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Research on the Image Narrative Strategy of Public Welfare Posters Based on Image Narrative Expression

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ABSTRACT

In the field of poster design, image narrative plays a vital role, and studying image narrative strategies for constructing posters is crucial to the development of modern public welfare posters. This study is based on the image narrative theory and conducts an in-depth analysis of the image narrative of public welfare posters. The study first summarizes the theoretical basis of image narrative, analyzes the characteristics of graphic narrative, and derives three characteristics of image narrative: symbolism, temporality and nonlinearity. Then, combined with excellent cases of public welfare posters, the superficial narrative form and deep narrative form of image narrative in the design of public welfare posters are analyzed. Through the three characteristics of image narrative and the two forms of image narrative, the strategic framework of image narrative for public welfare posters is initially constructed, thereby constructing a general model of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters, and conducting design evaluation of the image narrative strategy for public welfare posters.

The focus of the research is to analyze the two aspects of surface narrative form and deep narrative form in image narrative, and use the case analysis method to analyze how to encapsulate complex social information in a single, usually static image. The research also explores Gestalt psychology and the space establishment of image narrative and analyzes the relationship between Gestalt and the space establishment of image narrative. The cases involved in the study are common ecological and environmental protection posters, and the non-linear narrative techniques used in these posters are studied, emphasizing the importance of symbol and image strategy selection.

The conclusion of the research is that image narrative plays an important role in the effective communication of public welfare posters. The research content reveals the complexity of image narrative expression in public welfare posters. The deduced and constructed general model is a powerful supplement to the image narrative theory in public welfare posters and provides valuable ideas for the design methods and design practices of public welfare posters. It provides new perspectives and ideas for further research in the field of image narrative expression.

KEYWORDS



Image Narrative, Public Welfare Poster, Visual Communication, Design Strategy, Narrative Order

INTRODUCTION



Currently, with the progress and development of human society, global social and environmental problems are becoming increasingly serious. As an important way to guide public awareness and behavior, public welfare posters have played a certain positive role in social development. As the most common form of expression in poster design, image narrative can be used comprehensively with public welfare posters to give full play to the actual value of public welfare posters. It can express the main idea clearly and accurately, allowing the public to receive effective communication content, thus reflecting the practical significance of public welfare posters. Designers from various countries are exploring the style and form of public welfare poster design at different levels. Studying the image narrative method of public welfare posters has always been an important topic. What kind of design strategies should be proposed for this topic is worthy of further study.

Table 1

Public welfare posters by designers from 20 countries in Alliance Graphique Internationale

Name	Country	Title	Creative Time	Work
Hermann Rastorfer	Australia	That's the point	1975	
Fábio Prata	Brazil	A poster for São Paulo	2009	

Name	Country	Title	Creative Time	Work
Rolf P. Harder	Canada	Peace	1987	
Tai-Keung Kan	China	Think about nature again	2020	
Finn Nygaard	Denmark	Hiroshima bombing - 70 years	2015	
Kyösti Varis	Finland	Your Lifemeter	1970	
Erik Adigard	France	Fuelicide	2001	
Jianping He	Germany	Clone	2001	
Yarom Vardimon	Israel	Yarom Vardimon	2006	
Armando P. Milani	Italy	War/Peace	2004	
Shigeo Fukuda	Japan	Victory	1945	
Félix Beltrón	Mexico	Freedom for Angela Davis	1974	
Max Kisman	Netherlands	Sta stil; hoor de bommen vallen	2008	
Radovan Jenko	Slovenia	Earth. All Beings in One	1995	
Sang-soo Ahn	South Korea	Bomb.fishes	1991	
Diego Feijó	Spain	Greenpeace	2021	
Niklaus Troxler	Switzerland	Dead Trees	1992	
Mehmet Ali Türkmen	Turkey	Coexistence	2015	

Name	Country	Title	Creative Time	Work
Harry Pearce	UK	Unity	2019	
Gene Federico	USA	Women's Day	1951	
Michael Mabry	USA	Stop the Arrogance	2004	

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF IMAGE NARRATIVE

The narrative is a complex way for human society to understand things. Words are not the only narrative means. Different means have different narrative structures and forms. Image narrative refers to a narrative method that expresses and transmits content through images. It is a basic language and expression method of visual culture. The origin of image narrative can be traced back to the period of primitive society. Because language communication must be at the same time and space, in addition to using language to narrate, people also use gestures, symbols, graphics, and other methods. In ancient times, people would draw images with the help of murals, rock paintings, stone carvings, etc. With the development of human productivity and production tools, there are more and more forms of images. With the development of electronic media, images have become the most common narrative method. With the advent of the era of picture reading, studying image narrative has become an important topic. In the field of public welfare poster design, analyzing the communication narrative of public welfare posters from the research perspective of image narrative plays an important role in how to exert the effect of public welfare posters and affects the public's effective reception of the information content of public welfare posters.

CHARACTERISTIC ANALYSIS OF IMAGE NARRATIVE

The Symbolic Nature of Image Narrative

Symbols are a simplified means for people to understand things, and symbols are all informative. An Image symbol is a visual symbol, a picture with visual effects, a description and replacement of the similarity of objective objects, and an ideographic representation of objective objects. It is the visual language

in poster design. In the long social development of mankind, people first used simple graphics to communicate and record events. Later, with the advent of painting, the forms of images became diverse. Therefore, images are imitations and realistic representations of real things, and they are carriers and tools for people to express their thoughts. This symbolic expression transcends countries and nations. Similarity is the most basic feature of image symbols. Gombrich said: Any perceived symbol has a shape that acts on the senses. Therefore, any perception can find out the 'likeness' of another object (ErnstHGombrich, 1968). Specifically, it is mentioned in three aspects: metaphorical similarity, structural similarity, and image similarity. Image similarity is reflected in the similarity in external form or structure. It is an intuitive visual experience and the most direct image symbol. Structural similarity is a similarity in internal form or structure. Structural similarity is not as intuitive as image similarity, such as electrocardiograms, music waveforms, etc. that express the movement process and development trajectory of things. Metaphorical similarity manifests itself in conceptual similarity, mostly in abstract form, and is a metaphorical cultural symbol. The cultural context of the image also affects the symbolization of the image narrative. When communicating, audiences will have different understandings due to different cultures, societies, or individuals. Therefore, designers need to consider the cultural background, contextual, and psychological factors of the target audience to ensure that the image symbols convey the intended message.

The Temporality of Image Narrative

Literary works use time as a narrative method, including sequence, reverse sequence, interlude, etc. In poster works, although the entire poster can be completely seen at one glance, the interpretation of the picture requires a time process. To understand a poster work requires scanning through the eyes like reading, although the various elements of the image are synchronic, the eyes have an order of importance in the process of reading posters. This is a transformation process of spatial temporalization and semantic construction. This transformation process is the temporality of the poster's visual narrative. From a narrative perspective, the semantics of an image needs to be constructed based on its own meaning, especially for some abstract graphics, whose narrative method must be different from that of concrete images. Understanding the content of abstract graphics requires even more temporality. The temporality of poster visual narrative is inseparable from the image order and personal

experience. For image order, designers need to arrange various visual elements in an orderly manner. If it is a chaotic state, it will be difficult to reflect timeliness. Designers can establish a sense of order in the image through the organic organization of forms, even if it is in a chaotic state. Even though there is chaos on the surface, there also needs to be an inner sense of order. People are not blind in the process of reading posters. They are guided by the image order carefully arranged by the designer. The viewer will make temporal sight movements under the guidance of the image order. This kind of sight movement is not like that in literature. There is a clear sequence, but the order of viewing exists in time. Time clues affect the generation of image meaning. This is the temporality of image narrative. Designers need to make good use of this feature to reasonably arrange the temporality of image narrative.

Linearity and Non-linearity of Image Narrative

In the 1980s, nonlinear science gradually developed in the “third scientific revolution”. Nonlinear science has the characteristics of uncertainty, contingency, disorder, irreversibility, chaos, and other characteristics, which have a profound impact on science such as linear mechanics. The theory was questioned. Nonlinear science examines matter and spirit from a new perspective. Western art in the 20th century continued to break through binary oppositions and transform into multi-dimensional directions. From Nietzsche’s “perspectivism”, and Derrida’s “deconstruction” to Foucault’s “production aesthetics”, we have all witnessed the rebellion against linear causality from the side door. The order and disorder, chance, and necessity of nonlinear science form a new thinking model and logical system. From an aesthetic point of view, due to the uncertainty of graphic semantics and the lack of clear referent of color semantics in posters, the image narrative of posters has non-linear properties. This non-deterministic visual expression is different from other fixed Sexual visual language like textual information makes a difference. Text can directly obtain linear information, while posters need to decode and translate images, which results in different information results for everyone. This is the non-linearity of image narrative. In poster design, image narrative also exists linearly, coexisting with non-linearity. Usually, a group of posters usually narrates images in a linear narrative way, while a single poster usually expresses it in a non-linear image narrative way.

ANALYSIS OF IMAGE NARRATIVE FORM OF PUBLIC WELFARE POSTERS

Gestalt Psychology and the Establishment of Image Narrative Space

The most concise characteristic of Gestalt is “wholeness”, which emphasizes the initiative of perception. Anything based on integrity, such as a painting, a poster, or an article, can become the research object of Gestalt. In the field of poster design, it is called “Gestalt”, Gestalt Psychology analyzes the poster as a whole language system. The rules for the use of various visual elements are the order of poster design. Only with order can the narrative appear. In the design of public welfare posters, Gestalt is inseparable from the establishment of image narrative space. Poster works that rely on Gestalt for creativity will have better narrative intensity and more interesting content. The Kanisha triangle is a typical example of Gestalt psychology (see Figure 1). On the surface, there are three corners and three incomplete circles in the picture. A single corner and a single dot cannot constitute complete visual semantics. However, from the perspective of deep structural relationships, the relationship between the three circles and the three corners Two triangles are formed that are inverted. These two triangles are hidden and unstable. Removing any element will affect their existence. This is the active construction of the graphic form by Gestalt psychology. If the graphic is given some effective information, the narrative content will be revealed. It is the establishment of space for image narrative.

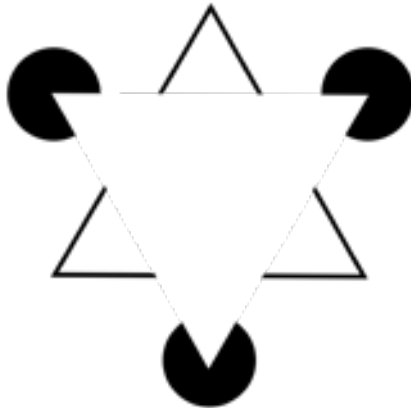


Figure 1. Kanisha Triangle

Note. Named after Italian psychologist Gaetano Kanizsa.

From the perspective of poster design, Gestalt psychology plays a role in constructing the narrative space of the image. Different elements in poster works

need to interact with each other, and these visual elements ultimately need to form a whole. Studying the integrity of the image is to study the constructive expressiveness of Gestalt psychology in the image narrative space. Only by using the relationship between visual interruption and Gestalt psychology can the image narrative of poster works be more expressive and interesting. In addition to the gestalt, the relationship between the panorama and the background also plays an important role in image narrative. Using the contrast and transformation of the relationship between the panorama and the background is an important method of graphic creativity in poster design. In visual perception, pictures can be divided into pictorial relationships between panorama and background, time and space, pattern and background, and subject and object. Panorama is divided into three aspects: stable panorama, double-sided panorama, and fuzzy panorama. The human brain likes direct, simple, and orderly images. Human beings will be conscious when they see many complex things. Simplify and sort out simple shapes, reduce complex information processing, and improve recognition. This is the Law of Prägnanz (Albert Young Choi, 2023, p.105). Chinese designer Han Rongxun's poster work "Protection Endangered Animal Species" uses the Gestalt's positive and negative figure-base-view relationship. The black part represents the human mouth, and the white part represents the endangered wild animal crane. The color contrast is black and white. Red is added as a visual highlight in the picture. The relationship between the positive and negative shapes in the structure is enhanced. The context of image narrative (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Protection Endangered Animal Species

Note. 2020 Leipzig Poster Prize. (<https://www.plakat-sozial.de/public/plakat-sozial.php>).

Surface Narrative Form

Posters tell stories through images. The formal structure of an image is the carrier of visual information. The formal elements of an image include graphics, images, colors, formats, text, etc. They form a complete image narrative language system through the hierarchical relationship of reading. People influence the composition of image narratives through their psychology and consciousness. Image narrative in poster design is composed of surface narrative and deep narrative. The surface narrative is two-dimensional graphics and three-dimensional images obtained by visual perception. Deep narrative is a kind of symbolization, metaphor, contrast, arrangement, and situational combination of surface narrative elements (see Figure 3). Therefore, narrative analysis is the basic approach and important content for understanding poster design.



Figure 3. Narrative Perspective Diagram

Note. People complete the construction of the image narrative language system through the hierarchical relationship of reading.

The surface narrative in poster design is composed of two-dimensional graphics and three-dimensional images obtained through visual perception. Their graphic semantics and color styles are the basic elements of the surface narrative form. Each element should have a clear purpose serve the overall design and ensure that the audience can accurately understand the message conveyed. Through clever design to achieve visual effects, convey information, or attract the attention of the audience, designers choose the appropriate elements based on the needs and goals of the project to create more impactful and thought-provoking posters. Among surface narrative forms, graphic semantics is the most common form of narrative expression in public welfare posters. Graphics are the product of human beings' understanding and transformation of nature. They predate writing. It can be seen from the murals of the Lascaux

Cave in France discovered in 1940 that primitive people began to use simple graphics 15,000 years ago. to record information. The meanings represented by different graphics are a summary of people's cognition and spiritual culture of different things. This is graphic semantics. Polish designer Patrycja Longawa's public welfare poster work "Water is Life" uses graphic processing to graphically represent human hands and heads, using the water droplets dripping from the faucet and human eyeballs as isomorphic graphics. In this kind of visual surface narrative, the expression catches the reader's eyes and leaves the reader with the desire to continue reading. The isomorphic expression of this graphic makes the work highlight the preciousness of water, implying the theme of protecting water resources and saying that water is life (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Water is Life

Note. Selected works for the 15th International Ecological Poster Triennial in Zilina, Slovakia (<https://www.ekoplagat.sk/fotogaleria/rok-2020/>).

In poster design, color is not a product of rationality, but is used directly based on personal feelings. Color gives sensory stimulation. As an important component of surface narrative, color conveys information and content together with graphic semantics. Color itself has no meaning, but through the activities of human society, color has been endowed with strong emotional and cultural attributes. Color is a powerful tool in poster design and plays a multi-faceted role. It is not only a visual element, but can also affect emotions, convey information, guide attention, and directly affect people's perception and behavior. Color is a strong expression of emotion, and different colors can inspire different emotional and psychological reactions. For example, red is often associ-

ated with passion, energy, and vitality, while blue may bring feelings of calm, tranquility, and trust. Color can be used to emphasize specific information or elements. By using bright colors or colors with higher contrast, you can make key information stand out more in the design. Using contrasting colors can direct the viewer's eye to specific areas of the design, which is very important for emphasizing important information or guiding the user's psychology. Layers and combinations of colors can create a sense of depth in a design, creating a layered structure between different elements that aids in the understanding of the message. Different cultures and regions have different perceptions and meanings of colors. The symbolic meaning of colors is the cultural cognition accumulated over a long period of time in human society. The main values of different nations and cultures give colors different cultural attributes. Use colors skillfully, Designers can create impressive work. The public welfare poster "Earth" designed by Polish designer Damian uses a teapot that boils water to create a creative isomorphism with the earth. The flame at the bottom is burning. The background image uses a strong red color. The red background enhances the theme of heat and plays a strong role. The atmosphere rendering effect, with humans and marine animals evaporating out of the white smoke, echoes the theme and has the effect of highlighting the theme (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Earth

Note. Selected works for the 16th International Ecological Poster Triennial in Zilina, Slovakia (<https://www.ekoplagat.sk/fotogaleria/fotogaleria-rok-2023/>).

Deep Narrative Form

The deep narrative form is a combination and change rule of symbolizing, metaphorizing, contrasting, arranging, and situational combination of surface narrative elements. Surface narrative and deep narrative are unified and influence each other. They are a dynamic visual language system. The surface narrative elements are the basis, consisting of dots, lines, planes, graphics, and colors, which determine the external shape characteristics. The deep narrative form is the combination rule of the surface narrative. After being processed by different rules, the surface narrative forms a new semantic expression. The variability of surface narrative forms and the diversity of deep narrative rules constitute the different content presentations of posters. From the perspective of visual semantic relations, the surface narrative form has no fixed meaning. Only after being processed by formal relationship rules, the surface narrative form forms semantics. This semantics is the deep narrative form. For example, a line segment represents a surface narrative form. It can express a tree trunk or a horizon. This kind of ambiguity often appears in the surface narrative layer. Designers need to try to eliminate the multiple semantics of the image to achieve the expectations of poster design. Another example is a dot, which can represent the sun or the earth. It is an abstract, uncertain, and ambiguous figure. Only by processing the dots in a regular manner can the narrative of this dot enter the deep narrative layer. Only then can clear visual semantics appear. This also reflects that the lower the narrative level of the image, the more ambiguous and uncertain the content it contains, and the higher the narrative level, the clearer the meaning. Designers need to flexibly use surface narrative forms and deep narrative forms. Using one layer alone cannot give full play to the narrative nature of the image. Only by fully and flexibly using both levels can we better carry out image narrative. The public welfare poster “Dirty” designed by Chinese designer Wang Yankun won the gold medal at the 11th China International Poster Biennale in 2023 (see Figure 6). This work uses graphics to express polluting and harmful gases through graphics and combines them with lines to form the Chinese character “pollution” and create a three-dimensional spatial effect before and after. The isomorphic narrative expression of polluted gas and the Chinese character “pollution” belongs to the deep narrative. The work expresses the central idea of the poster through the double-layered narrative of the surface and the deep, implying it reminds people to take the initiative to assume social responsibilities and protect the environment.



Figure 6. Pollution

Note. Gold Award in Public Welfare Poster Group (<http://www.cipb.org/zh>).

GENERAL DESIGN STRATEGY MODEL AND EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR IMAGE NARRATIVE IN PUBLIC WELFARE POSTERS

Framework construction of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters

First of all, the theme must be established. The selection of the narrative theme requires a clear central idea and narrative content. Public welfare posters are a kind of directional posters. The same poster style will make readers lose interest. Therefore, after the theme of the poster is established, design thinking can be carried out. The divergence is used to avoid the homogeneity of the design. The selection criteria for topics are issues that have certain positive significance and are beneficial to the development of human society. After determining the theme, conduct divergent thinking on the theme and look for visual elements that fit the theme. The precise extraction of visual elements directly affects the reader's understanding of the narrative content of the public welfare poster. This is a particularly important step. After extracting the visual elements, design and process the visual elements, build a narrative space for the image, and complete the preliminary design of the public welfare poster. The construction of narrative space is a process of concrete expression and establishment of narrative content. The construction process of narrative space requires design to accurately grasp the reader's psychology. Through the symbolism, temporality, non-linearity, and other aspects of image narrative, posters with limited space are in the picture, precise visual pictures are used to convey the

central idea of the poster. From this, a public welfare poster image narrative strategy framework can be constructed.

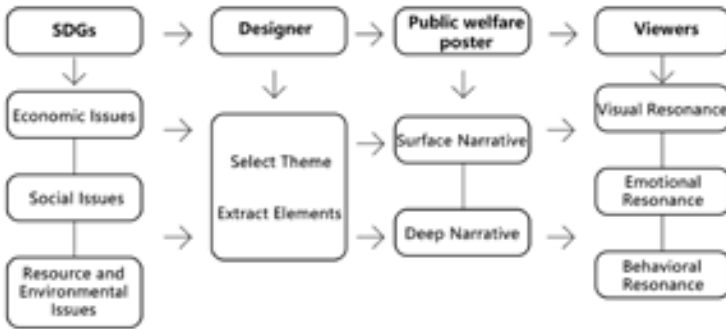


Figure 7. Public welfare poster image narrative strategy framework

Note. SDGs: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), abbreviated as SDGs, are 17 global development goals set by the United Nations. They will continue to guide global development work from 2015 to 2030 after the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015.

Construction of a general model of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters

In the design of public welfare posters, the purpose of image narrative is to influence the readers' concepts and behaviors through effective visual forms. The narrative ability of images can fully integrate people's senses and cognition into the work. Therefore, the design of public welfare posters must consider the transmission of information, and pay more attention to the appeal of image narrative. When image narrative is an important way to express and disseminate the content of public welfare posters, it provides a variety of design methods and sources of inspiration for the design of public welfare posters. The general design model of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters is mainly divided into four links:

(1) Select the theme. This study is based on the 17 global issues of the United Nations SGAs and uses these issues as the entry point to select the theme of the public welfare poster.

(2) Extract elements after analyzing the theme. Effective visual element extraction is an important step in poster design.

(3) Comprehensive use of surface narrative and deep narrative, two-dimensional graphics, and three-dimensional images obtained through visual perception, including graphics, images, colors, formats, text, and other contents, carry out the surface narrative and use symbols, metaphors, and metaphors to

the surface narrative. Comprehensive change processing such as comparison, arrangement, and combination of scenarios, etc. The surface narrative and deep narrative of the poster construct the narrative space of the public welfare poster.

(4) After the poster is output, the effect is evaluated. Readers will pay attention to it after reading it and generate corresponding psychological identification and emotional resonance. The ultimate goal is to achieve changes in personal behavior.

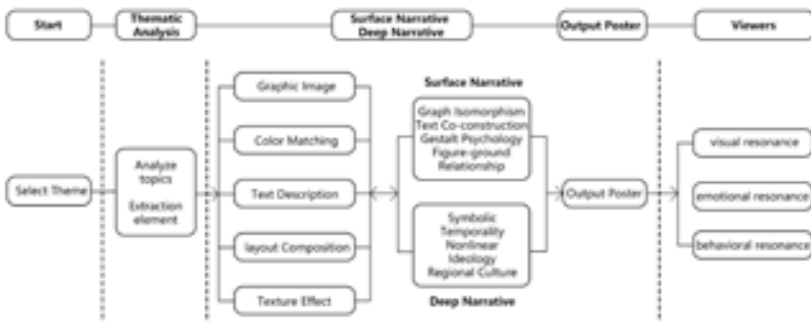


Figure 8. General model of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters

Evaluation criteria for image narrative strategies of public welfare posters

The basic task of the image narrative of public welfare posters is to complete the visual semantic expression of the poster. After reading, readers will attract attention generate corresponding psychological identification and emotional resonance, and ultimately achieve changes in personal behavior. The degree of completion of the narrative task is an important basis for measuring the degree of completion of the image narrative strategy of public welfare posters. The basic task of image narration through public welfare posters can provide some references for narrative evaluation indicators from different perspectives, which is an important basis for the establishment of a rating system.



Figure 9. General model of image narrative strategy for public welfare posters

Note. The key to the success of a public service poster is whether it can resonate with the audience's values. Behavioral change is the ultimate goal.

Table 2. Sample form of image narrative task for public welfare posters

Note. Task samples of image narrative for public welfare posters provide reference value for the evaluation criteria of image narrative strategies for public welfare posters.

Visual Semantic	Main Content	Selection and determination of narrative themes for public welfare posters
	Visual Construction	Use different design techniques to create visual narratives for posters
	Narrative Space Construction	Construct the poster's narrative space based on the poster's theme and visual narrative
Visual Aesthetic	Main Content	The clarity of narrative content conveyed in public welfare posters
	Visual Form	Innovation and beauty of visual form
	Narrative Space	The rationality of narrative space in public welfare posters
Emotional Resonance	Emotional Resonance	The design of narrative content needs to have the ability to infect readers, arouse effective positive emotions in readers, and arouse readers' resonance.
Behavior Change	Value Identity	The clarity of narrative content conveyed in public welfare posters
	Behavior Change	Psychologically persuade readers through narrative communication, thereby generating expected behaviors

Based on the basic task of image narrative of public welfare posters, the construction method of evaluation indicators for the image narrative strategy of public welfare posters can be explored. The completion of the narrative of a public welfare poster is the basis for a successful public welfare poster. Whether the narrative content of the poster can attract the readers' attention and attract the readers' attention is an important condition and a prerequisite for the success of the public welfare poster. The content of the poster can impress readers, arouse recognition of values, and create inner resonance. This is the key to the success of public welfare posters. If readers change their behavior because of the content of the public welfare poster and actively produce effective behaviors, this will be a very successful public welfare poster.

CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of science and technology, people have a new understanding of the functions and communication methods of posters. Today's posters have diverse narrative languages and artistic forms. For public welfare posters, the effective dissemination of public welfare posters will affect the healthy development of human society. The effective dissemination of public welfare posters requires some high-quality poster bodies for publicity. Based on the perspective of image narratology, this study studies the construction of image narrative strategies for public welfare posters. By analyzing the characteristics of image narrative, we build a frame infrastructure for the image narrative strategy of public welfare posters. Through case analysis, the paper focuses on analyzing the surface narrative mode and deep narrative mode in image narrative and constructs a general design strategy for image narrative of public welfare posters. The derived image narrative strategy for public welfare posters is a powerful supplement to the image narrative theory in public welfare poster design. It optimizes the design strategy of public welfare posters, provides creative design inspiration for diversified design methods of public welfare posters, and provides a basis for further research on public welfare posters. The research content in the field of image narrative expression provides new perspectives and ideas.

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