

# Photograph Usage in Posters and its Advantage Over Alternative Elements

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## ABSTRACT

Posters, being used in both for advertisements and for social good, are everywhere in our world. Their wide usage makes them take a great part in graphic designing practice. Posters may consist of many visual elements like symbols, typography, illustrations, pictures, schemas, and photography. Although photography is the newcomer of these elements, it has biggest share-out in usage. Posters usually find place in public areas to achieve as much people as possible and these crowded public areas are generally places that most of people are in motion so poster designs are expected to make deep and fast impacts. Thinking that attribute of posters, we may say photography has several advantages over writing and pictures; like creating sense of reality, being direct and fast in signification etc. This paper examines the advantages of photography the usage of in poster designing with the help of some actual poster designs.

**Keywords:** Photo, Design, Poster, Writing, Advantage.

## *Posterlerde Fotoğraf Kullanımı ve Alternatif Unsurlar Üzerindeki Avantajları*

### ÖZET

Çevremizde gördüğümüz posterler, hem tanıtım hem de sosyal içerikli reklamlar için kullanılmaktadır. Posterlerin bu geniş kullanım alanları grafik tasarım uygulamalarında önemli yer tutmaktadır. Posterler; semboller, yazı, çizim, resim, şema ve fotoğraflar gibi pek çok görsel unsur içerebilir. Fotoğraf bu unsurlardan en yenisi olmasına rağmen büyük oranda kullanılmaktadır. Poster olabildiğince fazla kişiye ulaşmak için topluma açık alanlarda yer almaktadır. Bu alanlar insanların hareket halinde olduğu mekanlar olduğundan, posterlerin hızlı ve güçlü bir etki oluşturması beklenmektedir. Posterlerin bu yönü göz önüne alındığında fotoğrafın direkt ve hızlı olmak, gerçeklik duygusu yaratmak gibi bazı üstünlükleri vardır. Bu araştırmada poster tasarımında fotoğraf kullanımının avantajları seçilen poster tasarımları aracılığıyla incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Fotoğraf, Tasarım, Afiş, Yazı, Avantaj.

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Figure 1. Poster with social context  
(<http://desigg.com/daily-design-inspiration-4-120-creative-advertisements>)

There is 940 years between the first paper and invention of typewriter. Printing traveled from China to Europe in 231 years and 174 years more was needed for the first printer to take place. But when we look at the last century, there is only 19 years between the first print press magazine and the communication arts magazine. Very next year after the first apple computer, which works on byte maps, front-page software came to stage and tabletop publishing term is defined. After only four years Photoshop is released. When we reach 20th century, graphic design changes at a dizzying pace in parallel with technological developments.

*"In this direction, art movements in which graphic design is used as an expression tool arise and change the art and design*

*environment. Those who are most influential in graphic design from these art movements are Dadaism, De Stijl, Surrealism, Suprematism and Constructivism. The discovery of the photography is the biggest innovation of this period. Starting from Cubism, the design scheme used by Juan Juan Gris, Fernand Leger's collage technique, writing-predominated movements like Futurism and Dadaism, which recover typography from traditional constraints contributed greatly to the development of contemporary graphic design. By starting the process of expressing abstract concepts in concrete terms, Surrealism; as a sensation, movement of thought and a way of life has enabled artist to communicate directly with the viewer through visual expression without the need for a written explanation"* (Gümüştekin, 2013: 40-41).

The graphic designing uses many languages and all these languages (pictures, writings, illustrations photography etc.) and developments happening in these languages technology have caused the design dynamics to change rapidly. "This process, which forms the basis of graphic design, while the message, meaning and knowledge differ from each other. Our perception of messages, adhered to their meanings, to the learned perceptions and cultural interpretations they have evoked, as well as to the systems or situations they are" (Ambrose and Aono-Billson, 2013: 103). When we examine posters in graphic designing context we can see that the main function of poster design is to promote a product or services, as well as being used for social purposes, taking focus on a many social problems. In poster design, many techniques such as photography, typography, illustration and collage are used.

According to Becer, posters are products in which design and art are of equal weight. Poster design is divided into three main groups:

1) Advertising Banners: posters that promote a product or service. They are widely used in six sectors: a) Fashion, b) Industry, c) Corporate advertising, d) Press, e) Food, f) Tourism.

2) Cultural Posters: This group introduces cultural events such as festivals, seminars, symposia, ballrooms, concerts, cinemas, theaters, exhibitions and sports.

3) Social Banners: Educational and stimulating banners, such as health, transportation, civil defense, traffic, environment, as well as posters promoting political thought or a political party take place in the group of social banners (Becer, 1997: 202).

For example, posters with social content are designed to inform the community about topics like environment, health, education, family planning, avoiding traffic accidents, cigarettes and alcohol and Aids etc. Posters brochures and open-air advertisements can attain all classes of



Figure 2. Advertising poster  
(<http://www.creativeadawards.com/fat-cant-hide-2/>)

community and give knowledge about these topics (Figure 1.).

"While designing the poster, trying to provide the message directly to the recipient, it must be taken into consideration whether it is effective to transmit it by photograph, by illustration or by typing" (Becer, 1997: 202). According to Paul Martin Lester "Something is happening today. Now we are becoming a visual-based society. Many of them understand and create the world by interpreting pictures and images, not by words. "In the cities we live in, we all face hundreds of advertisements every day. "This is so often perceived visuals are interpreted 60,000 times faster than written texts" (Brandmap. <https://www.facebook.com/343444649175589/photos/a.347197625466958.1073741828.3>



Figure 3. Poster with social context  
 (<http://sala7design.com.br/2016/02/sweet-kills-pecas-que-apresentam-riscos-da-diabetes.html>)

43444649175589/594595287393856/?type=3&theater). At this point, the prospect of photographic art is increasing day by day with the possibilities of developing computers and computer programs. Parallel to these, in our days as visually gained so much importance; photography in poster design is a simple, effective and powerful way of conveying clear and direct message to the recipient.

The photography used in poster has two functions. Primary function is presenting visual as an existing document by taking advantage of the reality of the photograph and delivering the message effectively and strikingly to the recipient (Figure 2.). The second is to use the ability of photographs to direct and influence individuals by covering its reality to improve marketing of the object (Figure 3.). The reason why photography is dominant and effective in the advertising world is the widespread belief in the reality of photography by large masses today. Reality is what people perceive during their daily interactions with the objective world that surrounds them. Photography is a powerful expression tool, especially because it can be edited to convey a piece of knowledge in a way that is believable, or to inspire a sense of owning a product. Poster by Lucian Bernhard is “nothing more than picking up and developing the concept of the object: The photo shows the product more precisely than the pattern” (Weill, 2015: 53). Thanks to photography, this visual

power loaded on the object also strengthens the sense of visual perception.

Photography is used instead of writing in an advertisement to make the impact, which is aimed by the designer on viewer-receiver (Figure 4.).



Figure 4. Poster with social context  
 (<http://www.luerzersarchive.com/en/magazine/print-detail/mccann-healthcare-worldwide-japan-inc-46499.html>)



Figure 5. Advertising poster  
<http://pzrservices.typepad.com/.a/6a00d83451ccbc69e201156f579797970b-pi>

Posters can be sometimes designed to be a photo without a writing, sometimes a word or writing with a photograph. Whatever the design is, the meaning in the poster should be resolved in a few seconds by viewer-receiver. So "posters differ from television or radio or magazines. Because most of the time, it is us passing in front of the image when we are walking, traveling, turning a page. The situation on the television screen is somewhat different; it is our choice to see the visual on the screen, we cannot look at the advertisement, we can reduce the sound, or we go to prepare coffee in the kitchen. Despite all this, ad images, passing in front of us like fast-moving trains to a distant station, may impact on us whether we are aware or not." (Berger, 2010: 130).

The photograph used in a poster lets a product or service or a message to be determined to the consumer visually. The aim is to transform the idea or message to a photo by interpreting

in determined contexts. Although advertising is basically based on dreams, not on reality, it reaches receiver with an increased credibility by the help of photography making dreams look like real. The impact and success created by advertising is based on reality perception. The aim here is to translate the message or idea to be sent to the buyer into the photo by being interpreted in a specified frame (Figure 5). H. Emerson says in his work "Naturalistic Photography": "Photography is an art form in which people can tell their ideas (Kılıç, 2010: 89).

Using photographs in posters facilitates perceiving and learning of the people and helps them to reach to growing number of products and services.

*"Today, we can access the information wherever or whenever we want at the speed we prefer. Descriptive feature of information society is that information can be accessed,*



Figure 6. Poster with social context (<http://www.outofbox.in/33-best-print-ads/>)

multiplied and shared at high speed by the help of the developing technology and internet getting into our lives. Sharing information at high speeds and information abundance has their disadvantages as well as their advantages. In this complexity of information, it is necessary to design and organize existing knowledge so that we can extract the necessary information and benefit from it freely. In this case, there is need for an information design, which aims to solve the existing information within the framework of communication and aesthetic principles, transforming it into a simple and visual form that can be perceived by large target groups easily" (Özmen, 2012: 9).

Chanls Eames says, "Design is the plan that relates to the arrangement to be made in order to achieve the best possible outcome" (Ambrose and Aono-Billson, 2013: 158). At this point, by the help of the credibility of the photograph and the power to influence of the poster will convince the viewer-buyer on the benefits of the product or service, emphasize the product's characteristics, facilitate the access to the information we need within the confusion of information. For this reason, the use of photography in poster design can increase accessibility to ever-increasing numbers of products and services, making it easier for people to learn and perceive. Photographs gives knowledge about the pros and cons of the products, helps the education of the community, produces public opinions and may cause changes in social behaviors by making social awareness. Individuals who take the data which was objected to be given, uses them in their lives and get involves to a long lasting socialization period and being affected with new opinions can change their behaviors in good or bad ways.

*"A photograph that is a common "language" all over the world, gathers nations and cultures, brings people closer. When it is free from political influences, wherever people are free, it reflects the true side of life and events. Photography provides people with easy and clear understanding and sharing of their hopes, hopelessness, political and social events. Thanks to the power of photography, it allows human beings to become witnesses of mankind and inhumanity" (Sontag, 1993: 201) (Figure 6.).*

The effect of the photo on a poster depends on the content of the message chosen to be given. This message can create a social influence-response. According to Milton Glasser "There are three responses to a piece of design: yes, no, and wow. Wow is the one to aim for". For example, the common language of awareness campaigns is to raise public awareness about the harm that human beings have on the environment. Organizations such as Safe, WWF and Greenpeace



Figure 7. "Fashion claims more victims than you think", WWF  
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/houtlust/2867898321/sizes/o/>)

continue to operate on a voluntary, nonprofit-oriented basis and thus aim to have a significant impact on society in a more livable environment. In this context "Fashion claims more victims than you think" is a highly creative and remarkable ad made for the WWF organization by Agency Ogilvy & Mather advertising agency. This ad is awarded with "The Concerned Communicator Award". The ad shows a mother leopard followed by her young cub, and they both wear size tags on their back, XL for the mother and S for the cub. Despite the small use of the text in this ad, the desired message "Fashion claims more victims than you think" is presented in a very strong, clear and impressive manner, to the recipient using the credibility of the photograph (Figure 7.) (Lust. <http://drprem.com/marketing/wwf-fashion-claims-more-victims-than-you-think.html>).

WWF Stop the Chopping It was also an important year for WWF in terms of forest protection. The organization has managed to

convince 60 countries to sign a treaty on zero deforestation by 2020. Thus, in Amazons and Congo, 1 million hectares have taken to protect the forested area. The following ad deals with animal species that are endangered because of deforestation (Webecoist. 2016. <http://www.momtastic.com/webecoist/2008/12/27/creative-ads-environment-humanity/>). In this example, a striking effect on the target audience has been created through the manipulation of the photo (Figure 8.).

For more than 70 years SAFE has been working seriously to be the voice of all animals to combat animal cruelty, abuse and testing on animals around the world. The organization uses advertising campaigns and political lobbying methods to uncover and question the use of animals for ruthless experiments and commercial exploitation to raise public awareness. The following "They Were not Born to Be Worn" banner samples are intended



Figure 8. "Stop the Chopping", WWF (<http://creativeadvertisingworld.com/wwf-and-safe/>)

to draw attention to stop usage and killing animals for fur scarves, boots and other leather products, in the following. It is aimed here to create an effect-response on the viewer, by using manipulation of the reality of the photo

in a disturbing way. The text in the banner is quite small, and is used on the backplane in supportive position. The effect of the photo on the poster is so big that even though the text is small, the message is fully conveyed (Figure 9-10). (Webecoist. 2016. <http://www.momtastic.com/webecoist/2008/12/27/creative-ads-environment-humanity/>).

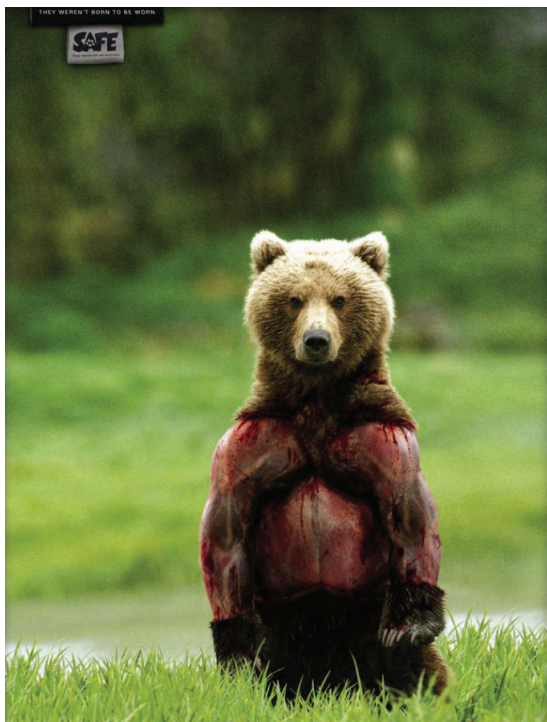


Figure 9. "They Weren't Born to be Worn", SAFE (<http://creativeadvertisingworld.com/wwf-and-safe/>)

Today it is impossible to think the photo in a poster, which supports the writing as a completely different visual material. All the images supporting the writing in a poster (photo, picture, symbols etc.) generally makes poster understandable but sometimes may lead to chaos's. However these supportive features are used, main aim should be making the message simpler. Photo being an easier and direct communication media than the writing, has a practical usage for both the source and the perceiver. Words are commonly used to convert the meaning (Figure 11.).

Photographs may have many advantages over writing on posters and can get ahead of the writing. First writing makes reading easier and faster. A written text has to be read to the end to be understood. But a good photograph emits the information to receiver immediately.



The second superiority of the photo is the density in meaning. Message can be transferred directly and densely with a photo. Another superiority of the photography is that it makes remembering the message easier. People used to remember the things they have seen easier than the things they have read.

The major objective of using photography on a poster is to affect the public emotionally. Sometimes striking and interesting photos serve to awake the curiosity of the crowd and lead them to read the writing. Because of the socio psychological pattern of the perceiver it is not enough for the photo to give reality about the product. People usually concerned with the psychological and aesthetic side of the products and services.

The photo which will be used in poster designing would not barely reflect people or the objects as they are in the real life but should better be builded to arise a will to buy in consumer. So advertisement photos are commonly photos, which require preparation. The preparations consist of making an advertisement and photo taking scenery, choosing the models and the area to be used, arrangement of the setting, lights and make up etc.

Advertisement photos are more concerned on message integrity more than photo integrity. All visions are installed on the lifestyle and longings of the consumer. Sometimes focus is on the lifestyle of the consumer and sometimes the life style they long to and their wishes. Whatever the used technique, either photomontage or photographs taken on real scenery, the message is given to consumer in a composition and is away from reality. Most of the time photos on posters are a bridge between real life and dreams.

Designer may plan to awake some associations on the consumer's mind that are over the visual. Photograph has a special importance in social contented posters. The usage of

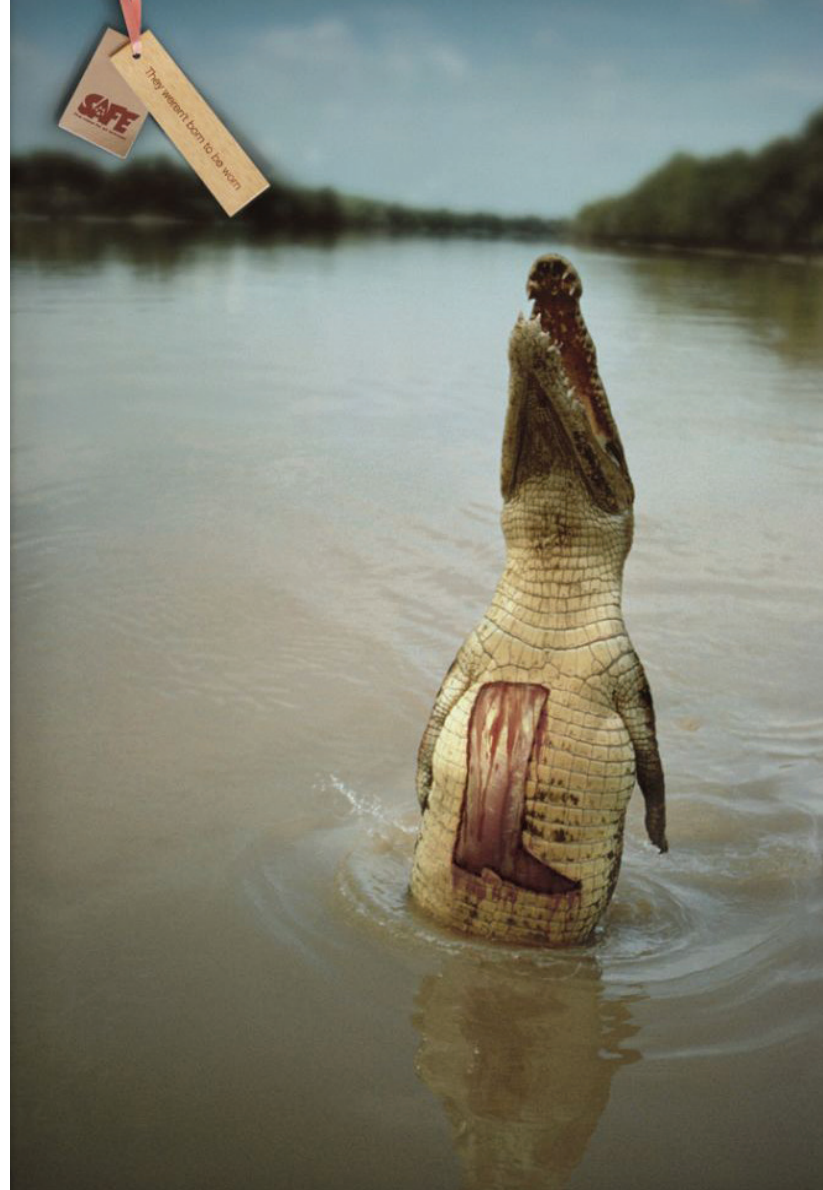


Figure 10. "They Weren't Born to be Worn", SAFE (<http://creativeadvertisingworld.com/wwf-and-safe/>)

photographs in posters usually aims to gain the interest of the consumer, to explain the information or the idea fast and effectively, to make consumer more interested with the headline and the text, to express an idea that is hard to explain with words and conduct the message correctly. Most of the time expressing the message of the photo by words can be boring and affect less.

It is not a general rule but while designing a poster, because the photographs are more convincing and easily understood, the photo must take at least one third of the area, logotype and writing can take one third and one third can be blank (Becer, 1997: 202).



Figure 11. Advertising poster (<http://www.fromupnorth.com>)

We have a very competitive advertisement media so to affect the consumers advertisers search extraordinary compositions. And this makes the creativity very important at advertisement photography.

When we examine the two posters expressing the harms of smoking, there is a common message in both "smoking kills". It is told by photography language in the first poster (Figure 12.) and told by text at second poster.

The first poster tell directly what is intended to, but at the second we read about 4000 chemicals tobacco contains and this is not a direct way of telling. And second poster using text needs the consumer to know the language used but photographs do not need it so can inform the consumers much more efficiently.

Anyt...  
 4000 chemicals tobacco contains and this is not a direct way of telling. And second poster using text needs the consumer to know the language used but photographs do not need it so can inform the consumers much more efficiently.

Figure 12. Poster with social context (<http://www.boredpanda.com/top-40-cool-creative-antismoking-ads/>)

## RESULT

Concluding remarks, in today's poster design process; it is inevitable to use photograph as an indispensable element at a banner which is designed to aim to attract attention to any ideological idea, to convey information, or to arise a wish to own a product with commercial concerns by using reality effect of photography. Photography is an important design element that increases the power to influence of banner and helps attract attention to the characteristics of the advertised product. Although using photography and text in harmony provides efficient solutions for conducting the message of banner to consumer, concluding that a creative photo in an ad has some advantages over text may not be true in all instances. On the other hand, in today's complexity of information while providing us with the information we need and benefit from it easily, photographs change the attitudes and behaviors of the consumer (target population) positively or negatively.

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