying processing-fluency mechanism is not an artifact of any single platform's algorithm or audience composition. This combination of experimental and field evidence gives art directors a comparatively strong empirical basis, relative to many other creative guidelines circulating in industry practice, for prioritizing symmetry and contrast as default compositional choices unless a specific campaign objective calls for a deliberate departure from them.

Color is one of the most consequential yet historically under-researched dimensions of art direction for social media. Kanuri, Hughes, and Hodges [5] introduce the concept of color complexity, defined as the degree of color variation across the pixels of an image, and demonstrate across several studies of real Facebook posts and controlled eye-tracking experiments that higher color complexity draws greater user attention and shifts audiences from peripheral to central processing of the content, thereby increasing engagement. Their research also reveals that this effect is not uniform, since it interacts with contextual factors such as the time of day the image is viewed, the height of the image, and the sentiment and complexity of the accompanying text.

This body of research indicates that color strategy in art direction should be treated as a deliberate engagement lever rather than a purely brand-consistency exercise. While brand color guidelines remain important for recognition and consistency, the findings of Kanuri, Hughes, and Hodges [5] suggest that art directors can strategically increase color variation within images, for example through richer backgrounds, varied product arrangements, or more dynamic photographic settings, to capture attention more effectively, provided such choices remain compatible with the broader

visual frame the brand seeks to construct, as discussed in relation to visual frame building by Dhanesh and Rahman [2].

The context-dependence documented by Kanuri, Hughes, and Hodges [5], particularly the interaction between color complexity and the time of day content is viewed, also has practical implications for content scheduling as a component of art direction. Rather than treating publishing schedules purely as a distribution or community-management decision, art directors and social media managers should coordinate on aligning higher color complexity content with periods of greater audience cognitive availability, and reserving simpler, lower color complexity visual treatments for periods when audiences are more likely to be scrolling with reduced attentional capacity.

Composition and color operate most effectively for advertising and reputational purposes when integrated into a coherent narrative or interactive structure rather than presented as isolated visual elements. He, Cai, Cai, and Zhang [6] examine three forms of brand-owned social media content marketing, namely conversation, storytelling, and consumer interaction and participation, finding that all three positively influence how audiences perceive brand personality and, in turn, their attitudes toward the brand, with the strength of the effect moderated by the perceived relevance of the content. For art direction specifically, this suggests that visual sequences, whether structured as a serial narrative across multiple posts or as a single image implying a broader story, can reinforce the brand personality traits that a campaign is intended to project.

This narrative dimension also connects directly to the visual framing perspective discussed earlier, since a storytelling-based art direction approach is, in effect, an extended and more elaborate form of visual frame building, in which a sequence of images progressively constructs a particular brand narrative for the audience rather than relying on a single frame to convey the intended meaning. Art directors working across Instagram, with its Stories and carousel formats well suited to sequential storytelling, and Facebook, with its feed-based and event-based content, should therefore consider narrative continuity across posts as a deliberate compositional strategy rather than treating each visual asset in isolation.

The moderating role of content relevance identified by He, Cai, Cai, and Zhang [6] further implies that narrative art direction cannot be judged solely by internal creative standards, but must be evaluated against how relevant the resulting content is perceived to be by the specific audience segment it targets.

A visually accomplished storytelling sequence that audiences perceive as irrelevant to their interests or needs is unlikely to generate the same brand-personality benefits as a less polished but more contextually relevant sequence, which argues for close coordination between art direction and audience research functions within the marketing organization.

A growing share of visual advertising content on Instagram and Facebook is produced not by in-house art directors but by influencers operating under brand partnerships, which extends the scope of art direction beyond content the organization directly produces. Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, and Thrassou [7], in their systematic review of social media influencer marketing, show that influencers function simultaneously as advertising intermediaries and as public relations agents whose perceived authenticity lends credibility to sponsored content, and that content quality and narrative strategy are recurring factors shaping the effectiveness of influencer-mediated communication.

For art direction practice, this means that brand visual guidelines must be adapted, rather than simply imposed, when applied to influencer-generated content, since the perceived authenticity that makes influencer content effective, as identified by Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, and Thrassou [7], can be undermined if visual guidelines are so rigid that influencer content becomes visually indistinguishable from conventional brand advertising. Effective art direction for influencer partnerships therefore requires defining a flexible visual framework, informed by the compositional and color principles discussed above, that preserves brand recognizability while allowing sufficient creative latitude for the influencer's own visual style.

In practice, this can be achieved by specifying brand-consistent elements at the level of core visual identifiers, such as logo placement, color palette boundaries, and product presentation standards, while leaving compositional choices such as framing, background, and narrative context, the very properties emphasized in the compositional and color research discussed above, to the discretion of the influencer and their own established visual style. This division allows the brand to benefit from the compositional and color research findings indirectly, through the influencer's own developed visual instincts, without imposing a level of creative control that would compromise the authenticity on which influencer marketing effectiveness depends.

The compositional, chromatic, narrative, and platform-specific dimensions of visual communication discussed in this article ultimately need

to be coordinated with the organization's broader marketing strategy rather than treated as a self-contained creative function. Olson, Olson, Czaplewski, and Key [8] argue that the effectiveness of digital marketing tactics depends on their alignment with the firm's overarching business strategy, whether the firm is pursuing market prospecting, careful analysis of established markets, cost leadership, or product differentiation. Applied to art direction, this framework suggests that a firm pursuing rapid market entry may benefit from visually intense, high color complexity content designed to maximize attention and awareness, whereas a firm defending an established market position may benefit from more restrained, symmetry-driven, brand-consistent visual treatments that reinforce established trust and recognition.

Taken together, the findings reviewed in this article indicate that art direction for Instagram and Facebook advertising should be understood as an integrated strategic function combining visual framing theory, platform-specific formatting, compositional principles, color strategy, narrative structure, and influencer collaboration, all coordinated with the firm's overall business and brand strategy, rather than as a sequence of independent creative decisions made separately by different content producers.

Conclusions. The research presented in this article confirms that visual communication and art direction play a strategic, rather than purely aesthetic, role in the development of advertising content for Instagram and Facebook. This role rests on several interconnected mechanisms: visual frame building, through which image selection and composition actively construct brand meaning for audiences; platform-specific formatting, which requires distinct creative treatments for the immersive, temporary nature of Instagram Stories compared with the persistent, feed-embedded nature of Facebook Wall; compositional principles such as symmetry and contrast, which measurably influence processing fluency and aesthetic response; color complexity, which functions as an attention-capturing device with context-dependent effects; narrative and storytelling structures, which extend visual framing across sequences of content to construct brand personality; and influencer-generated content, which requires flexible rather than rigid visual guidelines to preserve perceived authenticity.

For creative and marketing practice, the findings suggest that art direction decisions for Instagram and Facebook advertising should be made with explicit reference to the underlying visual framing, platform, compositional, and narrative mechanisms identified in this article, rather than relying solely on

subjective aesthetic judgment or brand style guides developed without reference to platform-specific evidence. Coordinating in-house art direction with influencer visual output under a shared, but sufficiently flexible, visual framework appears to be a precondition for maintaining both brand consistency and content authenticity across organizationally produced and influencer-mediated advertising.

For further academic research, promising directions include experimental studies isolating the interaction effects between color complexity, compositional symmetry, and narrative structure within the same set of advertising images, as well as comparative research examining how art direction principles identified primarily in Instagram and Facebook contexts generalize to newer visually oriented platforms and formats.

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ПОСТІНДУСТРІАЛЬНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА»**

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