

Reviews

Elena ABRUDAN

*Visual Communication. An Interdisciplinary Perspective*¹
Accent Publishing House, 2008

The statement that “we live in an overwhelmingly visual civilization” has, by now, become a cliché. Nonetheless, it is true. It is also true that, as more and more people come to accept this, there is a growing need for understanding what this entails. *Visual Communication* attempts to meet this need in a successful way, and it does this despite all of the challenges.

The first challenge lies in defining the subject. Drawing from theories of famous scholars such as Umberto Eco, Elena Abrudan plots a map to help understand the field of visual communication. It is still a dynamic field, with blurry edges and a mobile structure, not stable enough to be a discipline of its own (in a methodological sense of the word), but with many fixed points available for scrutiny. The entire structure of the book is based on this “rhizomatic map” of linked points. Some of these points are well established disciplines (“molar” nodes) such as Art, Psychology, History, Communication or Literature that can be directly linked to the subject, others are fields less straightforwardly connected, such as Law, Education, Business or Neuroscience (“molecular” nodes). Both of these categories meet in intersection points that offshoot both academic and professional fields such as Graphic Design, Visual Semiotics, Mapping, Film/Video, Photography, Advertising, Mass-Media and many others. Overall, it is a surprisingly complex chart of what the field of visual communication encompasses. The most important locations on this map have been selected to be discussed separately, in their own chapters.

The book is truly an interdisciplinary endeavor, and all of the fields and disciplines it approaches converge into an extended discussion on visual communication, that sees issues from both an academic and a practical perspective (if I may put these two



1 Our translation. Original Romanian title: *Comunicare vizuală. O perspectivă interdisciplinară*.

terms in direct opposition). The theory is always supported by examples, practical applications, and, as is only natural for such a book, visual aids (color illustrations, reproductions of well known visual artifacts such as paintings or ads etc.)

The first chapter, *Aesthetics and visual communication*, deals mainly in the artistic dimension of aesthetics, but, as most of the chapters in the book, it also ends up dealing with the specific case of visuals in the media and in the culture of today. The next chapters, *Visual Cognition*, *Visual Perception* and *Visual representations* try to establish a common ground for analyzing images, taking into consideration all the ways in which people may perceive stimuli, interpret, assimilate and appropriate them. The approach is mainly from the direction of psychology, but also from the field of communication sciences.

The discourse evolves even more towards communication in the *Visual Semiotics* and *Visual Rhetoric* chapters and then grounds itself in more applied domains, more relevant to the current issues of society when images are concerned: *The Reception of the Visual Text*, *The Visual from the Perspective of Cultural Studies*, *Visual Narrativity* and *Visual Literacy*. The next chapter returns to the more academic subject of *Visual Methodologies*, concerning scholarly interpretations of visual texts using content analysis and composition analysis. The book closes with a short consideration of *Visual Ethics*, using as example the very contemporary “art” of digital image manipulation.

The book is thoroughly documented and has an extensive and very relevant list of references. Most titles are either older, fundamental books on the subject they are dealing with or very new titles, presenting fresh perspectives on the field of visual communication.

One could conclude, after reading Elena Abrudan’s book, that people are still far from reaching their potential both in the consumption and the production of visual media artifacts. There is still a need for understanding what surrounds us. This volume is a step forward in that direction.

George Prundaru

Michael Meyen, Claudia Riesmeyer

Diktatur des Publikums. Journalisten in Deutschland

UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, Konstanz 2009.

This book offers a broad overview of the nature of journalists in Germany. Journalists have always been connected to information, described as professionals who know the needs of the public and who inform the people correctly about the happenings in the world.

The book is divided into eight chapters, introducing statistics and facts to obtain a clear overview about the role and goals of nowadays’ journalists.



The first chapter goes back in history, reminding the reader about the way journalists were seen in the past. Renate Köcher described them as “missionaries”, who want to teach the public in first line. Hans Matthias Kepplinger introduces the term “Side Ariser”, meaning journalists who had another occupation before working in media; Siegfried Weischenberg names them “Alpha-Animals”, and “souffleurs of the media society”. The first chapter speaks also about the tabloidization and the marketization of media, profit orientation and clearing-up. The authors describe in this part of the book the reasons this book was written and the content of it. More than 500 journalists took part at the interviews and a map of the journalistic field was created.

The second chapter introduces terms like “Field”, “Asset”, “Habitus”. Pierre Bourdieu has demanded in 1996 to fight “in the name of the democracy” against the ratings. He described journalism as being the occupation with the most jerky, unsatisfied and cynical employees, but his studies or not based on technical literature or empirical research. Bourdieu speaks about the desire of every human being to be outstanding. Each term is developed for a better understanding, because this theory is used to describe the journalistic field.

Those, who are interested in reading about how the interviews were structured and what the main goal of the investigation was, receive in the next chapter all the needed information. The 3rd chapter names the selective procedure and the reader is informed about the sample and the interview manual. The stepping stone was the theory of the journalistic field described in chapter two. The method, the recruitment of the journalists and further components of the investigation are introduced by the authors in this part of the book.

The next chapter deals with the journalistic field in Germany. How does one become a journalist? Why do some write about politics and others about music? There is a selection of answers to these questions in this part. The authors have also selected some stories told by the journalists who took part in the investigation about the beginning of their career as a journalist. The reader gets a lot of information based on personal experience and can decide afterwards if this is a dreamjob or not. It is very pleasant to read about lifetime stories, and it is very helpful for those who want to start a career in journalism.

Who is the leader in this journalistic field, what are the needs of the public? How do advertisers influence the article being published and what about the freedom of press? All the answers to these questions can be found in chapter 4.

The 5th chapter describes each field in detail: politics, economics, culture/feuilleton, sport, local themes. The reader gets an insight of each field and also of the importance of these elements. It offers a lots of inside information, for example: the journalists who work in the economy department are the best paid ones, because they are “rare”, most of them have a diploma in this field. All this inside information, based on the interviews capture very easily the attention of the reader.

The 6th chapter introduces the edges of the journalistic field: online journalism, tabloid, free-lance journalists, youth radios.

Online journalism appears to be the future of journalism. In the internet every medium becomes a tabloid medium. Online journalists can easily check with the help of a system, if their article is being read by the public or not. This offers them a clear way to success, because they can manage their work according to the audience's needs.

Every novice knows which themes can capture the attention in short time: sex and crime, sport, human interest. Big photos, small text are the slogan of tabloids. Advantages and disadvantages of free lance journalism are also presented in chapter 6.

In Chapter number 7 the authors have included a typology of journalists. They determined 8 different types of possible roles: supplier, guard, teacher, detective, lobbyist, artist, salesman, promoter. It is very well structured and contains very interesting results of the investigation.

The last chapter contains the conclusions. The quality of journalism in Germany, the autonomy of journalists and the current situation are finally built-in in this chapter.

It is a very pleasant read and it comes with a lot of information not only for those who are on the way of becoming a journalist but also for the masses, for the public, for people who don't really know what journalism is. Because of the fact that the whole book is based on 500 interviews, we can exclude any misleading or false information.

Julia Szambolics

Nicoleta CORBU

*Global Brands*²

Tritonic Publishing House, 2009

The present book analyzes, from a semiotical point of view, the image projected by products, which is the brand. To be more specific, the perspective that the book offers stands at the crossroads between semiotics and pragmatics, and the analysis is focused not only on how advertising is coded, but also how it is decoded and interpreted. From this point of view, the book takes into account the cultural differences which cause the different reception and evaluation of messages in general and of advertising messages in particular, depending on the country of origin.

The book is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the author talks about the concept of 'sign'. Its meaning is extended from the domain of semiotics to the domain of pragmatics, then the advertising domain and only then is the brand brought



2 Our translation. Original Romanian title: *Brandurile globale*.

into discussion specifically. The theory is presented in a coherent way and strewn with quotes that are extremely suggestive and plastic, like that of the theoretician Uexküll, who creates an analogy between the differentiated way that animals perceive the stem of a flower and the differentiated way that we, humans, perceive a certain object, in this case, a brand.

Thus the author creates a link to the second chapter. Here she presents the key concepts that define the brand as such and that help create its function as an advertising tool. But first and foremost the brand is defined and its history is briefly presented, from the year 2000 BC up to the present day. The author stresses upon the way that brands are decoded. Even if in most cases brands are created and disseminated the same way at a global level, we are made aware of the fact that they are not perceived the same way, because of cultural reasons. Another paramount aspect that is analyzed in this book is culture and the characteristics of the cultural dimension. The second chapter introduces the concept of 'publisphere' as well and it is defined as the dimension of advertising signs; inside this dimension the signs are decoded and understood.

The third chapter is the most dynamic. It presents a quantitative, cross-cultural research, by the putting into practice of the theories presented in the previous chapters. According to the author herself, the purpose of the research is to create new directions of researching the 'publisphere' and global brands. She offers some primary, orientation results in the cross-cultural analysis of the advertising phenomena. The study encompasses exclusively brands from the automobile industry from four states (USA, France, China, Romania). The chosen brands are Mercedes, Toyota, Porsche, Chrysler and inland brands. It is very interesting to see how differently people from all these countries associate certain characteristics with these four brands. Although the creators of the brands send out the same signals and messages about their brands, these are perceived and decoded differently, depending on the characteristics of the cultures that the respondents belong to. The results are very conclusive and allow a delineation of the specific elements of each culture, of differences inside the same culture and at the same time an enumeration of the common features of the four cultures.

This book offers new perspectives, new roads for specialists in the advertising domain. It presents concrete results that can be very useful for market studies and marketing strategies.

Meda Mucundorfeanu

Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Ilie RAD

*The Wooden Language in the Press*³

Tritonic Publishing House, 2009

The Wooden Language in the Press is addressed to students, journalists and all those interested in issues involving the proper use of Romanian language, referring to the media.

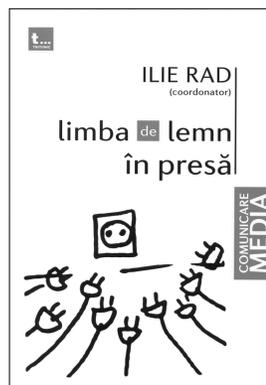
The volume contains 22 studies of the wooden language (of yesterday and today), grouped into three sections: “Conceptual diversity”, “Wooden language – yesterday” and “Wooden language – today”.

In summary, some of the most important Romanian linguists of the moment are present (D. Irimia, Tatiana Slam-Cazacu, Rodica Zafiu, Ioana Vintila-Radulescu, Adriana Stoichituiu-Ichim, Nicholas Felecan, Ionel Funeriu), well-known writers and journalists (Lavinia Betea Nicolae Melinescu, Doina Rusti, Gabriela Rusu-Pasaran, Mariana Cernicova, Dan Anghelescu), literary critics and historians (Mihaela Albu, Mircea Popa, Ilie Rad), teachers or researchers (Daiana Felecan, Oliviu Felecan, Doina Rad, Nicoleta Mihai) and Spanish professor Luis Veres, from “Cardinal Herrera” University in Valencia.

The first section “Conceptual diversity” includes studies of the wooden language’s problems and its forms of expression reflected in the press (in the language of visual discourse, in radio language, lexicographic work). Special attention may be given to the study on the language of wood problems written by Dan Anghelescu.

The second section “language of wooden-days” includes an extensive study by the late Professor Dumitru Irimia devoted to Panait Istrati and some studies on language of wood in various totalitarian regims: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Carol the Second, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Section Three, “Language of wood – today”, addresses the existence of wooden language media today by analysis of the reality of media texts supplemented by a survey of the National Audiovisual Council, with the theme: “From wooden language to the teleprompter language”.



Ramona Onciu

3 Our translation. Original Romanian title: *Limba de lemn în presă*.

Alexandra ZBUCHEA, Florina PÎNZARU, Cristina GĂLĂLAE
*Essential guide to promoting*¹
Tritonic Publishing House, 2009



Promotion has become a very frequently used concept of late, both in theory and in practice. Starting with ourselves and continuing with the organization where we work or the country we are from, there is a way, a tactic through which we can popularize them. *Essential Guide to Promoting* (Tritonic Publishing House), a book in the Media and Communication collection, gathers together all these promotional strategies, giving both theoretical models and practical examples.

The experience in the field of marketing and of communication of the three authors, academics at the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations of the National School of Political Sciences and Communication Studies, is witness to the fact that we are talking about a thoroughly theoretically documented papers, supported by practical examples.

The book is structured into five big chapters, each chapter having several distinct parts.

The first chapter talks of forms, definitions and theoretical models of communication. It also discusses the signification of the concept of promotion, the instruments and objectives of the promotion strategy.

The second chapter goes deeper into the subject and presents the promotional strategies of an organization, it talks about the concept of public relations, marketing, interactive communication. New forms of advertising are referenced, namely online advertising, the blogosphere. The authors also present the concept of integrated communication.

The third chapter emphasizes product and organization promotion. That is, the promotion of multinational companies, small and medium enterprises, internal promotion according to climate and employees.

The fourth chapter does a round up of the most important concepts referring to sales, brand, global village, direct marketing. "The promotion of sales has the goal of increasing the profits of a company. A brand has no value if it cannot generate sales."

The last chapter refers to the ethical dimension, the moral responsibility that those who implement and develop promotional campaigns need to have. Thus, through the suggestions and recommendations offered in such a campaign, the audience may not be offended or discriminated or the health and integrity of clients be affected. Legal aspects ruling promotional conduct are also mentioned. In the last part of the

1 Our translation. Original Romanian title: *Ghid esențial de promovare*.

chapter, some effects of the economic crisis on the consumption behavior in Romania are indicated.

The book is a welcome addition to the market, conducting a detailed analysis of what the promotional phenomenon means. The language is an accessible one, addressing both scholars in the fields of communication, marketing, PR or advertising, and those who want to get their business off the ground and to understand what a good promotional campaign can do for them.

Ioana Lepădatu