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Іміджевий копірайтинг: жанри і способи створення іміджевих текстів

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Розглянуто специфіку іміджевого копірайтингу, особливості сторителінгу як питомого методу написання іміджевих матеріалів. Цей різновид копірайтингу передбачає створення текстів, які формують та закріплюють образ бренду, людини, послуги у свідомості споживача. Історично на наших теренах іміджеві тексти спочатку поширювались через традиційні та електронні медіа, а з розвитком мережевої комунікації почали активно функціонувати в Інтернеті, довівши свою надзвичайну ефективність саме при зверненні до мережевої аудиторії.

Текст не акцентує лише позитивних сторін установи, товару чи послуги, не закликає щось купити чи замовити. Це є його ключовою відмінністю від матеріалів копірайтингу прямого відгуку (Direct-Response). Іміджевий копірайтинг має низку спільних рис із такими журналістськими жанрами, як: огляд, прес-реліз, інтерв'ю, біографія, запрошення, експертна думка, заява для медіа. У веб-просторі найбільш наочними прикладами реалізації іміджевого копірайтингу є наявна на багатьох сайтах компаній рубрика «Про нас» та обов'язкова для будь-якого ресурсу «Головна» сторінка.

На сьогодні найбільш комерційно вигідним способом написання іміджевих текстів вважається сторителінг. Уперше до нього вдалися на початку 2010-х рр. у *New York Times*. Встановити зв'язок зі споживачем та ринком якнайкраще вдається, просто і ненав'язливо розповівши про себе, компанію, продукт. Професійно створена історія викликає не лише зацікавленість, але й співпереживання, читач починає погоджуватися з автором. Ненав'язливе подання інформації веде до мети, яку поставили маркетологи – людина самостійно вирішує, як їй ставитись до матеріалу. На сьогодні вже розроблені й активно функціонують особливі техніки сторителінгу, які допомагають копірайтерам створити якісний іміджевий текст.

Такі матеріали підвищують довіру цільової аудиторії до об'єкта іміджевої компанії, мають тривалий ефект, дають чудові комерційні результати.

Ключові слова: іміджевий копірайтинг; іміджева кампанія; комерційний ефект; сторителінг; жанри іміджевого копірайтингу; техніки сторителінгу.

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1. Introduction

Background information. The development of online cyberspace has not only laid the foundation to unique content, which is being created in Ukraine, but also enhanced the formation of its semantic, syntactic, lexical and stylistic features. Search engines raise a number of technical requirements to text-filled resources. Therefore, modern copywriting is a multi-layer process that needs a detailed study and optimization as well as represents interest for international academic communities.

In the post-Soviet states, copywriting is a relatively new academic field, due to which local scholars experience a lack of in-depth studies of its specificity in domestic environment. There are almost no text-books that would really teach copywriting as opposed to being a mere tribute to fashion (nowadays, groups of people involved with network copywriting tend to publish their books, which promise to teach copywriting skills, but indeed are a re-write or a translation of past experiences and give no useful tips, except for general information). Therefore, an academic approach to copywriting and its types, as well as text-books and manuals development, is a critical task.

Literature review. In recent years, scientific studies that have, to varying degrees, addressed the issue of copywriting have become increasingly relevant. The authors have already made attempts to give a rationale for separate aspects of copywriting [1–4]. However, this field is so broad and so quickly-developing that it is impossible to fit all its features in several publications. Global academic community has made a significant contribution into the interpretation of copywriting and its specificity. For instance, H. Zulkifly and N. Firdaus focus on how to persuade online consumers with the help of specific copywriting strategies [5]; J. Azimi et al investigate keyword re-writing with the use of search engine results [6]; M. Fernandez et al draw attention to the fact that people's work schedule started to directly meet social networking activity [7]; Li Ming Zhang touches on innovations and practice of the course of copywriting in advertising [9]; the third edition of the *Writing for Visual Media* book contains a section dealing with writing texts for visual media [10]; the peculiarities of copywriting for networks are described in *Content is King Writing and Editing Online Emarketing Essentials* [11]; many scholars also emphasize the peculiarities of attributes for image content that attract consumers' attention to advertisements [12]; Margot Bloomstein examines content strategies implemented through copywriting [13]; the correlation between advertising and reality, content and representation is outlined in the work by Neal Burns [14].

To date, there are copywriting academic books and teaching guides [15; 16], and copywriting community still refers to handbooks that have already become classic [17; 18].

Yet, there is a big deficit of works that would raise the issue of image copywriting, its genre diversity and ways of creating image-building materials. For instance, a guideline on making a text that sells goods, services or brand [19] is noteworthy. Consequently, the topic of our research is relevant and almost unexplored.

In recent years, academic research that addresses (to various extent) the issue of copywriting has become even more relevant. In the course of its development, copywriting has taken

several forms. Following a fairly theoretical classification, copywriting is divided into SEO-copywriting, LSI-copywriting, image copywriting, commercial texts writing, direct-response copywriting, re-write.

The need for their further research is determined by the fact that modern copywriting tends toward journalistic writing, which has borrowed the technical parameters of the text. Image copywriting, emerged from PR communications and traditional journalism, is a syncretic, multidisciplinary phenomenon, which is actively evolving and being transformed; hence, it should be explored in greater detail.

This is all the more relevant because modern copywriting has come close to journalism, which has borrowed the technical parameters of the text. Image copywriting, which emerged from PR communications and traditional journalism, is a syncretic phenomenon that is actively evolving and transforming and needs to be studied and generalized.

The aim of this article is to explore unique features of image copywriting and peculiarities of storytelling as a specific writing technique for multiple image-related genres.

The object of the research is image copywriting, storytelling, its varieties and techniques as an up-to-date means of creating image-building materials.

Research methods include analysis and synthesis, comparison, induction and deduction, which altogether made it possible to outline the present-day state of the problem exploration. A descriptive method gave us an opportunity to characterize the genres of image copywriting, to determine the specificity of storytelling and its major techniques as well as to record our findings. A comparative method helped us spot similarities and differences in the genres of image-building texts created for conventional media and to be presented in web-environment.

2. Research results

Let us focus our attention on the image copy-writing analysis.

While SEO- and LSI-copywriting seek to create unique high-quality materials for commercial, awareness-raising and advertising purposes, image copywriting implies creating texts aimed to build and strengthen an image of a brand, person or service in consumer's mind.

A company's image is based on numerous factors, which include:

- The quality of customer service;
- Commercial goodwill;
- Corporate identity;
- Public recognition;
- Social mission.

The aim of image copywriting is to shape customer's positive attitude to a company or a specific person. The impact may reach the target audience either orally or in writing, as well as via a certain storage medium. Historically, image-building texts used to be distributed in our territory via conventional and electronic media, and with the advent of network communication, they started to actively function on the Internet, thus proving great effectiveness in reaching out particularly to cyber audience.

A mediator – conventional or network media – determines the specificity of the image-building text. In this regard, the texts may be intended for:

- Speakers, i.e. people who have a direct contact with the audience;
- Media of various types;
- Direct contact with the audience.

To the latter belong materials posted on the Internet.

Therefore, each type implies its own influence mechanisms, rules and requirements to text writing.

To enable the text to shape a positive image, it should lean on facts, contain author's implicit evaluation and be properly arranged, i.e. include a statement, reasoning and compelling conclusions.

However, it should neither emphasize the advantages of a company, goods or services, nor encourage customers to buy or order. This is the key difference between the image-building text and the commercial one. In fact, such material occupies an intermediate place between advertising and journalism.

Image-building articles are most frequently divided into the following types:

- A portrait, which outlines the company's background, its successes and failures and further development;
- An action, which means sharing an important piece of news regarding the company's life and achievements of its key employees;
- A challenge, which refers to an expert opinion on the challenges the company is facing and an outline of possible solutions.

Explicit advertising seems to be missing from here, but any information about the company and its employees provided in conventional media, on the website or social net is already a promotion.

Marketing professionals consider image copywriting to be one of the most effective advertising tools. Such texts are minimally annoying, and even the headline and a couple of lines gradually do their job, which is building a positive image.

This type of copywriting perfectly suits marketing campaign on social networks, as image copywriting is directly related to marketing policy.

Taking into account the specificity of image copywriting, special requirements are raised to the authors of image-building texts, respectively. In particular, copywriters should possess knowledge of the psychology of marketing and sales. In addition, making a successful image-building text requires deep understanding of the topic, creating material matching target audience's requests and submitting it to customer promptly and in an appropriate way. The author must exercise due diligence, while the customer must be highly attentive as all components of the text affect the image of an object. The author's task is difficult, as they are supposed to choose appropriate mood, style and vocabulary which would to the best reach recipient's mind. Copywriters who specialize in image-building texts should study the object of description in detail, analyze customer specification and only then develop materials. In order to achieve the best possible effectiveness, it is necessary to cooperate with marketing professionals and managers, who are able to clearly articulate the task and to identify weaknesses of materials to be posted. An appropriate

image of the company provokes the desire to use its services, to order its goods and to vote for a politician.

The difference between image copywriting and Direct-Response copywriting lies in the goal the texts are expected to achieve. For instance, Direct-Response copywriting follows the rules of sales, and text efficacy is determined by conversion, that is, a percentage of customer feedback. Such text should attract, raise awareness, sound promising and, finally, motivate for action.

On the other hand, image copywriting is supposed to build and strengthen in customer's mind a positive image of or attitude to a company or a person. Accordingly, there can be no immediate response to the image-building text. The image-building text will not contain any unique selling proposition (USP), without which the traditional advertising text cannot exist.

To date, it is customary to distinguish between two types of image-building texts:

- Personal;
- General.

Building a positive image is a major objective of a team working in this field. There exists negative copywriting, which is known as anti-PR hired by competitors.

At the same time, the texts should not use explicit advertising. The image-building texts do not contain invitations for calling, using services or ordering goods. Everything is a lot more delicate. Such texts only describe the company, its employees and their success stories and share news related to its operation. Image copywriting engages a lot more genres and formats. In some aspects, it resembles journalistic writing, particularly from the point of view of genres and associated means of expressiveness. Such texts easily employ:

- Illustrations;
- Emotional headlines;
- Various artistic devices that are etched on customer's mind, get fixed there and over time trigger positive emotions at recalling a brand or a specific person;
- Smooth transitions between paragraphs;
- Chronological order of narration.

Common examples of image copywriting include the *About us* page, which is available on the websites of numerous companies, and the *Main* page, which is mandatory for any resource. To positive examples of creating such materials may belong respective *Textum* text content agencies (<https://textum.com.ua>).

Therefore, even the smallest company, whose web-pages contain these sections, resorts to image copywriting. Its success to high extent depends on how effectively these materials are written.

Over the previous years, image copywriting on social networks has become a point of vivid discussion. It is a convenient platform for:

- Building a positive image;
- Mailing recommendations and commentaries seeking to build or improve the image;
- Addressing various issues at forums and meetings.

Skillful image copywriting makes it possible to emphasize the advantages of the company, goods, services or person. This promotes website conversion, attracts new visitors and,

eventually, customers. Image-building texts can be created both by copywriters specializing in this field, and by generalist copywriters. In any case, they engage catchy slogans, branding and various advertising stunts.

Image copywriting implies dealing with materials of specific genres, which have their own writing principles and a quite rigid structure. It is customary to distinguish between the following genres of image-building texts:

- Research;
- Information news;
- Figurative news;
- Research news;
- Fact-based information.

All these genres fit into primary, media and complex materials. Let us explore the main ones.

Company or product overview. Such material should be presented in a way that the customer does not realize it is an advertisement. The first requirement to this text is to be appealing to the customer and to elicit pleasant associations. The author may address common issues, childhood memories. Yet, the advertisement should by no means be implied. The image-building text is usually arranged as follows:

- Triggering some pleasant moments in recipients' mind;
- Giving recipients as many interesting true-to-life facts as possible rather than providing mere statistics;
- No playing with recipients;
- Providing statistics (if needed) with the use of infographics;
- Adding a bit of humor to highlight the text in an appropriate way; yet, it is prohibited to reduce everything to a joke, as in this case the goal will not be achieved.

Commercial proposal. Since nowadays a large number of image-building agencies resort to templates, it is essential for the author to have a skill of making an appropriately structured text original. It is also important to keep in mind the amount of text, which should not exceed 1 or 2 pages. Detailed recommendations as to making an efficient commercial proposal are provided in the works by A. Vereskun [20] and A. Khodov [21].

Press release is one of the most popular genres of image copywriting. Its writing follows the requirements defined for conventional media. In other words, its structure resembles an inverted pyramid, where the most important information is presented at the beginning of the text. The lead, i.e. the first paragraph, summarizes the whole text, which is supposed to answer 5W-questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? However, to make this text perform image-building functions, posts related to a specific company or person should be regular, for which any newsworthy event is suitable. Moreover, while press release does not reach a large target audience in conventional media, Internet resources are able to significantly increase the number of recipients by means of a smart and professional promotion of the company's website.

Presentation is a type of material, whereby the target audience is presented an interesting product or event. The major goal thereupon is to keep recipient's attention. For this purpose, it is possible to resort to infographics, emotional narrative, and psychological influence.

Interview is another genre which occupies an intermediate place between journalistic writing and copywriting. Pursuing the image-building goal, it is crucial not just to read questions and answers from a piece of paper, but to get an interviewee to talk, to be open-hearted and to encourage them to uncover themselves to the most. Frankness and sincerity always appeal to the audience. Besides, when reviewing the interview, it is possible to drop its uninteresting and overextended parts and to leave the strongest ones. The image-building interview is subjective; it emphasizes the advantages of the company or its particular representative. It is best if the questions answered by the interviewee match the questions each member of the target audience could potentially ask.

Biography. One of the latest trends of image copywriting is writing a biography of a particular person, most commonly, a direct customer, and posting it on well-known online reference resources. For instance, Ukrainian Wiki is very rich in biographies of government officials, chief executives, companies' top managers, entertainers, singers, key opinion leaders and just media personalities. This resource demands that the text should meet the requirements raised by the Encyclopedia to its content. When it comes to other resources, for example, personal branding, related materials may vary in structure and approach. Over the previous years, copywriters have largely resorted to a storytelling strategy, which makes it possible not just to provide mere biography, as it is done for reference resources, but to approximate a writing style to fiction in order to highlight solely the positive characteristics of the person. This explains why professionals distinguish between biographical narrative and biographical sketch.

However, there exist negatively charged image-building biographical texts, which are used for media-killings and negative campaigning.

Invitation. Alongside a primary goal of inviting a person to a particular event, an invitation seeks to ensure the attendance of media representatives and target audience. The most common structure looks as follows:

- Announcing the nature of event;
- Informing about the venue;
- Informing about the time/date event is scheduled for;
- Announcing participation terms and conditions.

Analytics, expert opinion, is one of the most complicated genres, as its major requirement is not mention a promoted company or person. Positive impact on the audience builds an attitude of trust to the author.

Such kind of image-building text can be found in both conventional media, and in network editions. It reports on how a particular person or company solves particular problems and addresses challenges. It commonly touches on social issues. The examples of such materials are easily recognizable, e.g.: The XXX Company bought holiday snacks for an orphanage, or The XXX Company staff members ran an eco-friendly campaign having removed the rubbish from NNN.

Backgrounder is a story with a certain ending, which often complements press release and is supported by infographics for greater clarity.

Byline is a first-person original material. It is usually prepared for a specific event. Bylines can be regular or sporadic and are often published in house publications.

Media statement is an analytical image-building text written on behalf of a company. Its emotional component predominates over the rational one.

Landing Page nowadays serves both as an independent site, and as a company's resource constituent. The main objective thereupon is to retain a visitor on the page and to make them perform certain actions (buy, register, follow a link, subscribe to company's news).

Naming implies generating names for companies, institutions, shops, goods, websites and slogans. It is considered to be one of the most complicated types of copywriting, as it implies developing something simple and easy-to-remember. At the same time, the customer may be offered numerous options, out of which they are supposed to choose the most preferable one.

E-mail-copywriting has replaced traditional mailing. Before making a newsletter or a conversation, it is important to research the target audience, estimate its potential response and identify the style of the letter. Any notification from the company may not only inform about something, but also encourage recipients to take actions.

E-mailing is a wonderful tool which allows to build close relationship with a target audience representative. The newsletter provides information about special offers, new arrivals, sales etc. Yet, only appropriate newsletters achieve the goal, which lies in creating a positive image and performing desired action in the long run. There is a number of useful tips on arranging a separate letter and running such kind of campaigns.

1. The text should be arranged in line with the inverted pyramid principle. The main idea should be placed in the headline. The next step is to provide arguments in favor of a brand or goods. These arguments are followed by an insidious call for action, which is expected to be a logical extension of the headline.

2. One letter should inform about one piece of news or special offer.

3. Promotional emails employ a unified template, as the target audience representative finds it easier to sort out incoming letters.

4. The text should be visualized. Marketing professionals suggest giving 20% and 80% of material to illustrations and text, respectively. The best way to customize the material is to use corporate colors and adaptive design.

5. Newsletters work better if they emphasize the benefit of the target audience representatives. This may imply some interesting information which may be used to expand the recipient's mind or for entertainment.

6. Newsletters should be sent regularly and with the same frequency.

Every genre has its own approaches and techniques which are beneficial for a brand or a person. Yet, over the previous years, copywriters have shown growing interest in storytelling, which seems to have incorporated numerous techniques and approaches typical of copywriting and media texts and can be used in writing of a variety of image-building texts.

All professionals involved with the field of marketing emphasize public annoyance with straightforward advertisement, which harshly imposes a certain viewpoint.

Hence, the information should be presented implicitly, and image-building texts are the best tool for doing so. People have to believe it was their own idea to trust a particular company or individual and to be sure they will not manage to survive without particular goods.

In this respect, storytelling has become the best way to communicate image-building messages.

If we trace back the history of text materials on the Internet, we will see that they were initially published in a similar way to conventional media. Yet, it quickly became clear that the audience does not approve of long-reads, and text perception mechanisms have changed dramatically comparing to reading printed press and books. Selective reading and filtering are the dominant features of perceiving online information. Hence, there was a need to revise a traditional "storytelling" and to adjust it to online audience's perception mechanisms. The specificity of storytelling is described by P. Kuznetsov, A. Simmons, P. Smith, D. Hatchens, M. Henkin [22–26].

All this gave way to Digital Storytelling, which was first used by *The New York Times*.

Although today there is no common definition of storytelling, there exist a number of approaches that are worth noticing. For instance, in a broad sense, storytelling is conceptualized as a skill of producing high-quality content. Another opinion states that it is about telling true-to-life stories of real people, and not just a content-writing strategy. The *Ogilvy One* agency supports the idea that storytelling comprises the following features:

- Relevance;
- Promptness;
- Benefit for recipient;
- Entertainment.

As a separate material-writing technique, storytelling arose in 2011–2012. The best way to build connections between customer and market is to speak about oneself, a company or a product. A high-quality story triggers not only interest, but also the feeling of empathy, and recipient starts to agree with the author. Non-intrusive presentation of the information helps achieve the goal set by marketing professionals, whereby a person themselves decide how to treat the information [27; 28].

Nowadays, storytelling employs special techniques which help copywriters produce a high-quality image-building text.

To the best stories belong those that outline the main character's journey and describe hindrances they had to overcome on their way to success.

When writing such type of material, it is necessary to employ a specific plot leaning on a traditional approach to fiction writing. In other words, the story is supposed to have an introduction, a climax and a conclusion.

The next strategy is a so-called *Mountain*. Its main difference from the previous one lies in the absence of victory. In fact, it is a failure story, which, on the other hand, became an inexhaustible source of useful experience, leaning on which the main character eventually started a successful business or a company, produced goods and promoted them on the market.

Sparklines (what is happening now and what could happen) imply an opposition-based presentation of the

information. In this case, the existing situation is compared to the potential one. This technique is widely used in advertising.

The reverse chronology technique holds recipient in suspense, as it starts with the main scene and ends with the first scene. When creating such texts, it is critical to maintain the suspense and not to reveal the whole plot till the very end.

The false start technique means that the story begins in a traditional way, but then the plot twists and gives way to a totally different story.

The authors involved with storytelling have to be well-aware of the technique they plan to apply to their target audience and of what image-building genre may benefit from this technique's potential to exert the best possible impact on recipient.

The plot of a made-up story has to be clear and appealing to the target audience representative, while composition techniques, stylistic devices and vocabulary serve "the muscles" that the author builds on "the skeleton." To produce emotional effect, which is compulsory for image-building texts and triggers the most vivid response from the target audience, it is a common practice to employ the whole scope of devices typical of fiction and journalism – intonation, vocabulary, morphology, syntax and stylistics. A skillful combination of emotional input, reasoning and clearness is a feature that brings together storytelling and journalistic writing.

For instance, sharing experiences that are well-known to people and applicable to familiar characters ensures empathic response. Yet, there are certain limitations to storytelling, as it is impossible to transform the entire image-building campaign into mere telling stories.

3. Discussion

Having made an attempt to spot similarities and differences between the genres of image-building texts in conventional media and Internet resources and having tried to introduce the concept of image copywriting and the specificity of producing image-building materials for web-resources to academic environment, we would like to note that this topic is highly appropriate for further research and practical implementation. Very few copywriters who specialize, for instance, in producing SEO-materials, are able to write a high-quality image-building text. In the meantime, recipient expects to see a content that would have something in common with their own life experience, that would not only be appealing topic-wise, but also employ the language familiar to the target audience representative. To date, this approach is referred to as the most commercially-viable, and storytelling as a specific image-building technique gains more and more popularity.

4. Conclusions

Image copywriting, which started as a journalistic achievement and found its best implementation in conventional media, has been somewhat transformed with the advent and spreading of the Internet and become rich in genres. Today, not a single website can be sustainable without image-building texts. Each web-resource has such components as *Main Page* and *About us*, which perform image-building functions. This includes raising customer awareness of

products and services provided by the resource owner, giving clear and appropriate information about the advantages of these particular products over similar ones. Besides, image-building texts promote target audience's trust. High-quality image-building materials are interesting as they are; they build trust and very often provoke the desire to disseminate them among friends. At the same time, as it was already mentioned, the text does not contain any direct call for targeted action.

The companies that resort to image-building materials emphasize their moderate price. It is much cheaper to order an image-building text or the entire campaign for a web-site or a social network page, than to shoot a professional video, order a TV- or a radio commercial. Such materials can be posted on the Internet at a low price, if not free of charge, but they reach out to a vast audience. Image-building texts produce a long-term effect, as online communities "forget" nothing. The materials are indexed in search engines and make a storage effect, whereby any reference to a company, service, goods or person becomes beneficial. The Internet posts increase the number of visitors who logged on the website via direct links.

To sum up, image copywriting, which had proved quite effective for conventional media, was improved with the development of the online environment and revealed even greater potential to attract a vast target audience and to promote a positive image of its content.

Producing stories appealing to the target audience is one of the most powerful ways to non-intrusively reach out to customer and to encourage their own decision-making ability. Various storytelling techniques seek to create a plot, and mixed techniques and devices are able to make any story gripping. True-to-life facts and realistic characters affect perception and generate positive outcomes. However, even the best story ever requires promotion.

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Blynova N., Mikhailova A., Polishko N. Image copywriting : genres and methods of creating the image texts

The specificity of image copywriting, the features of storytelling as a method of writing image materials are considered. Image copywriting involves the creation of texts that shape and enshrine the image of the brand, the person and the service in the consumer's mind. Historically, in Ukraine image texts were first circulated through the traditional and electronic media, and with the development of network communication an active functioning of such texts started on Internet, which proved its extraordinary effectiveness precisely when reaching the network audience.

At the same time, the text does not only emphasize the positive aspects of the institution, product or service, does not call for something to buy or order. This is its key difference from the Direct-Response copywriting materials. Image copywriting has much in common with such journalistic genres as: review, press release, interview, biography, invitation, expert opinion, media statement. In the web space, the most prominent examples of the implementation of the image copywriting is the section "About Us", which is mandatory for many companies' sites, and is obligatory for any resource "Home" page.

Today, the most commercially viable way of writing image texts is storytelling. It was first approached in the early 2010s in the New York Times. Simply and unobtrusively speaking about yourself, the company and the product is the best way to establish a connection with the consumer and the market is. A professionally created story not only create big interest but also arouse empathy in the readers, who begin to agree with the author. The unobtrusive presentation of information leads to the goal set by marketers: it is up to the individual to decide how to treat the material. Today, special storytelling techniques are being developed and actively operating to help copywriters to create image text of high quality.

Such materials increase the trust of the target audience to the object of the image campaign, have lasting effect and remarkable commercial results.

Keywords: *image copywriting; image campaign; commercial effect; storytelling; genres of image copywriting; storytelling techniques.*

