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Visual Literacy as a Dimension of the Young Generation's Cultural Capital – Comparative Research

Abstract

The subject of the research presented in the article, related to visual literacy, is to determine the scope and quality of the phenomenon of communication in the area of symbolic communication. Individual dispositions of information users were taken into account, creating a set of behaviors and reactions, views and concepts, personal beliefs and inclinations that determine the way of life and thinking – the so-called Habitus by Pierre Bourdieu. The aim was to create the characteristics of the examined representatives of the young generation and to determine their predispositions to symbolize (search for references). The research was carried out on two comparative groups of research participants from Poland and Italy in order to examine the quality of contemporary visual communication and the predisposition of information users to visualization, and their adaptation to the visual form of expression. The research meets the educational demand for a modern form of education, taking into account the modern informational live environment and media immersion in the visual reality of the participants of the education process.

Key words: visual literacy, visual competence, visual communication, visual culture, visual learning environment

Visual Competences as the Basis for Participation in the Information Culture

Contemporary perception of reality through the prism of an image is a natural form of functioning in today's society. Information takes a heterogeneous visual form in the form of, for example, immersive virtual worlds created using new media and digital graphics – but also traditional – audiovisual realizations or works of art, as well as monochromatic and polychromatic photography. Each of them interacts with the surrounding world, being an element of perception and cognition.

From the perspective of information users, the image provides new content, illustrates the issues, phenomena and objects discussed, organizes and systematizes didactic content, shapes views, and promotes values and attitudes. The outstanding theorist of graphic design, Bergström, analyzing the construction of cognitive and emotionally colored visual projects, first of all emphasizes the functions of informing, organizing, teaching, illustrating, showing, explaining, dazzling, and making them more attractive (Bergström, 2009).

The enormous potential of visual forms that can be used in educational and informational practice is currently implemented mainly in terms of the visual function, facilitating the reading of the content contained in the text message, e.g., in the form of textbook didactic materials, such as graphic layouts, diagrams, illustrations, and photos. Their role is to support the perception of educational content in terms of information through a comprehensive approach to textual and graphic content, which makes it possible to see connections and relationships between individual elements of the message. Increasingly, education recognizes the property of pictorial forms of knowledge transfer, which, supported by new technologies, makes the education process more effective by using interactive possibilities of searching, saving, interpreting, imaging, analyzing, and creating (Kubalíková & Trabalíková, 2016).

Contemporary forms of digital recording combine images, text, sound, and film in one message, enhancing the information impact. Websites, multimedia, virtual worlds, interactive installations, digital videos, computer games, computer animations, cinema, and human-computer interface create a new dimension of visibility, which was created as a result of computerization of culture (Manovich, 2006). The widespread aestheticization of culture caused by the influence of new media, apart from intellectual threats, is an opportunity for education. Educational activities enter the areas where the boundary between art and visual activity is blurred, making it possible to incorporate design practices and craftsmanship of the workshop to your needs. We are dealing with an information society with a global

visual literacy shaped by an image culture developed over the ages, supported by civilization achievements (technology), with a synesthetic mindset. It awaits such forms of information and knowledge transfer that stimulate development, where visual logic plays the main role in building cognitive structures. Visual interpretative contexts work together to present successive areas of interpretation and create new knowledge patterns and inspire creativity in the creation and reception of image messages (Schnettler, 2009; 2013).

Free participation in culture, in accordance with its norms and values, enables such acquired individual abilities and dispositions, defined by cultural competences, which guarantee full adaptation in society. The condition for cultural assimilation is the ability to recognize the meanings and content of culture acquired during socialization and education. Meanings are created in the course of culture's development – they are passed on, absorbed, and transformed by successive generations. It is through activity and creativity that an individual has an impact on changing the content of culture, can create and enrich cultural capital with new values and models. The information society of the 21st century requires distinguishing between the adaptive abilities of participation in culture and a set of features redefining the concept of competence, giving them a new meaning adapted to the needs of the present day. Development conditions, supported by technology and digital information realizations, including activities in the field of mental activity, self-improvement, development, creativity, self-discipline, and the ability to set goals and make decisions, should play a fundamental role here. Modern society is becoming more visual than textual. The transformation, provoked by the omnipresence of images and visual media interfering with human life, made it possible for everyone to create new forms of expression and use visual content. Visual competences allow a person to become involved in the life of a visually-oriented society and thus fully participate in culture.

Scientific research on visual skills

In the interdisciplinary environment of higher education, he is able to:

define the type and scope of the necessary visual materials (1), effectively and efficiently search, reach and share the necessary images and visual media (2), interpret and analyze the meanings of images and visual materials in historical, cultural and social contexts (3), evaluate images and their sources (4), use images for effective visualization (5), design and create pictorial meanings (6), understand the ethical, legal, social and economic issues related to the process of creating and using images and visual mass media, especially regarding sharing and using copyright of visual materials (7). (Wieczorek-Tomaszewska, 2014)

The document published in the USA is a methodological basis for similar visual literacy research programs conducted in Poland, in educational and e-learning environments, including those in which the author participates (<http://edu-mwt.manifo.com/badania/>, Visual Literacy Standards Task Force) (Wieczorek-Tomaszewska, 2014).

Technological and cultural changes in the 21st century mean that the position of visual messages in culture is now increasing. Technology, multimedia, and access to information affect the perception and use of visual media. There is also a change in the paradigm of learning about visual skills, indicating the necessity of updating educational activities in this regard even more (Thompson & Beene, 2020).

Currently, the use of various techniques and methods of visualization is aimed at developing a new scientific paradigm based not only on linear texts, but also on multidimensional, dynamic images (Osińska & Osiński, 2018). Very wide application of visualization techniques, which covers the areas of scientific and technological activity, is based on an interdisciplinary formula. In modern scientific environments, the subject of visualization is related to the methods of analyzing large data sets and their graphical representation, i.e., with advanced IT knowledge. However, in practice, the creation of interdisciplinary teams of scientists results in the creation of ready-made visualization applications that do not require the use of advanced mathematical and technological methods. It seems that this is the direction of the development of visualization methods, with the support of which visual sets of knowledge representations can be used, enabling the visualization of knowledge.

Methodology of Research

General background of own research

The methodological basis for the analysis is the research on participation in visual and informational culture, which gives an idea of the condition of perception of image messages (Batorowska, 2015). They cover two spheres of interest; the first is quantitative research, which allows to determine the scope of the pictorial form of communication within the information culture, and the second is based on qualitative studies of image perception by respondents and information conveyed through the image.

Both the number of visual search strategies and their quality depend on external factors. The description of these zones has been deepened with an analysis pointing to the cultural and informational determinants which determine the choice of the pictorial form of communication. An interesting psychological and aesthetic perspective shows both the influence of the local milieu of the partici-

pants of cultural life and transfers the problems of perception into a wider context of information science and civilization.

For this purpose, considerations on the development of a pictorial form of communication in Poland were confronted with similar experiences of the representatives of Mediterranean nations – in this case, Italians. The state of knowledge about the culture of the image and the level of visual literacy of young Italians, building their own knowledge structures just like young Poles, became the basis for nomological, typological, and comparative analysis. Data analysis made it possible to respond to the theory about the cultural centers and peripheries of Europe, confirming the need for the development of image competences through education.

The aim of the research was therefore to determine the level and the necessary scope of visual competences as part of the information standards which a participant of culture should be equipped with in order to be able to correctly read visual texts of culture in the form of pictorial information structures and to decode their meanings. Information and visual competences enable the understanding and contextual analysis of culture, based on intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, and technical elements used in the creation of information architecture.

Instrument and procedures

The aforementioned scope of research was developed and carried out in 2014/2015 and repeated in an electronic version in 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 in Poland and Italy. The following research techniques were adopted in the diagnostic procedure: for quantitative research: questionnaire, text analysis, and projection technique; for qualitative research: participant observation – research through collective experience.

The questionnaire was used to implement selected research techniques (Babie, 2006). The questions of the survey were asked to the respondents in order to make mental identification in the context of their historical, social and cultural knowledge and to determine their level of participation in visual culture in relation to social life, at home, at school, in the peer and professional environment, in the church, on the go, etc. The full range of questions was prepared in Polish (Ankieta) and Italian (Inchiesta) and made available to the respondents on the web.

A Comparative Analysis of the Italian (Inchiesta) and Polish (Ankieta) Versions

Respondents' Social Status

Taking into account the education of parents and grandparents, comparable results of the study of Polish and Italian students in terms of social status of the respondents and the level of education of previous generations show that both groups represent a similar social position.

When confronted with Polish research, the Italian questionnaire interviews show dependence of the number of images in the possession of parents on social status. In Italy, research participants whose parents are educated have more images, are able to describe them correctly, and accept the visual form of expression in contemporary cultural communication. Such dependence does not exist in the group studied in the Polish version.

Examination of Aesthetic Dispositions

The number of paintings that Italian respondents have in their homes is higher than that declared by Polish respondents.

Table 1
Comparison of the number of paintings in the homes of Italian and Polish respondents

Nationality of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of images	Average (arithmetic mean) number of paintings in respondents' homes
Polish	253	2093	~8 images
Italian	132	1299	~10 images
Total	385	3392	~9 images

Sources: Own work

In Poland, 253 people declared that they had approximately 2,092 paintings (100 people have 827 – 46%). In Italy, 132 respondents declared having about 1,299 paintings (100 people have 984 – 54%). This constitutes an 8% advantage of the Italian group of respondents over the Polish one in the number of paintings owned by 100 people (Table 1, Figure 1).

Comparison of the number of paintings per 100 people of Italian and Polish respondents

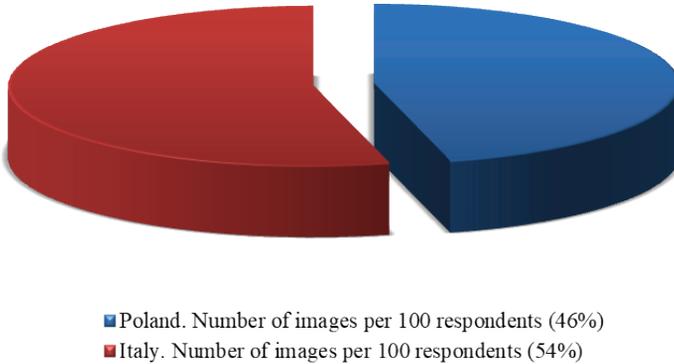


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of the number of images owned by respondents in Italy and Poland.

Sources: Own work

Table 2

Distribution of the number of paintings in the apartments of Polish and Italian respondents

	Number of paintings in the respondent's apartment																								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	14	15	16	17	18	20	21	25	30	40	71	~	
	Number of respondents who have the above-mentioned number of paintings in the apartments in Poland and Italy																								
Pl	16	7	31	35	28	36	13	13	10	8	29	5	2	14	2	1	0	13	1	1	7	1	1	0	
It	3	0	21	9	4	11	10	9	8	0	10	2	0	3	0	0	16	0	0	11	8	0	0	4	

Sources: Own work

Another research problem is the analysis of the respondents' aesthetic preferences based on the quality of the works of art they have, the level of pictorial literacy, and the influence of family traditions on the selection of works. The assumption of the study – about the emotional attachment of the respondents to the described artifacts – was to result in the stimulation of long-term memory associated with facts and events semantically and episodically related to the images.

The Respondents' Skills in the Field of Painting Attribution: Image Title

The respondents demonstrated the ability to recognize and describe the image in the Italian edition of the survey at a level similar to that of respondents in Poland.

In the Italian group, 258 people could name their paintings and 474 could not, i.e., the result was 35% to 65% for Italians and 33% to 67% for Poles, respectively. The results indicate the level of visual skills in both groups of respondents at an average level, with a 2% advantage in favor of the surveyed Italians (Table 3).

Table 3
Comparison of the ability to recognize and describe images

Respondent's nationality	The respondent can name the picture	The respondent cannot name the picture
Italian	258 (~35%)	474 (~65%)
Polish	364 (~33%)	741 (~67%)

Sources: Own work

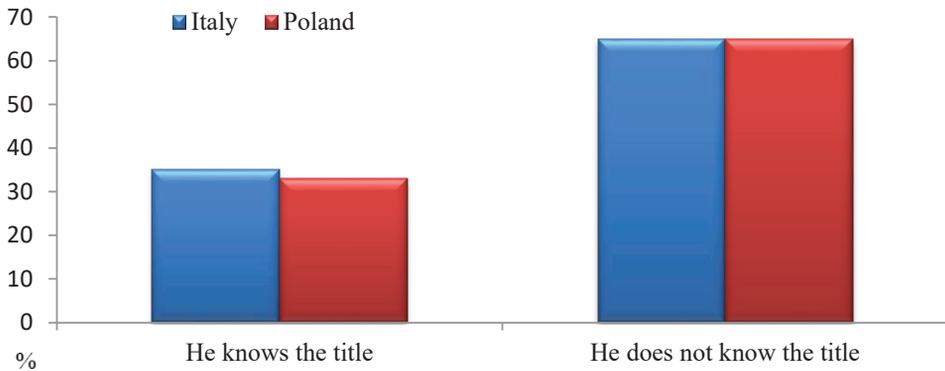


Figure 2. Comparison of the ability to recognize and describe the subject of an image among Italian and Polish respondents.

Sources: Own work

The Respondents' Skills in the Field of Painting Attribution: Subject Matter of the Painting

The study of the ability to recognize the subject of visual representations in pictures and the exploration of aesthetic preferences also yielded comparable results.

Table 4

The results of the study of the preferences of choosing the subject of images by respondents in Italy and Poland

Number of image Topic of the painting	Topics provided by respondents			
	According to the Italian survey		According to the Polish survey	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. landscape	384	47%	318	29%
2. portrait	126	17%	145	13%
3. still life	67	9%	169	15%
4. religious	43	6%	311	28%
5. historic	42	6%	71	6%
6. animal studies	36	5%	57	5%
7. mythology	31	4%	0	0%
8. abstraction	30	4%	71	6%
9. genre scene	–	–	57	5%
10. act	9	1%	62	6%
11. group portrait	–	–	26	2%
12. not recognized	6	1%	8	1%
Total	732	100%	1105	100%

Sources: Own work

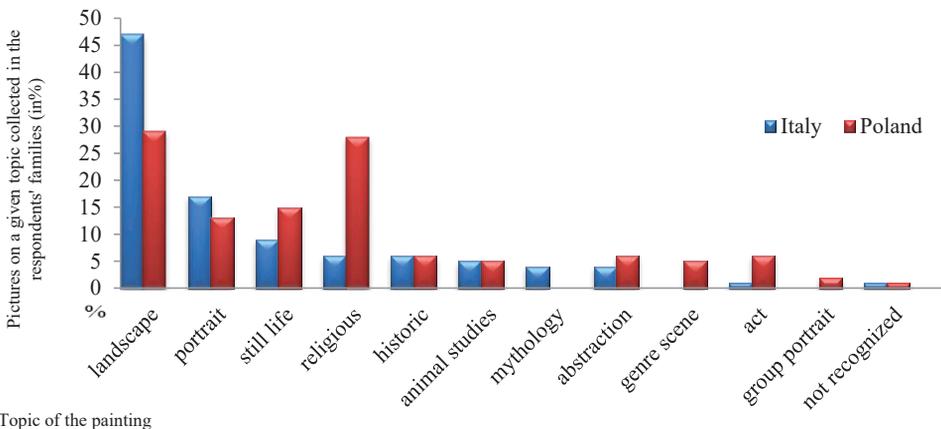


Figure 3. Comparison of the results of the preference survey in the choice of topic by Italian and Polish respondents.

Sources: Own work

In the Italian survey, the respondents mentioned landscape as the most common in their homes (47%); in fact, it was an attractive topic for both surveyed groups (Poland – 29%). The traditions of landscape painting date back to antiquity in Europe. The skills to reproduce nature were one of the most typical features of painting, initially as a background for the presented historical, mythological, religious or decorative events, and then, as a separate topic, which later became a pretext for artistic experiments, such as, for example, in impressionism. Both among the respondents in Poland and in Italy, landscape painting is considered a traditional medium of content that satisfies aesthetic tastes of the average participant in culture.

Next in the order of choice made by Polish respondents are religious topics, covering as much as 27%, while in the case of Italian ones, such paintings scored a minimum interest of 6% (Table 4).

The next preferential items in the selection of the subject of paintings are taken interchangeably: portrait (Italians – 17%, Poles – 13%) and still life (Italians – 9%, Poles – 15%). The choice of such topics demonstrates the traditional nature of the respondents' communication needs and their family backgrounds. Works of art satisfy their needs in terms of symbolization, in the forms of customary representations which are a direct connotation to the world of values, aesthetics, and beauty, commonly recognized as typical (Figure 3).

The Respondents' Skills in the Field of Painting Attribution: Execution Technique

Similar to the Polish edition, the respondents in the Italian one declared preferences in relation to oil painting (Italy – 52%, Poland – 37%), considered as a traditional way of expressing themselves in art due to specific features such as color, space, and mimesis (Table 5).

Table 5
Comparison of the preferences of artistic techniques of paintings in the homes of Italian and Polish respondents – number and percentage distribution

Visual techniques	Number of visual		Techniques recognized by respondents	
			According to the Italian survey	According to the Polish survey
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Oil painting	384	52%	410	37%
2. Watercolor	78	11%	99	9%
3. Print (reproduction, poster)	66	9%	150	14%

4. Crayon	66	9%	85	8%
5. Drawing	24	3%	51	5%
6. Graphics	18	2%	42	4%
7. Icon	12	2%	0	0%
8. Photography	6	1%	83	7%
9. Crayon	0	0%	62	6%
10. Other	78	11%	117	10%
Total	732	100%	1105	100%

Sources: Own work

Such painting uses oil paints mixed with pigments applied to a taut, primed canvas or other type of support (board, cardboard). Painterly creativity corresponds to the rules appropriate for the period in which it is created and causes the formation of various styles, directions, and forms. It is the most representative form of contact with art, articulated through the acceptance of the form combined with the fascination and admiration for the work, expressed by the fact of acquiring it. Besides, the oil painting technique is an expensive technique – this is usually reflected in the price of the painting.

Having an oil painting is a testimony to a certain social status expressed by surrounding oneself with goods of a specific material value. Artists and people of culture constitute a separate group here, in whose natural surroundings works of art are obtained in circles similar to their interests and passion of their own. For them, knowledge and professionalism are other reasons for having valuable works of art that become the object of research or business.

A slightly cheaper technique of fine arts – watercolor, both in Polish and Italian study, was recognized by the respondents as an important source of symbolic message (Italy – 11%, Poland – 12%). It is a very difficult technique of covering paper with watercolors without the possibility of making corrections and retouching. It is used by portraitists, landscape painters, and illustrators, both in Italy and Poland (Table 5).

The next most common images in the homes of the respondents are reproductions. In both groups, they account for the leading – third in Italy (9%) and second in Poland (14%) – share among the owned works. It can be a manifestation of unadulterated fascination with an artistic phenomenon expressed in the will to commune with a specific representation in a way that mediates meaning. It can also express the aesthetics of mass culture, which sees the perceived reality from the perspective of the copy and not the original. In the era of technical reproduction,

the aura of the work dies – the work is taken out of tradition and a mass is created instead of uniqueness (Table 5, Figure 4).

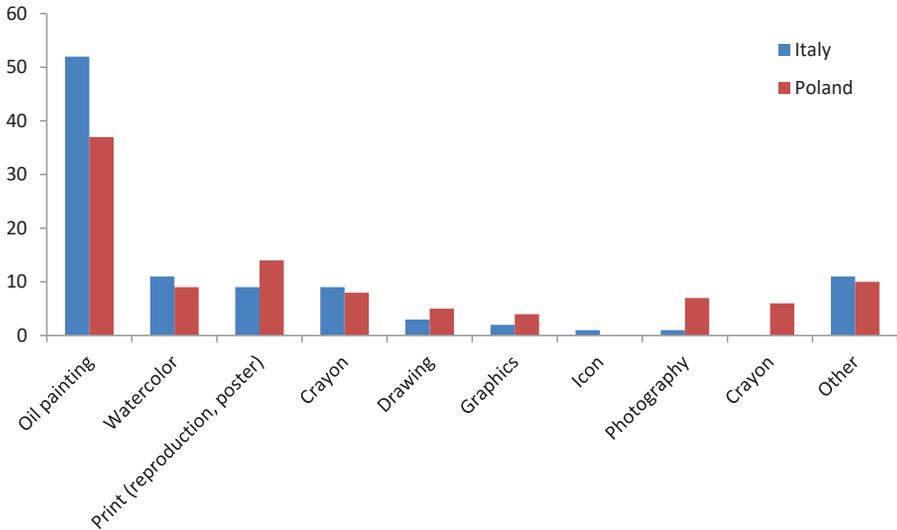


Figure 4. Comparison of the preferences of artistic techniques of paintings in the homes of Italian and Polish respondents.

Sources: Own work

The Respondents’ Skills in the Field of Painting Attribution: Image Author

The author is known by 26% of Italian respondents and not known by 74%. In the Polish study, these proportions were 10% and 90%, respectively. The ability to attribute images in the case of Italian respondents was almost twice as good as that of their Polish counterparts (Table 6, Figure 4).

Table 6
Comparing image attribution skills of respondents from Italy and Poland

Knowing or not knowing who the author of the painting is	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
Respondent knows the author of the painting	192	26%	104	10%
No knowledge of the author of the painting	540	74%	1001	90%
Total	732	100%	1105	100%

Sources: Own work

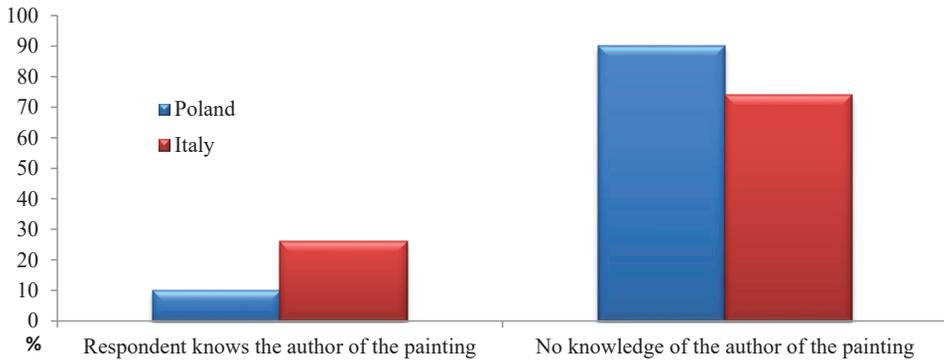


Figure 5. Comparison of knowledge levels about the authorship of images owned by respondents.

Sources: Own work

The Respondents' Skills in the Field of Painting Attribution: Date the Painting Was Created

Dating of paintings held by respondents was also better in the group of Italian respondents (the date of the painting is known to 69% of the surveyed Italians and 46% of the surveyed Poles). In the homes of Italian respondents, as in Poland, there are mainly contemporary paintings from the 20th and 21st centuries (59% – Italians, 41% – Poles), but also (1%) several unique 18th- and 19th-century works (icons) (Table 7, Figure 6).

Table 7

Dating of painting by respondents from Italy and Poland

Date of painting completion	Italian respondent		Polish respondents	
	Number Distribution	Percentage Distribution	Number Distribution	Percentage Distribution
1. 18th century	7	1%	–	0%
2. 19th century	11	2%	24	2%
3. 19th / 20th century	19	2%	12	1%
4. Beg. 20th century	36	5%	25	2%
5. 20th century	251	34%	100	9%
6. 20th / 21st century	183	25%	351	32%
7. I do not know	225	31%	593	54%
Total	732	100%	1105	100%

Sources: Own work

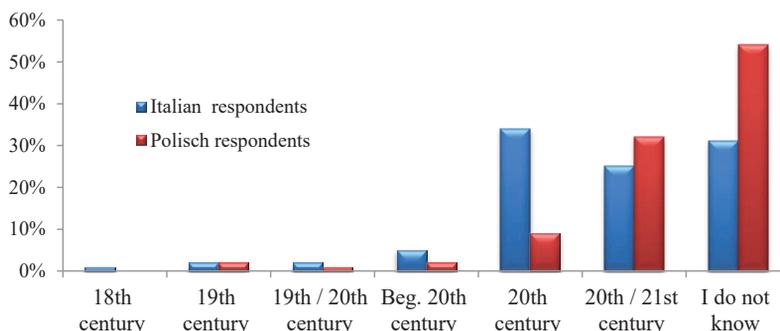


Figure 6. Comparison of respondents' skills in terms of image attribution – date of image completion.

Sources: Own work

The list of the authors of the paintings provided by Italian respondents is interesting from a cultural point of view. Research penetration allowed for a qualitative analysis of cultural goods stored in respondents' homes. In connection with dating, authorship, and formal analysis, it indicates the collections which feature the oldest works – icons which date back to the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries; there are also works by the Impressionists – Sisley, Klimt, and Cezanne – as well as 19th century painters (E. Roesler Franz, 1845–1907) and architects (Friedensreich Hundertwasser, 1828–2000), along with reproductions, for example of Salvador Dali. The paintings of contemporary authors, including famous representatives of contemporary Italian painting, dominate. The authors of the works also include parents, friends, and acquaintances of the respondents, and the respondents themselves.

The names of several famous painters, such as Kossak, Fałat, and Filipkiewicz from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries appeared in Polish reviews. The paintings described are mainly works painted on canvas or cardboard with oil paint and reproductions of works by great masters. Most often, they are contemporary forms, but also include paintings from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Study of Aesthetic Preferences over Three Generations (Grandparents, Parents, and Children)

The results were comparable for Polish and Italian respondents alike. In the survey, they provided information about the important role of parents in making decisions and selecting works of art in their homes. This is for a number of reasons. First, the property status and the right to decide are in the hands of those who finance the maintenance of the house. Considering the age range of the respondents (from 20 to 36 years old), it can be concluded that most of them are not independent to the extent that would allow them to run their own home, as they are people who study or are just starting work.

Table 8

Results of the study of generational aesthetic preferences from Italy and Poland

How long has the picture been in the respondent's possession?	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
Who contributed to its placement at home?	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. It has always been there	204	28%	203	18,5%
2. Grandparents	48	6%	137	12,5%
3. Parents	312	43%	429	39%
4. Me (the respondent)	144	20%	280	25%
5. I do not know	24	3%	56	5%
Total	732	100%	1105	100%

Sources: Own work

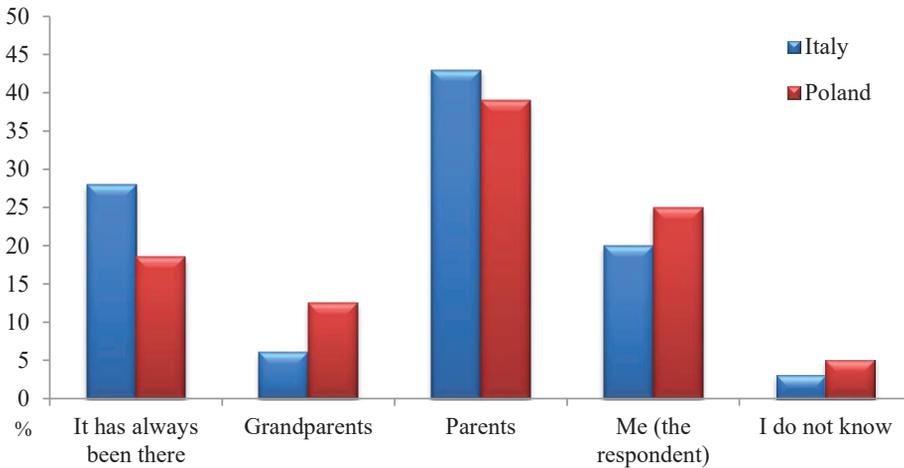


Figure 7. Comparison of generational aesthetic preferences.

Sources: Own work

The next distribution of values shows variation between respondent groups. In Italy, a fairly significant percentage (28%) of respondents confirmed that they pass paintings down from generation to generation as a continuation of generational traditions. In Poland, the role of animators of cultural life is taken over by the respondents themselves, who choose and buy paintings for their homes (Italy – 20%, Poland – 25%). They confirm the belief in the symbolic and communicative meaning of the image acquired through education, socialization, and upbringing. Grandparents are claimed to have had the least influence on the aesthetic preferences of the respondents (Italy – 6%, Poland – 12.5%) (Table 8, Figure 7).

Both in the Italian and Polish context, the respondents update their views on art by confronting the old with the new. Contemporary visual communication related to modern technologies enables the transfer of information and makes it formally more attractive, hence the strong tendency to reject old views in favor of new ones, which is conditioned by generational change. However, it is a continuation of a multi-generational cultural sequence that prefers to be surrounded by images as an expression of acceptance and fascination with the visual form of expression.

Reconnaissance of the Way of Thinking about the World in the Context of Historical, Social, and Cultural Changes, and Participation in Contemporary Visual Culture

Comparison of the ways of thinking about the world by Polish and Italian respondents.

The attempt to define the personality and disposition of the respondents participating in the survey was made on the basis of the statements made in the survey on the behavior, attitudes, and opinions concerning the analyzed aspects of culture, visual communication, and participation in culture.

The first task performed by the respondents was to indicate their own attitude to the perceived visual reality.

The respondents had the opportunity to define their personality in terms of psychology, communication, and anthropology, which determine their attitudes. The selected aspect of perception of the world represented by the respondents was treated as an individual feature shaped as a result of the process of upbringing, socialization, and education, referring to the cultural pattern as a recognized way of thinking and adapting to life in the community.

Table 9

Comparison of respondents' ways of thinking about the world

Ways of thinking about the world	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Psychological aspect	35	27%	78	31%
2. Anthropological aspect	61	46%	119	47%
3. Information aspect	20	15%	42	17%
4. Other	16	12%	14	5%
Total	132	100%	253	100%

Sources: Own work

In the case of the Polish edition of the survey, almost half of the respondents (47%) declared an anthropological way of perceiving visual phenomena, which, in principle, approves of pluralistic and individual activities aimed at breaking cultural stereotypes and affirms creative independence in the continuity of social processes and cultural change.

Similarly, Italian respondents selected the anthropological aspect of perceiving reality as the most appropriate cultural model (46%), chose a personal, moral, ethical, and aesthetic standard.

In the second place, the respondents accepted the psychological interpretations surrounding reality and the perception of the world through the prism of the analysis of the impact of psychological phenomena on humans (Italy – 31%, Poland – 27%).

The third type of the proposed worldview is the interpretation of phenomena in the context of communicative interpersonal relationships, individuals, groups, society, and interactions between them (Italy – 15%, Poland – 17%) (Table 9, Figure 8).

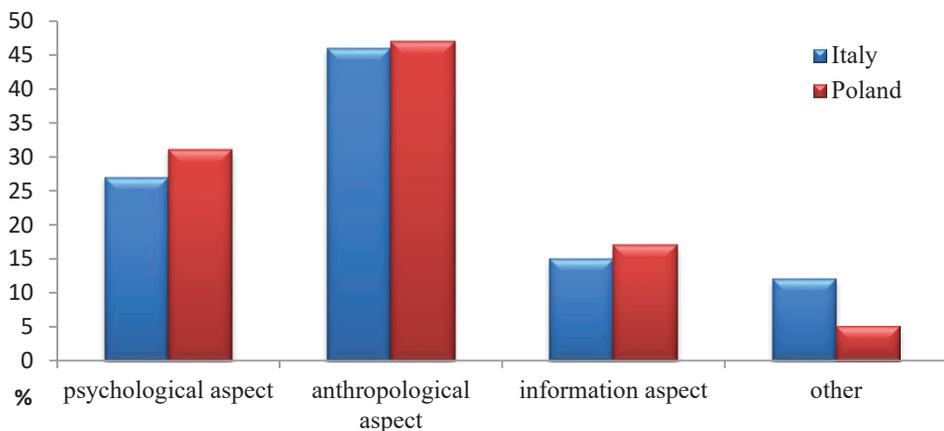


Figure 8. Perception of reality. Comparison of the ways of thinking about the world.

Sources: Own work

Research on attitudes and behavior models (Nęcka, 2020).

According to the Italian interview, the main factor in acquiring a work of art by the respondents is fascination (37%). In Poland, this stimulus is second (31%) (Table 10, Figure 9). Emotions, as strong feelings of a positive or negative nature, are mental processes of cognition. They give objects and phenomena a qualitative dimension, assigning them meaning and value. A characteristic feature of the feeling of fascination – a positive emotion – is a constant desire to stay in touch with a work of art, which is still a source of admiration and inspiration to take actions in symbolic communication.

Table 10
Recognizing respondents' preferences in choosing an image
Models of behavior and attitudes

Image selection preferences by respondents	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Fascination	96	37%	95	31%
2. Interest	36	14%	119	39%
3. Snobbery	42	16%	42	13%
4. A reflexive-aesthetic attitude	36	14%	14	5%
5. Negation	30	11%	22	7%
6. Other	21	8%	14	5%
Total	261	100%	306	100%

Sources: Own work

Snobbery, as an attempt to adapt to the environment in order to gain acceptance and impress with the features which are not authentic, also serves as motivation for wanting to own a painting, according to 16% of Italian respondents. In fact, snobbery as a stimulus to obtain a painting should not be viewed negatively because such sources of aesthetic inspiration have been influencing the ambitions of patrons, collectors, and sponsors of artistic activity for centuries. In Poland, the respondents considered it to be the third factor influencing the behavior that stimulates finding a job (13%) (Table 10, Figure 89).

In the third place in the Italian survey, respondents cited interest as a qualitative justification for their choices regarding works of art – a substantive reflection on the phenomenon of visual communication (14%). In Poland, however, as many as 39% of the respondents indicated as a priority action due to interest, expressing the need for knowledge and research, supported by opinion-forming information from professionals (galleries, critics) (Table 10, Figure 8).

The psychologically motivated reflexive-aesthetic attitude, which was chosen by 5% of respondents in Poland and 12% in Italy, is the result of the presence of internal impulses in the psychoanalytical sense; these are subconscious, based on previous experiences, and stimulate action, e.g. to buy works of art.

On the other hand, 9% of respondents in Poland and 1% in Italy negated the need to use the image as a visual form of communication and its importance in human life. This percentage of young people does not see the need to surround themselves with works of art. They are not the subject of fascination, interest, or unconscious, let alone snobbish desires (Table 10, Figure 9).

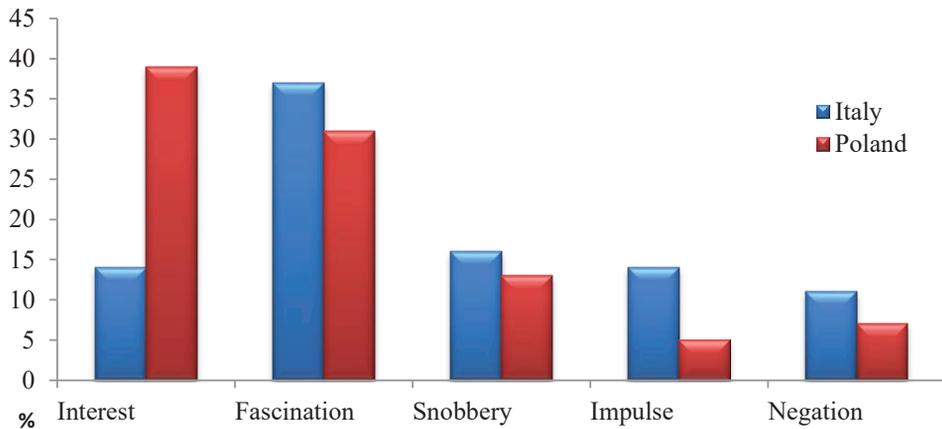


Figure 9. Comparison of behavior models. Image selection preferences by respondents from Italy and Poland.

Sources: Own work

The place of the image in the mediated perception of the world among Italian and Polish respondents. Models of behavior and attitudes.

Another issue that became the subject of research in the questionnaire interview concerned the role of the image in the perception of socio-cultural reality. We feel the existence of the external world through our senses; its perception is mediated and resides in the structures of our mind. The world is not given to us directly – we have access to it through co-created mental phenomena. The image is our main experience and we use it to shape our perception of reality. The reading of visual cultural texts analyzed in the research was based on the recognition of behavioral models as a kind of attitude towards pictorial phenomena (expressive, cognitive, mirror reception).

As the first plane of perception, the respondents in both countries – 66% in Poland and 39% in Italy – indicated the cognitive category. Secondly, they declared objective perception of reality as a message in the form of a mirror image of cultural facts and events (Italy – 35%, Poland – 20%). The third – expressive perception of pictorial reality, dependent on subjective factors – was chosen by 16% of Italian and 13% of Polish respondents.

This strong support of the respondents, both Poles and Italians, for the cognitive aspect of perceiving the phenomena of the external world proves their maturity and processing of information in order to expand knowledge about the world (Table 11, Figure 10).

Table 11
Study of the place of the image in the mediated perception of the world among Italian and Polish respondents. Models of behavior and attitudes

Image position in mediated perception of reality	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Mirror effect	66	35%	52	20%
2. Expression in reception	30	16%	34	13%
3. Cognitive function	72	39%	172	66%
6. Other	18	10%	2	1%
Total	276	100%	260	100%

Sources: Own work

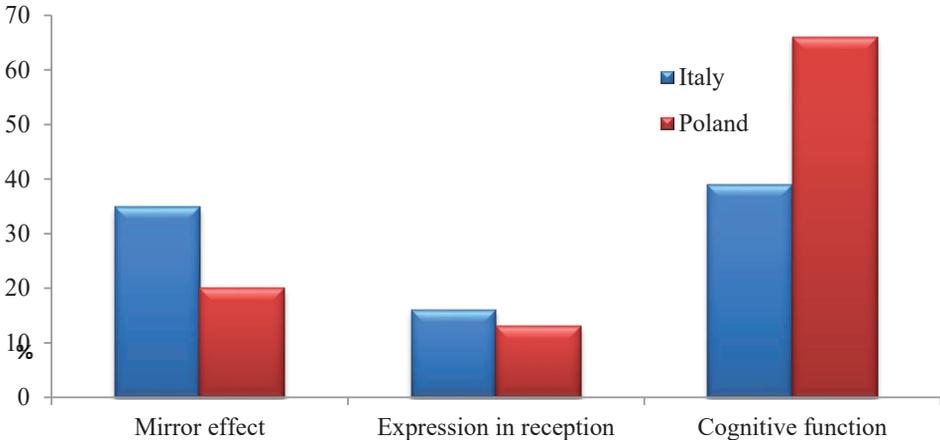


Figure 10. Comparison of behavior models. Image position in mediated perception of reality.

Sources: Own work

Image Impact

Research on the influence of an image on shaping attitudes. The transgressive function.

The study was conducted during Easter and Christmas, i.e., during the periods of increased religiosity, when transgression mainly leads to deeper reflection on the values of the temporal world. However, only Poles described it as an emotional experience confirming faith and sanctity (30%) in the context of earthly imperfection and universality of religious behavior (Table 10, Figure 12). They

gave transgression an unequivocal meaning of religious experience, referring to tradition, faith, and patriotism.

Table 12

Examination of the influence of the image on the shaping of attitudes. Comparison of the significance of the transgression function among Italian and Polish respondents

Image selection – respondents' preferences	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Faith	18	10%	77	30%
2. Reflection	81	46%	124	49%
3. Rationalism	60	34%	48	19%
6. Other	18	10%	4	2%
Total	177	100%	253	100%

Sources: Own work

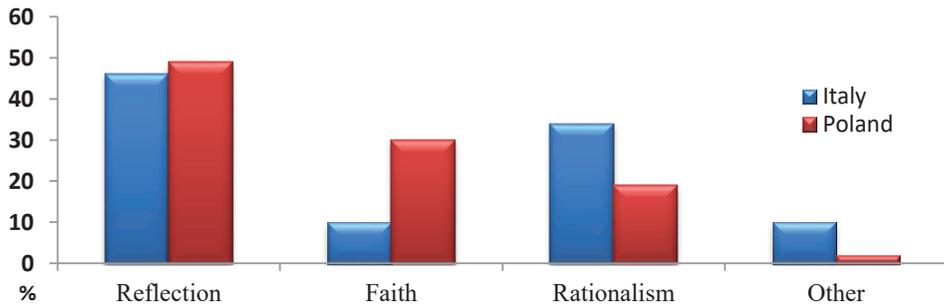


Figure 11. Comparison of the significance of the transgression function among Italian and Polish respondents.

Sources: Own work

Research on the influence of the image on the shaping of attitudes.

Tolerance.

Shaping attitudes under the influence of external factors – images, in the case of visual communication – takes place during an act of communication in which the intention of the message influences postural processes. Influences in the study focused on the attitude of tolerance that respondents were made aware of through verbal information, indoctrination, and emotional simulations in confrontation with the represented and real world. The results showed that the respondents under-

stand the social function of the image in modeling attitudes differently, confirming the hypothesis that this process requires active participation of the perceiving person, conditioned by the state of their personality traits shaped by education, socialization, and upbringing.

Through multi-level interpretations of visual arts, the surveyed Italians (57%) and Poles (71%) learned tolerance, counteracting xenophobia and resolving conflicts – features considered to be the basis of a democratic and open society. Respondents from Italy, however, prefer the relaxing role of the image to reception of messages aimed at tolerance (20%), which is important in shaping the attitude of acceptance of the behavior and views of other people, as well as themselves (Italians – 27%, Poles – 12%). Negation of the influence of the image on building the attitude of tolerance was signaled by 9% of Italians and 15% of Poles (Table 13, Figure 12).

Table 13

Study of the influence of the image on the development of the attitude of tolerance

Shaping the attitude of tolerance	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Inspires tolerance	54	20%	136	54%
2. Resolves conflicts	60	23%	27	11%
3. Respondent rejects xenophobia	36	14%	14	6%
6. Awakens a sense of humor	72	27%	31	12%
7. The image does not affect the respondent	24	9%	39	15%
8. Other	18	2%	5	2%
Total		100%		100%

Sources: Own work

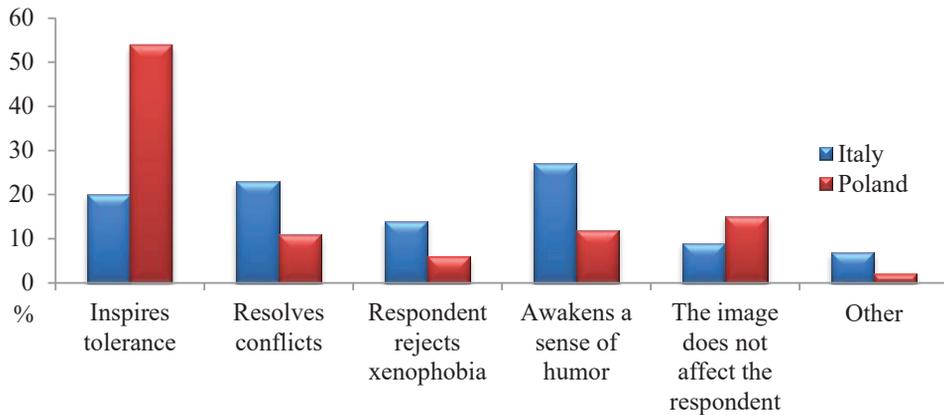


Figure 12. Comparison of the impact of the image on shaping the attitude of tolerance among Italian and Polish respondents.

Sources: Own work

Researching the educational function of visual messages.

A comparison of the statements of Italian and Polish respondents in the context of the educational meaning of the image indicates the visual transfer of knowledge as a universally recognized form of educational expression (Italy – 40%, Poland – 45%). Next, Italian respondents deem persuasion (33%) helpful in conveying information in the context of creating didactic visual materials. Poles, on the other hand, see the visualization of knowledge as the message focused on values (35%). Both groups appreciate the cognitive and educational opportunities offered by the visual message and the broader, contemporary understanding of image culture (Table 14, Figure 13).

Table 14

Study of the educational function of the visual message among Italian and Polish respondents

Image selection preferences by respondents	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Values	48	22%	90	35%
2. Knowledge, skills	90	40%	113	45%
3. Persuasion	73	33%	48	19%
6. Other	12	5%	2	1%
Total	248	100%	253	100%

Sources: Own work

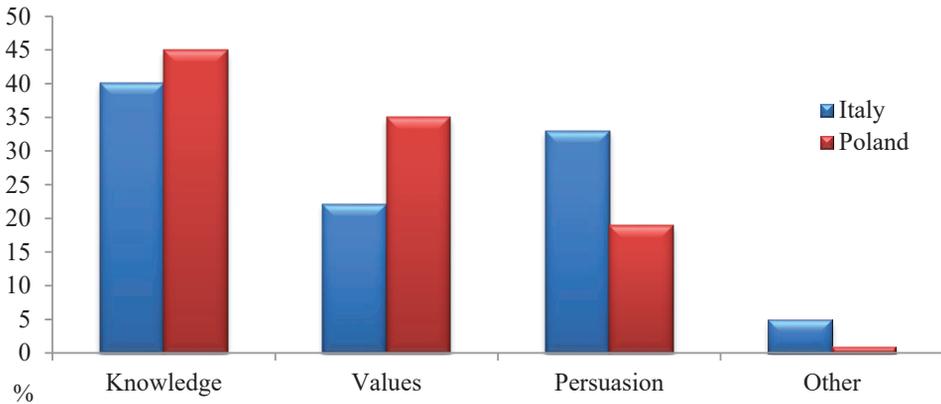


Figure 13. Comparison of the importance of the educational function of the visual message.

Sources: Own work

Image influence. Cultural pluralism.

Cultural pluralism, like tolerance, is a phenomenon characteristic of democratic societies that recognize ethnic equality, beliefs, and cultural diversity.

In the survey, 77% of Polish respondents and 70% of Italian respondents admitted that the image can be used for social integration, arousing positive interest in other cultures, diversity of perception and reading the meanings of recognized artifacts (Table 15, Figure 14).

Table 15

Image impact. Research on cultural pluralism among Italian and Polish respondents

Image selection preferences	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Conservatism	27	16%	50	20%
2. Pluralism	123	72%	196	77%
3. Other	21	12%	7	3%
Total	171	100%	253	100%

Sources: Own work

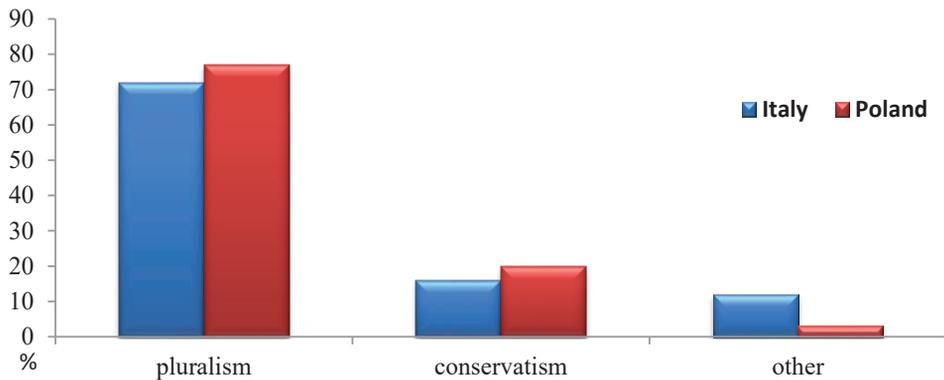


Figure 14. Comparison of the influence of the image on the shaping of attitudes. Cultural pluralism.

Sources: Own work

The theory of collecting as an element of everyday anthropology.

In their research, Italian respondents identified aesthetic motivation as the main reason for creating a collection of works of art. In the era of consumerism of modern society, contact with works of art, i.e. objects of aesthetic value, allows them to rise above economic and ideological utilitarianism, to reach the essence of art – beauty. 50% of Italian respondents indicated the aesthetic criterion as the leading one. According to Poles, in the same study, the creation of a collection is a phenomenon so distant and, above all, elitist that it is associated with snobbery, an attempt to break into the upper social class with the help of valuable and prestigious works of art. 49% of Polish respondents indicated snobbery and prestige

Table 16

Motivations for collecting images in Italian and Polish respondents

Image selection preferences	Italian respondents		Polish respondents	
	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution	Numerical distribution	Percentage distribution
1. Business	12	5%	16	2%
2. Prestige	19	9%	424	49%
3. Family traditions	48	21%	264	31%
4. Connoisseurship	18	8%	80	8%
5. Beauty	114	50%	76	9%
6. Other	17	7%	0	0
Total	228	100%	860	100%

Sources: Own work

as the reason for collecting. However, common to both groups (48% – Italy, 31% – Poland) is the understanding of the collection as a way of life resulting from family traditions. The knowledge of collecting is confirmed by only 8% of Italians and 9% of Poles. The least appreciated were behaviors for which collecting is a source of income (Italians – 5%, Poles – 2%) (Table 14, Figure 15). The respondents associate it with negative reference to the material value of art related to ethics, morality, and cultural knowledge.

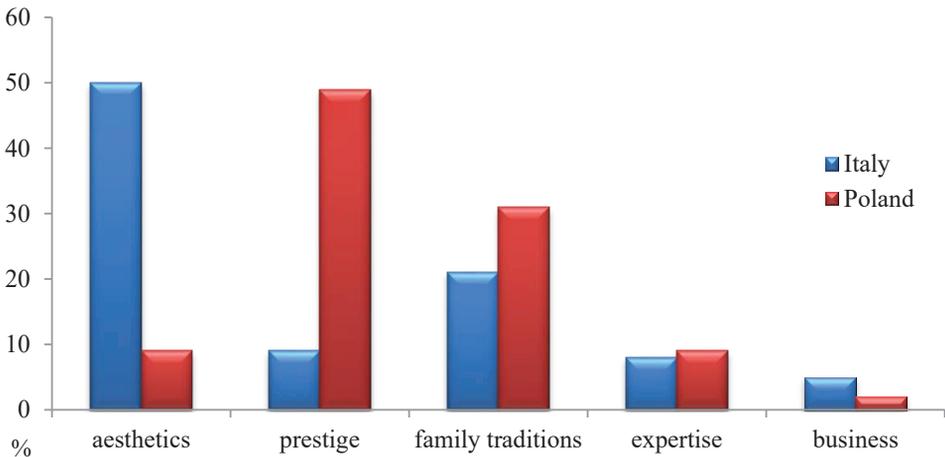


Figure 15. Comparison of motivating factors to create a collection of images.

Sources: Own work

Discussion and Conclusions

The qualitative analysis of the participation of the young generation in culture, in the aspect of users' perception of visual messages, showed that, at present, information awareness of digital natives is a component of cultural competences necessary to read not only a traditional image, but also a structured visual message (Prensky, 2001). The attempt to define this kind of ability in the context of visual literacy was the aim of this research.

Several elements necessary for the formation of cultural competences can be listed. First, it is necessary to characterize a given community in terms of its historical and social development, and to examine value systems that determine the way of life of individuals, their styles and cognitive orientations. Schemes of expectations towards visual works should indicate the existing environmental

patterns of culture that have their source in psychological and cultural determinants. Then, it is necessary to identify the attitudes and behaviors of information users in relation to the role and importance of image in the life of the information society, as well as motivation, fascination, and needs – the factors determining visual reception.

In the research, the problem of visual qualifications as an element of education about information through art has been set in a broader European context thanks to the comparative analysis of the degree of image reception in Poland with the Mediterranean perspective registered in Italy. In this way, the process of symbolizing was distinguished, marked psychologically, educatively, and informatively. The young generation of Italians, at the academic level, was subjected to a quantitative and qualitative research similar to that conducted on young Poles. The similarities and differences in the reception of visual culture became the subject of formal and theoretical analysis, and the results showed contradictions in mentality, as well as worldview coherence within the studied cultural groups. The results of the analysis will be useful in designing educational activities for visual and informational literacy and in creating visual information architecture understood as building structures and organizing content so that users can read information and transform it into knowledge.

Research on the manifestations of participation in image culture, in the context of informational behavior, also indicated a specific cultural code for individual societies. The conditions of such a code depend on many factors which have been highlighted in the research. They are common to many countries and fit into the overall model of the development of the European civilization.

Theoretical analyzes and empirical research refer to the cognitive-informational nature of visual communication, consisting in the creation, transmission, and interpretation of images based on intuitive reception, under the influence of learned perceptual practices shaped on the basis of cultural meanings. In this context, taking into account the pictorial nature of contemporary communication, visual literacy is a qualitative element and a guarantee of continuity of a cultural message, based on the possessed visual knowledge and information competences. The conducted quantitative and qualitative research, which penetrates the circles of the future Polish and Italian intelligentsia in the field of visual literacy, within the information culture they represent, is an attempt to draw attention to competence and educational shortages in this field.

The functioning of a young person within the virtual educational and information space, which is currently identified in the living and learning environment, is combined with the ability to formulate and specify information needs in relation to the available visual material.

Contemporary culture forces its participants to be able to communicate efficiently within a wide range of problems which are often articulated by images in the social space. 21st century society is becoming more and more visual. These information needs are now being met by the emergence of visual representations of knowledge in the form of modern, semiotically coded images. They remain traditional only in the sphere of the concept of imaging but, in terms of form, content, and impact, they set far more specialized goals, such as, for example, infographics (Pulak & Wieczorek-Tomaszewska, 2011).

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Visual Literacy as a Dimension of the Young Generation's Cultural Capital...

Wieczorek-Tomaszewska, M. (2016). The Research on Visual Literacy in Transliteracy as the Main Ability to Understand and Communicate in the 21st Century. *International Journal of Research in E-learning* 2 (2), 31–50.

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Małgorzata Wieczorek-Tomaszewska

Umiejętności wizualne jako wymiar kapitału kulturowego młodego pokolenia – badania porównawcze

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem badań przedstawionych w artykule, związanych z *visual literacy*, jest określenie zakresu i jakości zjawiska porozumiewania się w obszarze komunikacji symbolicznej. Uwzględniono indywidualne dyspozycje użytkowników informacji, tworząc zbiór zachowań i reakcji, poglądów i koncepcji, osobistych przekonań i skłonności, które determinują sposób życia i myślenia – tzw. *Habitus* wg Pierre'a Bourdieu. Celem było stworzenie charakterystyki badanych przedstawicieli młodego pokolenia i określenie ich predyspozycji do symbolizowania (poszukiwania odniesień). Badania przeprowadzone zostały na dwóch porównawczych populacjach z Polski i Włoch w celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na pytanie o jakość współczesnej komunikacji wizualnej i predyspozycje użytkowników informacji do wizualizacji oraz o ich kondycję adaptacyjną do wizualnej formy ekspresji. Badania wychodzą naprzeciw zapotrzebowaniu edukacyjnemu na nowoczesną formę edukacji, uwzględniającą współczesne informacyjne środowisko życia i medialne zanurzenie w wizualnej rzeczywistości uczestników procesu edukacji.

Słowa kluczowe: umiejętności wizualne, kompetencje wizualne, komunikacja wizualna, kultura wizualna

Малгожата Вечорек-Томашевска

Визуальная грамотность как измерение культурного капитала молодого поколения – сравнительное исследование

Аннотация

Предметом исследования представленного в статье исследования, связанного с визуальной грамотностью, является определение масштабов и качества феномена коммуникации в сфере символической коммуникации. Учитывались индивидуальные предрасположенности пользователей информации, создавая набор моделей поведения и реакций, взглядов и концепций, личных убеждений и наклонностей, определяющих образ жизни и мышления – так называемые *Habitus* Пьера Бурдьё. Цель заключалась в создании характеристик исследуемых представителей молодого поколения и определении их символической предрасположенности

(поиск референсов). Исследование проводилось на двух сравнительных популяциях Польши и Италии, чтобы ответить на вопрос о качестве современной визуальной коммуникации и предрасположенности пользователей информации к визуализации, а также об их адаптивном состоянии к визуальной форме выражения. Исследование удовлетворяет образовательную потребность в современной форме обучения с учетом современной информационной среды жизни и медийного погружения в визуальную реальность участников образовательного процесса.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а: визуальная грамотность, визуальная компетентность, визуальная коммуникация, визуальная культура, визуальная среда обучения

Małgorzata Wiczorek-Tomaszewska

La alfabetización visual como dimensión del capital cultural de la generación joven – investigación comparada

R e s u m e n

El tema de la investigación que se presenta en el artículo, relacionada con la alfabetización visual, es definir el alcance y la calidad del fenómeno de la comunicación en el área de la comunicación simbólica. Se tuvieron en cuenta las disposiciones individuales de los usuarios de la información, creando un conjunto de comportamientos y reacciones, visiones y conceptos, creencias e inclinaciones personales que determinan la forma de vida y pensamiento – el llamado *Habitus* de Pierre Bourdieu. El objetivo era crear las características de los representantes examinados de la generación joven y determinar su predisposición a simbolizar (búsqueda de referencias). La investigación se llevó a cabo en dos poblaciones comparativas de Polonia e Italia con el fin de responder a la pregunta sobre la calidad de la comunicación visual contemporánea y la predisposición de los usuarios de la información a la visualización, y sobre su condición de adaptación a la forma visual de expresión. La investigación responde a la demanda educativa de una forma de educación moderna, teniendo en cuenta el entorno de la vida informativa contemporánea y la inmersión de los medios en la realidad visual de los participantes del proceso educativo.

P a l a b r a s c l a v e: alfabetización visual, competencia visual, comunicación visual, cultura visual, entorno de aprendizaje visual