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THE ROLE OF IMAGE  
IN RITUAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION  
BASED ON THE EXAMPLE  
OF POLISH NEWS BULLETINS

Although image exists only in personal conscience and imagination it can be personalized – painted, sculptured, and in that manner becomes a part of common imagination<sup>1</sup>. This common imagination is nothing but culturally constructed frame and schema, around which our everyday life is organized. Thanks to them our perception and choice of action becomes easier. However, the important question here is who and how influences the dominant picture of the world in a given society.

The concept of picture is extremely broad and complex. It constitutes a starting point for numerous phenomena and processes of today's world. Nowadays culture is frequently described as visual and modern society as picture society. Ernest H. Gombrich claims that “we live in the age of visualizm, we are constantly bombarded with pictures”<sup>2</sup>. This seems to be true, since according to psychologists, children are more and more prone to get satisfied with images provided by television and the Internet and rather reluctant to use their own imagination. Such a tendency among children should not be surprising, for even adults base their

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<sup>1</sup> M. KOCIUBA, *Antropologia poznania obrazowego. Rola obrazu i dyskursu w poznawczym ujmowaniu świata*, Lublin: Wyd. UMCS 2010, pp. 140-141.

<sup>2</sup> E.H. GOMBRICH, *Obraz wizualny*, in: *Symbole i symbolika*, ed. Michał Głowiński, Warszawa: Czytelnik 1991, p. 312.

perception of the world on pictures. This, in turn, can be observed in countless visualizations present in news bulletins, whose aim is to simplify the perception of information and to make its recipient lazier. In that manner one is provided with a ready-made interpretation of a given event and the persuasive message is strengthened. That is why such phenomena as infotainment and tabloidization are more and more frequently observed. On the other hand, as Roland Barthes puts it, “speaking of the civilization of picture is not entirely right: we still and more than ever live in the civilization of script, since script and speech are the structures of the fullest informativity”<sup>3</sup>. However, pictures became long before script which is more conventionalized. Moreover, pictures, not script, are present in our lives since birth. Images provided by the media are rooted in the addresser and addressee’s culture and use signs and code typical of this culture. Importantly, the images should result from the recipient’s experience directly, rather than the visualizations proposed by the mass media.

The information presented in the mass media does not reflect reality, but constitute a symbolic system<sup>4</sup>. For this reason it is worth to perform analysis of visualization in the context of ritual media communication, in which the usage of symbolism makes an important element shaping the audience's behavior. This perspective narrows the understanding of a given picture down to a specific culture. Rafał Drozdowski highlights that modern culture becomes more and more popular, and popular culture – more and more visual<sup>5</sup>. This phenomenon can be observed in news bulletins, which are now filled with images. These visualizations are designed to make the message easier to understand. As a result, the viewer is provided with a specified picture of the world. Images are discursive, they reinterpret reality, and the mass media and television in particular, perform this function in an excellent manner. This is probably why television, despite the growing significance of the Internet, still constitutes the most important source of information for a large number of people. As a result, it is worth to focus on how the content of news bulletins, whose primary role is to provide information, is construed. However, analysts, including Carey, Couldry, Katz and Dyan, claim that this role goes far beyond it, as far as shaping public opinion is concerned.

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<sup>3</sup> R. BARTHES, *Retoryka obrazu*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN 1985, p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> E.H. GOMBRICH, *Obraz wizualny*, p. 312.

<sup>5</sup> R. DROZDOWSKI, *Obrazy na obrazach. Strategie społecznego oporu wobec obrazów dominujących*, Poznań: Wyd. UAM 2006, p. 7.

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to analyze the usage of visual content of news bulletins and its role in the perception of information. Images are also important from the perspective of ritual communication. They strengthen the verbal message and broaden the control mechanisms over the recipient, as a viewer has to focus more on the message than the listener. There are several questions that can be asked here. What pictures are used to convey message? In what context they appear? How the usage of picture changes according to a kind of the presented information? What is the relation between verbal and visual message? Is the latter always the complementation of the former? Do different news bulletins use pictures in a different manner?

The research under consideration focuses on news bulletins broadcast by the two most popular Polish television stations (public and private). A news bulletin, defined as a television program presenting the events that occurred on a certain day, possessing a clear identity as well as measured and diverse materials<sup>6</sup> may be considered as one of the most important sources of information. An interesting definition is provided by Ivan Cury, according to whom “if most of the stories presented are current, then the program is a news program”<sup>7</sup>. What plays an important role here is television, and in consequence the information program presented by this particular medium, which uses image and sound to achieve a great effect, which was mentioned by Giovanni Sartori<sup>8</sup> or Pierre Bourdieu<sup>9</sup>. Another important fact is that the news bulletins create the importance of words and expressions on a large scale<sup>10</sup>. The image is very important for television, is a one of the most important part of this medium.

The method adopted in the research in question is qualitative content analysis, and the research tool is categorizing key. The choice of the qualitative method was motivated by the character of questions. The aim is not to find any regu-

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<sup>6</sup> A. BOYD, *Dziennikarstwo radiowo-telewizyjne: techniki tworzenia programów informacyjnych*, Kraków: Wyd. UJ 2006, p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> I. CURY, *Directing and Producing for Television. A Format Approach*, Amsterdam [etc.]: Elsevier 2011, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> See: G. SARTORI, *Homo videns. Telewizja i postmyślenie*, Warszawa: Wyd. UW 2007.

<sup>9</sup> See: P. BOURDIEU, *O telewizji. Panowanie dziennikarstwa*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2011.

<sup>10</sup> W. PISAREK, *Język w mediach i media w języku*, in: *Język w mediach masowych*, eds. J. Bralczyk, K. Kosiółek-Mosińska, Warszawa: Wydawca Upowszechnianie Nauki – Oświata „UN-O”, p. 13.

larity<sup>11</sup>, but rather to understand the role of image in news bulletins. What was chosen as a unit of this analysis is a single piece of material in the program. Population are news bulletins of Polish television stations that broadcast their program nationwide. As a result of operationalization, they were narrowed down to the most popular two, “Fakty” and “Wiadomości”<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, two-step sampling was performed. First, programs from 2011 and 2014 were isolated, and then the media were divided into public and commercial ones. Then, the research concentrated on programs broadcast in the days when important media events<sup>13</sup> took place and on the events connected with the election campaign. This was to

<sup>11</sup> In this particular research the sampling frame was too small and non-probability sampling was performed so as to generalize the results of the research.

<sup>12</sup> According to the report of the National Broadcasting Council, based on Nielsen Audience Measurement in the first quarter of 2014 “Fakty” achieved the average audience of 3.9 million and “Wiadomości” of 3.7 million viewer. This bulletins were followed by Poslat television “Wydarzenia”, whose result was 2.9 million. Raport KRRiT: *Najpopularniejsze audycje w I kw. 2014. Dobowa oglądalność programów*, [http://www.krrit.gov.pl/Data/Files/\\_public/pliki/publikacje/raporty/kontrola-nadawcow-wyniki-badan/najpopularniejsze-audycje-w-i-kw-2014--dobowa-ogladalnosci-programow.pdf](http://www.krrit.gov.pl/Data/Files/_public/pliki/publikacje/raporty/kontrola-nadawcow-wyniki-badan/najpopularniejsze-audycje-w-i-kw-2014--dobowa-ogladalnosci-programow.pdf) [07.08.2014].

<sup>13</sup> A media event is here widely understood. For one hand it concerns a preplanned event, arising public interest, and for the other as something sudden, e.g. a crash, which fulfills certain demands of three levels. At the syntactic level, a media event breaks other broadcasts, in is related live, from outside the studio, it makes important news. Semantically speaking, it highlights the range of the event, it is pompous, frequently of historical importance. At the pragmatic level it breaks the broadcast programming and gathers a large audience (D. DAYAN, E. KATZ, *Wydarzenia medialne. Historia transmitowana na żywo*, Warszawa: Muza 2008, p. 50; see also: E.W. ROTHENBUHLER, *Komunikacja rytualna: od rozmowy codziennej do ceremonii medialnej*, Kraków: Wyd. UJ 2003). At first, Dayan and Katz regarded only preplanned events as media ones and did not included here crashes or natural disasters. Later they changes their opinion (see: M. BLONDHEIM, T. LIEBES, *Live Television's Disaster Marathon of September 11 and its Subversive Potential*, “Prometheus”, 20 (2002), No 3. The reason for this can lie in the fact that the world has changes dramatically since the time their publication was written. For that reason it is essential to widen the notions of the authors under consideration with the reports relating crashes which are often far more interesting than a visit of a foreign head of state or anniversary of an important historical event. Elihu Katz himself regarded September 11 attacks as media events even though their character was sudden. He claimed that they constituted a “crash marathon” and the journalistic relations were particularly speculative. The questions asked were not “who” and “why”, but rather “what”, “where” and “when” (W. GODZIC, *Wstęp do wydania polskiego*, in: *Wydarzenia medialne. Historia transmitowana na żywo*, eds. D. Dayan, E. Katz, Warszawa: Muza 2008, p. 13; M. BLONDHEIM, T. LIEBES, *Live television's*; J. CURRAN, T. LIEBES, *The Intellectual Legacy of Elihu Katz*, in: *Media, Ritual and Identity*, eds. Liebes, J. Curran, London–New York: Routledge 2008, p. 7; see also: E. KATZ, T. LIEBES, „No more peace!”. *Disaster, Terror, War and Media Evens*, in: *Media events in a global age*, eds. N. Couldry, A. Hepp, F. Krotz, New York: Routledge 2010; A. STĘPIŃSKA, *9/11 and the Transformation of Globalized Media Events*, in: *Media Events in Global Age*, eds. N. Couldry, A. Hepp, F. Klotz, London–New York: Routledge 2010; M. KOŁODZIEJCZAK, A. STĘPIŃSKA, *Teoretyczne podstawy badań nad wydarzeniami medialnymi*, „Zeszyty Prasoznawcze”, 2014, No 1 (217).

choose whether there is any difference in the composition of the service analyzed according to the event.

Such a choice was motivated by a desire to examine whether there is any compositional difference according to a kind of the event. The attention focused on Barack Obama's visits in Poland in 2011 and 2014 (the second visit was linked with the 25th anniversary of the first democratic election in Poland<sup>14</sup>); the first anniversary of 2010 Polish Air Force Tu-154 crash<sup>15</sup> (2011) and canonization of Pope John XXIII nad Pope John Paul II (2014), as well as two broadcasts for each station concerning the parliamentary election campaign of 2011 and two relating to the election campaign to the European Parliament in 2014. To sum up, this study concentrated on sixteen issues of news bulletins: eight of "Fakty" and eight of "Wiadomości".

The methods of the picture analysis were of qualitative character. The semiotic analysis was used also, for the subject of this study included both overt and hidden content. What was examined was the picture composition, the context of its appearance, the kind of images and the goal it was to perform. It was essential to think of its possible influence on the audience. The interest in the message, which also means the participation in ritual communication, requires the use of a proper narration, figures of speech and an intriguing image, which may suggest both the goals and a potential impact on the recipient.

#### THE ROLE OF PICTURE IN RITUAL COMMUNICATION

As it was previously mentioned, the notion of picture is extremely wide. William J.T. Mitchell distinguishes between five kinds of images. The first kind are graphic images (paintings, sculptures, graphics); the second are optical (mirrors, projections); the third – perceptual (sensual data, virtual images); the forth – mental (dreams, memory, ideas); and the fifth – verbal (metaphors, descriptions)<sup>16</sup>. For the purpose of this analysis, the notion of a picture will be limited to the first category described by Mitchell, for a certain limitation is necessary. Thus, the analysis will concern icons, indexes and symbols rather than material or mental images. Verbal images will be referred to as texts or verbal layer.

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<sup>14</sup> Hereinafter referred to as "the June election".

<sup>15</sup> Hereinafter referred to as "the Smolensk crash".

<sup>16</sup> J.M. MITCHELL, *Iconology, Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press 1986, p. 1.

From the cognitive perspective, learning by image is regarded as less valuable than learning by notion. Despite this fact, the author of this study does not depreciate visual layer. Michel Foucault stated that what we see goes beyond what we speak about, which does not mean that it should be ignored<sup>17</sup>. Perception of notions and images is one process, that takes place in two pervading dimensions. Still, the latter is frequently regarded as a complementation of the former<sup>18</sup>. Is it always the case? According to Roland Barthes, there are two ways to achieve a successful interaction of picture and text: anchoring and relay. The first consists in mutual penetration of picture and text, where one strengthens the message of the other. Relay is connected to the fact that text and picture relate to other aspects and in that manner the significance of the message is widened<sup>19</sup>.

It can be nowadays observed that linguistic narrations are ousted by picturesque ones. This phenomenon is connected with the process of gradual colonization of common knowledge<sup>20</sup>. This process is extremely visible in news bulletins, where information makes the basic element. If Polish news bulletins dating back to the 1990's are compared to those broadcast nowadays, the change in proportion of visual and verbal information can be easily observed. However, is word indeed being replaced with a picture? Is it still a relevant component in shaping public opinion?

Bo Bergström distinguishes informational pictures which provide real information and are deprived of any evaluative element. They include both relevant and irrelevant but real events. Secondly, he speaks of clarifying messages that explain actions, situations or courses of events, such as pictures of graphs. Thirdly, there are direct (directional) pictures. Their role is to point and give support to certain ideas. Here, the addresser's goal is to influence the addressee in a certain manner by means of a particular proof. Forth of all, we can speak of expressive pictures which reflect strong emotions, use strong means of expression and present author's personal opinion<sup>21</sup>. It is worth highlighting, that this classification is not separative, as one picture can belong to several categories. Moreover, if informational function is perceived broadly, even emotion can carry certain portion of knowledge.

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<sup>17</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *Słowa i rzeczy. Archeologia nauk humanistycznych*, Gdańsk: Słowo / obraz terytoria 2000, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> M. KOCIUBA, *Antropologia poznania obrazowego*, p. 7, 16.

<sup>19</sup> R. BARTHES, *Retoryka obrazu*, p. 295-297.

<sup>20</sup> R. DROZDOWSKI, *Obraza na obrazu*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> B. BERGSTRÖM, *Komunikacja wizualna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2009, p. 124.

As it was already mentioned, the context of the information presented is extremely important, as they gain their meaning among other pictures, titles, headlines and logos. For instance, when a photo of a falling over politician is juxtaposed to a one of a drunk person, the associations are totally different than when the second picture presents a hospital. This phenomenon was pointed by Silcock, Heider, Rogus, who highlight that “three principles are important when considering the visual aspect of building news blocks. First, place pictures based on their context. Second, pictures can generate powerful emotions. Third, people need breathing space after certain pictures”<sup>22</sup>. In a situation of a tragedy, a single item in news bulletins may be composed of images only, which can give a much more emotional effect than a verbal comment. The third aspect is connected to the journalists' necessity to comment on series of images to provide viewers with a certain interpretation (e.g. “stand up” at the end of a material).

The analysis of message in television requires concentration of visual aspects. What is present in television studio is a multivisual interaction. There are presenters, spoken texts, photos, films, graphics, colors, pictures, lights. News bulletins take advantage of this interaction, thanks to which for many viewers it constitutes an attractive option to spend an evening<sup>23</sup>. This results from the possibility to influence by means of numerous stimuli. The visual layout poses as an important factor in the reception of the communicate. According to, Darell M. West, one picture may transfer the same meaning that require a thousand of words<sup>24</sup>. What is more, due to photos, films and other visualizations of non-visual contents (including polls or the distribution of mandates in the Parliament) to message becomes more credible and easier in the reception.

Picture plays an important role in ritual communication, whose analysis, though interesting, is nowadays often neglected. Ritual model perceives communication as a kind of performance or celebration rather than just pure exchange of information. Message is discourse that influences the recipients and shapes their attitudes and behavior. James Carey (1992, p. 18) claims that ritual communication links communication with such notions as division, membership, union, companionship and shared beliefs<sup>25</sup>. It relates to the integration role of rite,

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<sup>22</sup> W.B. SILCOCK, D. HEIDER, M.T. ROGUS, *Managing Television News. A Handbook for Ethical and Effective Producing*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2007, p. 104.

<sup>23</sup> B. BERGSTRÖM, *Komunikacja wizualna*, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> D.M. WEST, *Air Wars. Television Advertising in the Election Campaign 1952-2008*, Washington: CQ Press 2010, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> J. CAREY, *Communication as a Culture – Essays on Media and Society*, New York–London: Routledge 1992, p. 21.

mentioned by Durkheim. Media communication engages not only its addresser by also the addressee who actively participates in the shared event, as if they were physically present in the place it happens and experienced all the emotions. Ritual view on communication do not aim at sharing information but rather on the presentation of common values and believes. For these reason, the addresser has to be aware of those values and believes so as to encode the message in a proper manner, which frequently involves rich symbolism, especially as regards the visual layer.

However, it is not social integration that makes the goal of ritual communication, but a desire to control society. Ideology is the power that specifies what and how we are supposed to think. Rites, including the ones presented in the media, strengthen the image of the world created by or thanks to ideology. According to Carey, newspapers are a form of culture created by particular (dominant) classes in different moments of history. Like other forms of culture, news both creates and reflects certain “hunger for experience”. People are not capable of experiencing everything themselves, but we still can participate in more events while watching news. Still, such a kind of experience is shaped by those who select information and choose among the variety of contexts. From a ritual perspective, news is not information, but drama. It does not describe world, but constitute an arena for competing strengths and actions. This is where power, understood as imposing a given opinion about reality, reveals.

#### THE ANALYSIS

The analysis of the news bulletins was based on the category key that was created to answer the questions asked in this study. Although it was a single item of news that constituted the subject of this research, firstly the composition of the whole program was analyzed. Then researcher’s attention focused on the single unit of information. The categories taken into consideration were the composition (a kind of program, arrangement, subjects of news, the place it is performed), and as regards a single news the context in which images appeared, the relation between verbal and visual layer, the role and composition of visualization, types of pictures (informative, clarifying, direct, expressive) and types of rhetorical pictures (representative, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, simile) and types of signs (icon, index, symbol).

The analysis of the composition of news bulletins brought a following conclusion – during election such a program consists of specific parts. They include

the service signal with certain visual motif, the presenter's welcome, a few-second long summary of the main information (in case of "Wiadomości" such a summary also appears in the middle of the service), followed by the presentation of the main information. Such a composition constitutes a kind of suggestion for the recipients what to pay attention to and which news is most important. As regards a service concerning a media event, the composition changes, which reflects its unusualness.

One of the aspects that highlight this unusualness is the fact that the presenter goes beyond the studio and is present in the place the event happens<sup>26</sup>. Another technique is the presence of more than one journalist (e.g. during the canonization of John Paul II "Wiadomości" was hosted by three presenters). In this particular case the two above mentioned aspects are combined, which was to show the importance of the event and serious treatment of this subject by the editorial staff who put extremal effort to provide people with the experience they are otherwise not able to participate in.

Another unusual aspect is taking advantage of visual motives during the program. While presenting media events, television stations use specially-created graphic signs that are to symbolize a given event that frequently appears in the middle of the program. This can be exemplified with the issue of "Fakty" of June 4, 2014 (the anniversary of the June election as well as Barack Obama's visit) in which appeared the Polish flag with the words "25 years of freedom". At the same time "Wiadomości" used the name of TVP station written in the manner resembling the famous "Solidarność" logo. Another technique applied to make the program special are visual interludes that usually last several seconds. In the aforesaid issue of "Fakty" it was the election poster of Solidarność dating 25 years back, and during the canonization of two popes – the flag of Vatican City. Such interludes are usually shown between pieces of news or between the news and the presenter's comment. They can last longer and consist of more than one picture. In such a case they appear once or twice during the program and are more

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<sup>26</sup> For instance on April 4, 2011 (the first anniversary of the Smolensk crash) "Fakty" was broadcast from where the crash happened, which was highly symbolic. The presenter stood on the background of the broken birch, which made the cause of the crash – the plane caught on it, broke its wings and fell down. According to the followers of the conspiracy theory (including Polish political party PiS), the tree could not cause the crash, which was suggested by the committee whose task was to examine the background of the crash. The birch became the subject of a fierce debate and the tree itself the symbol of both the discrepancies in Polish politics and the fragility of life and broken hearts of the victims' families. Using this symbol is a perfect example of ritual communication taking advantage of symbols and feelings that make the message more expressive. Another examples here are the canonization of John Paul II transmitted from Vatican or Barack Obama's visit in Poland in 2014, when the presenter stood on the balcony with the view on the Warsaw old town, where the event had happened.

common for TVN station. This can be illustrated with “Fakty” broadcast in the day of the canonization, in which a collection of archive pictures of John Paul II, accompanied by calm music, were used between the materials. Similarly, a year after Smolensk crash, the program included pictures from this event, such as the crash, the national move, bringing bodies back to Poland or the funeral. Such retrospections are to recreate the emotions and the atmosphere of those days and remind of the tragedy and unity that characterized Polish nation. In a similar manner, pictures of pope John Pope II were to give evidence of the feeling Poles have had about his person. This is typical of the ritual view on media communication. Mass media aim at attracting people’s attention, bringing memories back, creating atmosphere of reflection and seriousness, in order to shape their opinion on a given event.

As regards news bulletins, an important part is played by the reporters who give live relations of the events. At the beginning of the program the presenter introduces reporters located in different places (they are also shown on the screen), who are ready to speak about the events they observed or participated in. Thanks to their ability to witness unusual events, they resemble omniscient priests. The importance of the event is frequently highlighted with the fact that no other material is present in the program, which was the case during the canonization of John Paul II and anniversary of the Smolensk crash. As regards Barack Obama’s visits in 2011 and 2014 (the latter was linked with the anniversary of June election) other information appeared as well, which may suggest that the rank of the events was less important. There is a discrepancy between TVP and TVN stations, for the former focused less on the media event and gave place to other information as well. The latter was more homogeneous and gave more attention to the president’s visit than to the anniversary of the election. For that reason there were certain doubts whether to regard American head of state’s visits, and in particular the latter, as media events, as they did not attract as much attention as it was supposed by the media. On the other hand the layout of news bulletins on that days very much resembled that of a media event, which clearly shows that the mass media try to persuade viewers which events they ought to consider as worth attention.

The services concerning election campaign are predictable in their layout. This does not mean, however, that they go far from ritual communication, as formalism makes one of the features of rite, which are usually performed in a given sequence and, in consequence, can be better understood. What is more, political campaigns take place in cycles (usually it is every four years for

parliamentary and self-government elections and every five years for presidential and EP elections), which means they are repeatable. Although media events are more typical of ritual communication as understood from the perspective of formalists and Durkheim, usually analyzed in the context of religious rites, modern view on that matter is much broader. Political campaign constitutes an important period for the mass media. It breaks daily routine, which is reflected in the content of news bulletins. Since the rule of the campaign are closely specified (debates, meetings with voters, congresses), journalists follow politicians in their activities. Campaign is a kind of drama played on the media stage. What is interesting, the media are both the stage and the actors. The character of media rituals is social, they are possible thanks to the audience, here the viewers. Moreover, the less time to the election the more services and debates are offered by the media.

The context in which pictures appear is closely related to the event itself. Secondary information are also mentioned. For instance the relation of a disaster that happened in a Turkey mine inspired a discussion about safety in Polish mining industry. The presentation of pictures of such tragedies give a very emotional message. In that manner a catastrophe that happened in another country becomes closer. This phenomenon was described as geographical and mental close-up and was discussed by Andrew Boyd<sup>27</sup>. President Obama's visit in Poland started a debate about visas for Poles and American investments concerning shale gas. This was accompanied by pictures presenting mines. During the second visit of Barack Obama Ukraine was a popular topic, as a conflict that took place there caused a lot of interest. Here, images depicted the aforesaid conflict as well as archival pictures concerning June election.

During political campaign pictures illustrate the topics that are mentioned. When politicians discuss education matters viewers can see children, when the subject is economy they are provided with images of money, when it is unemployment – with scenes from employment agencies and interviews with the unemployed. Another interesting technique consists in using pictures as requisites. When children are discussed we can see a child, when bills are discussed we can see documents, when war is discussed tanks and guns are shown. If the subject of relation is somebody's death pictures are black and white, which is designed to introduce serious and reflectional atmosphere. The viewer is provided with verbal, visual and auditory (melancholic music) content, which strengthens the message and makes it more emotional.

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<sup>27</sup> See A. BOYD, *Dziennikarstwo radiowo-telewizyjne*.

As a result, the materials that compose a single piece of news include numerous film frames. They are, first of all, materials without a comment that usually concern media events. This can be exemplified with “Wiadomości” broadcast one year after Smolensk crash, when the last but one material constituted a presentation of victims’ names and their black and white pictures, accompanied by melancholic music. Normally, it would be unacceptable to include such a material within the program, when every second is very precious, but here it posed a kind of tribute for those who died in the crash. This news was followed by a retrospection of the last flight of Tupolev Tu-154. Accompanied by mournful music, the material presented photos of president Kaczyński and his wife on the board of the plane, another Tupolev that several months later performed a similar flight (one could think that it was the same plane), records from flight recorders and the wreck of the plane. This left the viewers in the atmosphere of grief and seriousness. A similar effect was achieved by the last material in “Wiadomości” concerning the pontificate of John Paul II, where archival photos and music were used. Words are unnecessary here, as pictures can say much more, especially when combined with music.

Second of all, one can distinguish typically relational materials, where image is merely complementation, confirmation or background of the verbal layer (according to Barthes it is anchored). For instance, when a reporter speaks of dinner that took place in the presidential palace we can see this particular place and guests who attend the event, when about a specific person, such as the daughter of the deceased president, her photos are shown, when the subject is the devastated monument, we can see it on the screen. Also pictures closely linked to the verbal layer are used. The text concerning persecution of Belarus opposition is complemented with an image presenting a demonstrator fighting with the police. When the presenter says about leaders’ meeting regarding the necessity to bring peace in the Middle East we can see illustration from that region. Another case is a situation then the picture reflects the reporter’s words (closing a laptop, eating, etc.). What is more, a picture can be value added to the verbal layer, although this form is less popular. This can be exemplified with a reporter pointing at Maidan Nezalezhnosti that does not resemble that from several months back, when it was full of demonstrators and barricades, or pictures presenting the joyful atmosphere on St. Peter’s Square just before the canonization of the popes.

Third of all, there are materials in which the verbal layer is dominant and reporters do not even try to complement it with pictures. This can be illustrated with the news concerning the success of TVP, appreciated by Stefan Batory Foundation for its impartiality, in which the presenter boasts the whole editorial staff.

A similar case was if the interviews performed by TVP journalists during the canonization of John Paul II. Nevertheless, this particular type of presenting information is not highly popular, for it would be a waste not to use all the possibilities offered by television. Only in unusual situation (last minute events), news can be presented verbally and the background would be the person of the presenter reading news from the prompter.

The role of the image can be determined by the visualizations made by the journalists. Their aim is to clarify difficult issues. However, some of them seem to have been created for that was such a technological possibility. The analysis of 16 news bulletins (8 from the year 2011 and 8 from the year 2014) proved that visualizations appeared more frequently in the former ones<sup>28</sup>. Another observation regards the television station. Visualizations are more often used in “Fakty”. In “Wiadomości”, they did not appear in the relations of the Smolensk crash anniversary and the canonization.

Visualizations constitute a great source for the analysis of the role of image in ritual communication. They are usually dynamic, sequential, and new elements appear consecutively. Most frequently they are used in the presentation of opinion polls and data connected with numbers (e.g. rate of exchange of the Swiss franc, the number of the unemployed or children who are to start education). Such materials appear when statements, letters, mails or press articles are presented. In such a case what is shown on the screen is a fragment of a given text, or the whole text with a highlighted fragment. Moreover, to provide articles or notes on well-known people, screen prints of websites or social networks are taken advantage of. This can be exemplified with the information concerning the depression of Justyna Kowalczyk, Polish skier, that firstly appeared in an interview in newspaper “Gazeta Wyborcza”. The material shown by “Wiadomości” was composed of the visualizations of highlighted fragments of the article mixed with the sportswoman’s pictures. What can also be observed is using the map of Poland or Europe in order to localize a given place that is mentioned in the news. Such maps are getting enriched with another elements. For instance, during the anniversary of the June election, “Fakty” presented the map of Europe to show the countries in which communism ended – firstly in Poland and then in another countries of the Eastern Bloc.

Visualizations that appear to support the verbal message can adopt the form of moving pictures. For instance, during the anniversary of the June election,

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<sup>28</sup> This may contradict the thesis on the growing role of the visual aspect; however, on the basis on this study such a conclusion cannot be drawn.

“Fakty” present on the screen two windows, an actor speaking on the left, and a fragment of Warsaw declaration of independence on the right. They are also visible on the part of the screen, as e.g. numbers or pieces of text about which the reporter speaks. This can be illustrated with the material broadcast in “Fakty” concerning help for Belarus in return for reforms, when viewers are shown the offered amount of money and Europe’s demands. Still, the media need to be careful not to tire the audience with stimuli. For example, during the speech of Polish president in parliament on the day of anniversary of the June election the visualization concerned a list (photo, name and country) of leaders who were present to hear the speech. Since at the same time their names were mentioned verbally, this was designed to attract attention.

Visualizations play an important role during political campaigns – they show the results of opinion polls and the possible distributions of seats in the parliament. What is more, in the analyzed materials, they were used to present party leaders in chosen districts, and one of the issues of “Fakty” were composed of visualizations only, which was rather disturbing than helpful as regards the message. The journalists, however, expected it to facilitate the absorption of the communicate, for it is easier to remember a picture than a text. Visualization in campaign is designed to influence recipients and expand their knowledge of the campaign.

In both stations visualizations are the same only when similar sources are used. This can be illustrated with the simulation of dangerous maneuver of a Japanese plane (September 30, 2011) created by Japanese airlines or the screen of an American website that informed about shares in a Russian gas company owned by the former Polish president (May 14, 2014). What is important, visualization are not composed of pictures only, but are complemented with a text or description. It is also popular to present fragments of letters or statements in a form of visualization.

In many cases the function of visualization it to explain, and for that reason they can be described as explanatory. In a broad understanding of this term, every picture can be regarded as informative. Frequently pictures are direct and their role is to complement the verbal layer. When a reporter speaks about fights in Ukraine, the pictures present soldiers, tanks, ruined buildings. The material in “Fakty” concerning the protests against mining shale gas uses the screen of an American document on the subject. Interestingly, when a reporter mentions the opponents of Radko Mladic, a Serbian war criminal, it is illustrated with a pile of coffins. It is unknown whether these are coffins of those who died as a result of Mladic's crimes; still, for the media it is irrelevant. The pictures are both direct

and expressive, as in the case of Ukraine. During president Obama's first visit "Fakty" reporter tried to prove that the visit did not cause traffic paralysis and accompanied by a camera operator traveled by a depopulated city. His word would not make such an impression as empty streets.

Expressive pictures are particularly important as regards media events: the canonization, the anniversaries of Smolensk crash and June election. A number of them are archival materials whose role is either to bring back memories (plane crash), to show somebody that passed away but is still vivid in people's memories (John Paul II) or events that changed reality (June election). Taking advantage of memories makes a significant element of ritual communication. It consists of symbols and myths, such as the myth of beginning. Emotions are visible also in pictures of political campaign, e.g. an emotional speech of a left-wing politician during press conference who protested against lists of people that, according to PiS, have "blood on their hands". Also "Wiadomości" material concerning embarrassing songs used by parties and politicians in their campaigns used emotions. This technique is crucial in ritual communication. What is worth remembering, a single material is composed of different kinds of pictures: informative, direct, etc.

Another classification of pictures distinguishes representative pictures, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor and simile. Obviously, the most frequently observed are representative ones, illustrating what things look like. Also synecdoche, that is fragments standing for the whole, signaling or proving something are popular. These can be close-ups on people's faces or even parts of them to show emotions (e.g. sadness during the anniversary of Smolensk crash). Close-ups of another body parts, e.g. shoulders, to present shadowed figure of a person desiring to stay anonymous, or legs of children running over the sports field, when the subject is child abusing. Moreover, close-ups of important documents, attributes, e.g. code or judge hammer, fragments of tunnel boring machines to show their power, or official buildings, e.g. Sejm stands for the parliament or the White House for American government.

Metonymy is also frequently used. By substitution of one object or phenomenon with another, they explain reality. Pictures that relate to spoken words are a good example here. The text about parliamentary election is illustrated with the building of parliament, the one about US president with White House. EU flag stands for Polish presence in European Union and Obama himself for United States. A crying man shows grief and sadness, a cross means death and funeral. An empty chair or Belarus during the meeting of Eastern Partnership mirrors

Lukashenko's absence. Metaphors, which are much more conventional, more relate to discourse transformation. For instance, several pictures of gun shots and an image of president Putin stand for Russian engagement in war, close-up on "Kamiński accuses" and prime minister Tusk as opposition against government activity, showing John Paul II as a laughing man who does hiking pictures him as an ordinary man, and his last days show dying. When the case of bringing PiS<sup>29</sup> politicians to the Constitutional Tribunal (the politicians' faces are presented on the screen) is closed, viewers can see door with a sign "don't open". Metaphors appear in visualizations in which two photos are juxtaposed, e.g. image of Putin and of a tank (in the context of Ukraine) or image of prime minister Tusk and banknotes (in the context of tax reform).

Another type of pictures is simile. They may be compared to one another in a sequential manner or in the same frame. The former case can be exemplified with photos of Radko Mladic now (a skinny old man) and from the times he was a general (a strong officer). Another example is visualization of the perception of the world of the Polish and the American (the former see the map of Europe and America, the latter of America and Asia); when the subject is Justyna Kowalczyk's depression people can see other sportsmen and sportswomen struggling with that disease. Archive photos of the fight at Westerplatte are juxtaposed with the ones of its reconstruction, embarrassing clips of electoral songs with the performance of Conchita Wurst during Eurovision festival. In the material dealing with the hardship of Polish travelers conditions in which people travel in Poland and in Pakistan are compared. As regards comparison within one frame, a Polish board memorizing the victims of the Smolensk crash was placed against the Russian one. The examples mentioned show that there can be many reasons for using similes: to show the difference, evoke emotions, depreciate somebody's image. As is was already said, one material can use several types of images.

Pictures can be also analyzed from the perspective of Pierce's classification of icon, index and symbol. As television deals with pictures, icon, that is the most realistic reflection of signs, is the most common one. Also indexes, though frequently mistaken with symbols, can be observed. The example here is an armchair as an index of a participant in a debate, a road sign as an index of traffic rules, clock as an index of time, a soldier as an index of fight, a toy as an index of a child; water measuring instrument as an index of flood, marijuana leaf as an index of soft drugs, coffee cup as an index of waking up, bars as an index of

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<sup>29</sup> Polish conservative party called Law and Justice.

closure, “stop” sign as an index of objection. Indexes are frequently used in windows (“Fakty”) or stripes (“Wiadomości”) visible when the material is introduced. Using symbols is an important feature of ritual communication. For instance, Lech Wałęsa may be regarded as a symbol of the starting point of changes in Poland and Europe, a flag or an emblem stand for a given country; Obama's plane Air Force 1 reflects power; a slowly bouncing ball mirrors the end (death of a basketball player Małgorzata Dydek); flowers and candles show memory; the “V” sign symbolizes victory; a young flight attendant brings about ruptured life; a cross stands for martyr's death, the pope for Poland and Poles, an empty chair for absence, logo for a party, a banner “jihad” for war, the round table for compromise and agreement. Using symbols constitutes an essential element of ritual communication. As regards the aforesaid classification, a single material in the news can be composed of the signs of any type. Their task is not only to transfer information, but also to tell the story that will stay in recipients' memories. Only then the mass media will be capable of influencing people and shaping social rules.

#### CONCLUSION

The above qualitative analysis cannot be too exhaustive, since the amount of the collected material is impressive and the space of the article is limited. However, the main aim of the article is to show the manner in which visual content is presented in news bulletins and the role it plays in information perception, especially in the context of ritual communication. An essential information is that both visual and verbal layers are equally important in information perception and frequently support each other. Complemented with auditory layer, they constituted multi-stimuli system of influencing the recipient, who by the mass media is told what and what about they should think.

Ritual communication is visible in their fullest during media events. Pictures are composed in such a manner to show community, sharing, participation, ceremonial character, sublimity. The picture itself may be enough to tell the story. However, its interpretation may vary, and it is journalists' role to explain it and direct the audience's thinking. A green “jihad” banner exhibited during a football match of Polish and Israeli teams does not have to irritate the viewers unless the journalist presents it as a hooligans' excess or antisemitic manifestation. What is more, if such a picture is juxtaposed with images of fights in the Middle East, the

match is perceived differently. An empty chair at the presidential table, with the “Belarus” writing on it, during the meeting of the Eastern Partnership may not be interpreted as boycott, but when reporters suggest it, the audience is likely to understand it that way. As a result, the recipient may be shaped according to the dominant ideology. News bulleting do not usually leave space for reflection, for their impose certain interpretation of events. Despite the fact that in a democratic country we can choose for the variety of television channels, the most popular ones present similar opinions on reality. It is the ritual character of communication makes the recipient to use the same channels of gaining information again and again, although they have access to numerous sources<sup>30</sup>. There is visible another issue: that sometimes journalists do a lot to create media event. They try to persuade to event should be very important for recipients, even though viewers don’t treated it in this way. But this comment should be checked in another research.

Relations of multi-thread are composed of variety of images that seem not to complement one another. However, closer analysis shows that their aim is to diversify message and enrich it with new plots which may attract interest of large audience. This could be observed during political campaigns as well as during president Obama’s visit or the anniversary of the Smolensk crash. As a result, the kind of information remains irrelevant and all depends on the time planned for the material and journalistic idea. Although the whole programs were dedicated to certain events, including the canonization, looking for secondary subjects can be observed especially in public television, where as much as ten other materials, including interviews that could be omitted.

Last but not least, it is worth highlighting that the differences between the programs concerning the use of pictures to tell stories are usually subtle and may result from the approach of the journalists rather than from the editorial policy<sup>31</sup>. The rules according to which materials are composed are similar in the journalistic environment (supported with proper technological tools) and at least for the mainstream stations they appear to be the same. They result from cultural conditions and adopting central and liberal view on the world. This means that they support the dominant ideology, whose strength resides in rituals practiced by the mass media. The sphere of media ritual is of boundary character, it is the place where the recipients meet the world they would not be able to experience

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<sup>30</sup> Personalization of message poses a similar threat, instead of journalists they are applications adjusting to our interests that select information, which limits the access to information.

<sup>31</sup> The author draws such a conclusion from the analysis of the services rather than media institutions.

otherwise. They, fortunately, do participate in wars, natural disasters or political conflicts only by means of their computers and television sets. Few minutes later they can return to their daily routine only to repeat the ritual the next day.

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#### ROLA OBRAZU W RYTUALNEJ KOMUNIKACJI MEDIALNEJ NA PRZYKŁADZIE POLSKICH SERWISÓW INFORMACYJNYCH

##### Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje zagadnienia związane z rolą obrazu w komunikacji rytualnej na przykładzie wieczornych wydań serwisów informacyjnych. Wybór tych audycji spowodowany jest ich popularnością. Celem pracy jest analiza wykorzystania wizualnej zawartości serwisów i ich roli w odbiorze informacji. Obrazy są też istotne w ramach rytualnej perspektywy komunikacji. Obraz wzmacnia przekaz werbalny i zwiększa możliwość oddziaływania na odbiorców. W artykule postawiono kilka pytań. Jakie obrazy są wykorzystywane w relacjach reporterskich w serwisach? W jakim kontekście się pojawiają? Jakie obrazy wykorzystuje się w różnych typach informacji? Jaka jest relacja między werbalnym i wizualnym aspektem przekazu?

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja rytualna; serwis informacyjny; telewizja; obraz.

#### THE ROLE OF IMAGE IN RITUAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF POLISH NEWS BULLETINS

##### Summary

The article presents some questions connected with the role of image in ritual communication based on the example of polish news bulletins. I focused my analyse on this kind of programme, because of its popularity. The aim of this research is to analyse the usage of visual content of news bulletins and its role in the perception of information. Images are also important from the perspective of ritual communication. They strengthen the verbal message and broaden the control mechanisms over the recipient. There are several question that can be asked here. What pictures are used to convey message? In what context they appear? How the usage of picture changes according to a kind of the presented information? What is the relation between verbal and visual message?

**Key words:** media rituals; news bulletins; television; image.