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LOGO AS A VISITING CARD OF A THEATER – A NEW APPROACH IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

LOGO JAKO WIZYTÓWKA TEATRU – KONIECZNOŚĆ NOWEGO PODEJŚCIA W KONKURENCYJNYM ŚRODOWISKU

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Streszczenie. Teatr to nie tylko miejsce, gdzie zaspokajane są potrzeby kulturalne widzów, gdzie wybitne jednostki mogą realizować swoje wizje i zamierzenia (teatr jednego aktora), ale także na przykład sfera, gdzie mogą uzewnętrzniać się różne poglądy polityczne i społeczne. Mimo tego, że liczba teatrów w Polsce nie maleje, w ostatnich latach obserwować można silną konkurencję między nowoczesnymi kinami, telewizją „na żądanie" i innymi formami rozrywki. Konkurencja ta obejmuje też teatry. Stwierdzić więc można, że rynek kultury się zmienia, stąd też funkcjonujące na nim podmioty winny analizować zachodzące przemiany i odpowiednio dostosowywać swoje strategie marketingowe. Obecnie najistotniejszymi wyróżnikami teatrów są repertuar i wybitni aktorzy, ale istotne są także nazwa i logo - elementy wyróżniające dany obiekt wśród innych. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia analizę marek polskich teatrów z punktu widzenia ich struktury. W części empirycznej pracy zastosowane analizę porównawczą, a zbadana próba objęła 60 teatrów, co stanowi 43% wszystkich obiektów tego typu funkcjonujących w Polsce. W artykule stwierdzono, że współcześnie teatry w części przynajmniej muszą się zachowywać jak podmioty biznesu, szczególnie w zakresie komunikacji z otoczeniem. Oznacza to, że menedżerowie muszą wziąć pod uwagę istnienie komunikacji masowej i odpowiednio do niej dostosować znaki i symbole, jakimi posługują się teatry. Może to oznaczać istotne zmiany w dotychczas realizowanej koncepcji.

Key words: branding, communication of value, competition in nonprofit sphere, culture.
Słowa kluczowe: branding, komunikacja wartości, konkurencja w sferze kultury, organizacje non-profit.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of marketing gave birth to a variety of issues which are vitally important today, including, to name a few, an entity's image and identity, its philosophy and behavioral patterns, system of values, mission etc. There is still no compromise on what elements comprise the organisation identity mix (company identity tools), though it is partially agreed that an image is mainly created by anything that can be noticed by the naked eye (Melewar, Karaosmanoglu 2006). This initial approach had undergone a few transformations until it developed into the contemporary concept which emphasizes the role of an entity's nature and character rather than its visual elements. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the name, logo, richness of colors used, slogans, different forms of advertising, and Internet sites can be distinguishing marks which create the image (Bosh et al. 2006). The issue is associated with corporate identity functions, which: 1) provide the organisation with visibility and recognisability; 2) are a source of information for stakeholders about the image and

reputation; 3) reflect employees' identification with the organisation as a whole and/or the specific departments for which they work.

In case of a non-commercial organisation, the issue of how to build a good brand/image is more pressing than in the case of companies which can use their diversified offer, intermediaries' support, or advertising campaigns. Such possibilities are usually out of the scope of nonprofits potential, because they do not have the ability or resources for such activities, although they have to reach a much more complex milieu: local authority, potential donators, grant-making organisations, beneficiaries and society as such.

The main aim of the article is to examine from what organisations make up their logos, and **what values they communicate** to their external environment. The empirical part was created by a comparative analysis of brands of Polish public and private theatres (the sample of 60 represents 43% of all theatres in Poland). But it must be mentioned that among the studied brands, 22 (almost 37%) have been built using words or letters only, without any graphical elements, therefore the analysis will encompass 38 examples (27% of all Polish theatres).

The subject of the analysis undertaken, the logo structure, mainly concerns the examination of colors and shapes used, which can represent **universal, cultural or conventional symbols**. Universal symbols include all signs which are perceived in the same way all around the globe, e.g. a bird represents freedom. Cultural symbols are those understood only in a given culture, which include letters, words or symbols connected with the tradition prevalent in a given area (colors, religious symbols, etc.). The last group of conventional symbols is comprised of abstract shapes that do not awaken any associations but have been promoted by given organisations.

The essence of logo

In the analysis of an organisation or product brand symbols, the concept of a logo is defined as a graphical reflection of the trademark. Since the majority of brand symbols are a combination of words and graphics, the name of an organisation quite often consists of verbal and graphic elements which constitute its logo. If a brand symbol is based on combinations of words and letters of peculiar shape, then it is called a 'logotype' (Hernik 2009). Since words and symbols awaken certain associations, logo patterns, colors or even the kind of font used influence the way the organisation is perceived by its external environment. Surely, logo is a critical component of brand aesthetics and influences our senses and evaluations (Walsh et al. 2010), so – as it was mentioned – is important in commercial and nonprofit activity.

All the aforementioned terms concern the commercial aspect of business. A question can be raised whether – based on the assumption that organisations operating in the same field are competitive with each other – nonprofit organisations behave in the same way as other entities in the competitive market and they lay the foundations of communication by

creating their logo. One might want to ask: why should a theatre have a logo? One of the most important reasons should include the fact that widely known and respected brands are a base of trust. This means that in case of a nonprofit activity, where a profit is not a foundation of existence, trust is a crucial element that drives stakeholders.

The positive results of well-known brand possessed in a nonprofit activity can be observed in several areas: 1) in fundraising activity and obtaining donations, 2) in common efforts of managers believing in brand values, 3) in better efficiency (bigger scope of impact), 4) in a stronger internal identity, 5) in improving competences of an organisation (Kylander, Stone 2012). Furthermore, a good brand of noncommercial entity can serve as a support for another, commercial brand which is just being introduced into the market. Thus widely known brands can be a kind of a catalyst of market acceptance. Certainly a good brand (with a well-known name and distinct logo) means better market authority, but to create such a brand an organisation must rethink the core values it delivers as well as its visible symbols. Moreover, it's very important that a name and logo – through content and characters used in communication – should bring really positive values, which will be associated with a given activity.

Theatre as the market entity

On the market there are institutions involved in creation of the art and its dissemination. Theatres, appointed to carry out cultural activities, belong to the latter category. By the term *theatre* one can understand a special building, designed to show plays and drama, consisting of two basic elements: a stage and audience (Glossary of the art 2003). Theatre is also – alongside orchestra, opera or philharmonic – a form of market cultural activity. Such forms are established by central or local state agencies, whose duty is to organise cultural sphere in a given area. Theatres may be set up also by individuals and nongovernmental organisations. In both cases, according to Polish law, activity in theatre sphere is not a commercial activity and institutions that own theatres must subsidise them. While discussing public theatres, it's worth adding that the level of support does not fully cover the costs of activity and maintenance; therefore theatres (and other cultural organisations) have to run their own financial matters and cover all costs to earn money.

While reforming the system of institutions of the culture in Poland, it was assumed that resources from the state budget would decrease, while revenues from sponsors and donors would gradually grow, but this postulation has not been fulfilled (out-of-budget funds, for example from tickets or rooms rental, bring about 30% resources). That is why today theatres have to face a really difficult challenge: staying on the market. According to the Polish Main Statistical Office, in 2010 there were 139 theatres in Poland; among which dramatic theatres prevail (85), on the second stage there are puppet theatres (29) and next music theatres (25), as shown in Figure 1.
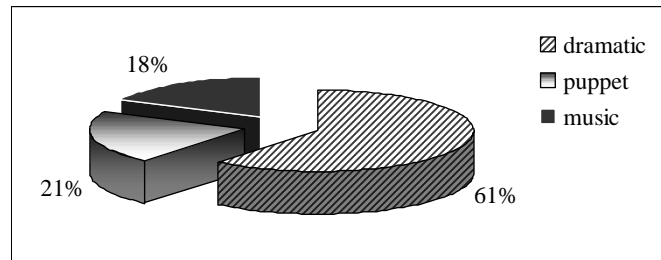
Fig. 1. Main types of theatres in Poland in 2010
Source: Own study based on Polish organisations of culture activity (originally: Działalność instytucji kultury w Polsce), http://www.stat.gov.pl

In theatre category some forms can be singled out, such as music theatres (opera, operetta), theatre of movement and dance, dramatic theatres, as well as ballet and alternative theatres. Today, the majority of theatres belong to the state, so they are managed by governmental agencies or local authorities. However, as mentioned, the owners do not want to subsidise theaters 100%, therefore they must compete for visitors, customers. The data shown lets one form a conclusion, that theaters have to compete not only with new forms/institutions of entertainment, but also between each other.

Logo analysis

As mentioned, 60 brands of theatres were included in the analysis: 27 dramatic, 16 music and dance, 14 puppet theatres and 3 alternative. However, as 22 theatres have no graphical part/element, ultimately 38 brands were studied (Fig. 2).
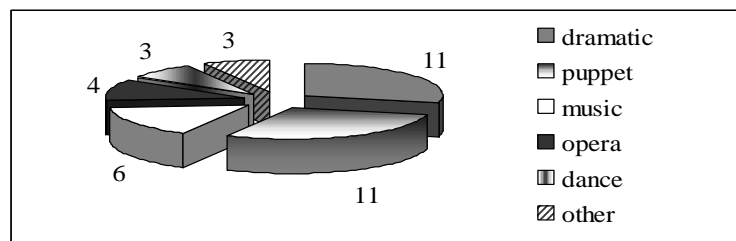

Fig. 2. Structure of the analysed theatres
Source: Own study.

Looking at an organisations' brand, human perception always notices colour and shape first. Colour is actually a reflected light that is perceived by the sight, and from a physics point of view it is a dose of energy, but received in small portions. As every type of energy, colour can stimulate or soothe, inspire or discourage, always influencing the mood. The influence of theatre (art) can be discussed in the same way, so one may merge functions of theatre with the sense of color.

In the analysis of chosen brands (logo), colors were present in two spaces: in the background and as an element of a logo, therefore hues are divided into two groups (Fig. 3 and 4).

In the first one, two colors dominate: white and black (50% of logos were designed in such hues). Next, colors like red, blue and green appeared (Fig. 3).
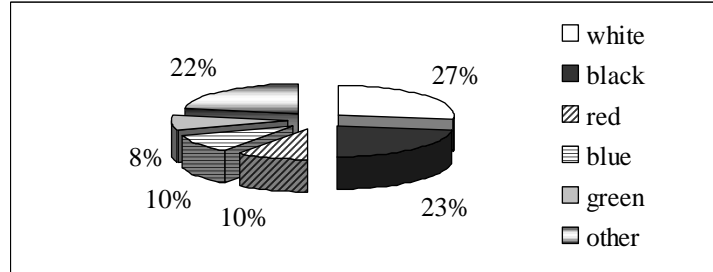

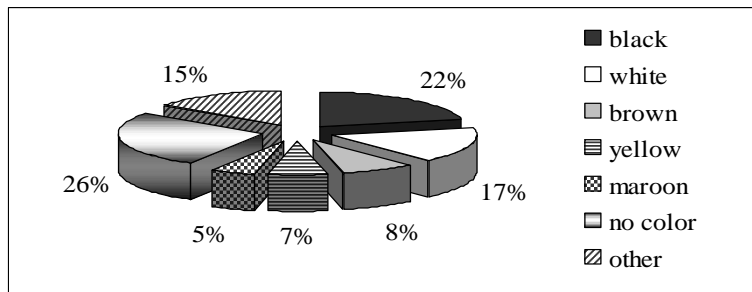Fig. 3. Colour as an element of a logo
Source: Own study.

Fig. 4. Colour in a background of logo
Source: Own study.

In ancient times, white, black, red and yellow were typical dyes of Greek art, so they formed the canon of aesthetics. In the middle ages, white, black, red and green prevailed, and – interestingly – black and purple were used interchangeably. Even then some importance was attributed to colours: according to pope Innocent III, green was the colour of hope, blue – the colour of heaven, red was the colour of love to others, and white – the colour of peace and moderation (Rzepińska 1983). It is worth mentioning that yellow was the colour of cowardice, treachery and deceit, but also the colour of warning and attracting attention. Black is instead a conservative colour, in most Western countries connected with grief and funerals, but – on the other hand – for young people it is the colour of rebellion. Besides, it is used for dyes or shapes separation and for highlighting contrasts. Today black is also the colour of elegance and sophistication (black tuxedo, for example).

The usage of white and black in analysed logos can also often be connected with the need to demonstrate good and evil, which can be shown in a theatre (white angel and black devil; the good character wears white while the bad wears black). Many associations and references can probably be found.

For a long time, colours were connected with a temper of a man and given following meanings:

– white – phlegmatic person: usually cheerful, reliable, objective in assessments, patient;

– black – melancholic: someone inclined to reflection, but also tending to be hesitant and nervous;

– red – sanguine: sociable person, carefree, imposing and also dominant;

– yellow – choleric: someone excitable, often dissatisfied, aggressive and stubborn (Rzepińska 1983).

In order not to limit a message to one kind of a temper, black and white should be mixed with other colours, red for example, which was quite often the case with the surveyed logos. In spite of this, dramatic theatres usually reduce colours to two dyes only: white and black, sometimes replacing black with grey or purple.

Looking for the roots of colours in today's logos one has to state that we need to turn to ancient and Middle Ages, despite the fact that we live in the 21st century – colours as well as used shapes mostly refer to classic models. The main graphical form (42%) is a shape of human body (Fig. 5), or a part of it (an eye or a foot for example) while the shape of a circle can be found in 16% of the analysed logos (the shape of a triangle or square is even more rare).

Human silhouette refers to the receiver of an art – a man is a measure of all things, as a classic says, everything happens for a man, and his well-being, a state of his soul, of his aesthetic sensitivity is an issue that a theatre is interested in, hence the symbolism used in logo. For this reason we will not find the influence of geometric abstraction for example, so popular in the beginning of 21st. c., when circles, triangles and squares dominated everything – it seems to be too young, too fresh to use in a theatre brand.

Fig. 5. Human figures in a logo of theatre
Source: http://teatr.polsl.pl/

As well as human figures some other symbols were used in logo (Fig. 6), such as animals (a horse, Pegasus, siren); buildings (a tower, castle) or symbols that refer to a theatre as such (a stage, curtain, mask). In case of theatres offering performances for a younger audience, a symbol of a doll/puppet was also used (Fig. 7).
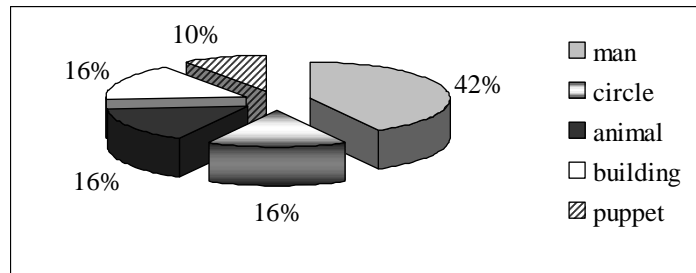
Fig. 6. Human figures in a theatre logo
Source: Own study.

Fig. 7. A doll in a theatre logo
Source: Own resources.

The theatre ought to be perceived as a place for spending a pleasant time. Such symbols as a castle or a tower can convey the idea of leisure, being metaphors of extraordinary places; an eye – as a symbol of watching and spying; a doll – a sign of a joy for a child; a cock and kite – marks of enjoyable time in nature; finally, a figure of a dancer symbolising fun. It should also be mentioned that some logos use a mask with a smile, which is the promise of a good fun. So, the logo of a theatre can show the pleasure waiting for the visitors inside.

As stated before, many brands are based on words or individual letters. They are often written in simple fonts, but sometimes refer to some trends in the art, like secession, which uses flexible lines reminding of plants (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Logo composed of words (logotype)
Source: Internet sites of theatres.

Such stylised logo refers to the time of the late 19th and early 20th century, when artists were looking for new forms, separated from the classics. Logo in such a style means a break with the classic drama and a turn toward a lighter, more entertaining version of a theatre. This example proves that a logo can help art receivers to understand the essence, the spirit of an organisation activity (Lange 2010).

Analysing universal, cultural or conventional symbols in logos, one can state that theatres using brands built on words/letters, actually utilise cultural symbols, as such a logo will be understood only in a given society. Colors are also an example of cultural symbols, because black and white are not understood in the same way all around the world. Into the group of universal symbols, undoubtedly human figures can be classified; this group will also include symbols of animals, and symbols of nature (like the sun). It is really difficult to find conventional symbols, which were promoted by a theatre and now are well known. It can result from the fact that theatre, acting usually as a nonprofit entity, does not decree adequate resources and cannot advertise itself like companies. Thus, it can be stated here that theatres usually use cultural and universal symbols in their logos.

At present, theatres should watch carefully what kind of symbols they use, since too often they utilise words/letters only, while today's culture is a culture of a picture (Mayfield, Mayfield 2012). And this means that the time for change has come.

CONCLUSIONS

The most significant elements which constitute the identity of a theatre, include the name and logo, (and the repertoire, of course); they are the most vital tools of communication between an entity and its external environment. 38 theatres' logos were analysed. The results show that: 1) white and black are the most often used colours, which may be connected with the idea of showing the good and the bad sides of life. Quite often black and white are mixed with other colours, but it does not happen in the case of dramatic theatres. 2) The most popular shape is the human figure or a part of it, but also symbols of some animals are used. 3) Theatres too often use only words/letters in their logos. Summing up, Polish theatres usually create a logo based on cultural (language) and universal (human figure) symbols. The third group, conventional symbols, actually do not appear. So, a first suggestion refers to lack of symbols that could lead a potential visitor to certain associations. Moreover, today's theatres keep traditional solutions sometimes unclear to contemporary visitors.

A good name and logo are crucial as they symbolise a promise and build trust. This becomes more and more important in a competitive market, and although the number of theatres in Poland has not changed radically, today they must compete with 'on demand TV', modern cinemas and other ways of spending free time. Therefore, theatre managers ought to redefine their offer and use the correct name and logo, which should answer today's audience expectation, and be adapted to existing competition.

In the article it was mentioned that nowadays, theatres have to behave like companies in terms of communication and offer, mainly because today's culture market is more complex and demanding. Unfortunately, some managers think that the mission of a theatre and

its role in a society is so big that the idea will sell itself. They forget that modern culture recipients have wide access to information and know how to find the best proposal. This means that theatres must improve the level of their offer as well as ways of communication. It should be mentioned that such an approach (assuming that theatre will defend themselves without effort) is named the effect of Titanic – managers ignore the environment and lead the organisation into difficult situation (Zaltman 2003). Some managers also believe that marketing is unworthy of the high art and they will not use it (Laberschek 2012); however, they should notice also that marketing prompts how to communicate with the milieu effectively and how to attract new audience is a method of better functioning on the market.

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