

DESIGNING MUSEUM EXHIBITION'S COMMUNICATION: REPORT AND RESEARCH ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Between March and August 2022, the National Museum in Lublin organized the first in Poland Exhibition of the works of the Polish painter Tamara Łempicka. It was visited in total by 86,667 individuals.¹ The narrative display titled *Tamara Łempicka: a Woman on the Road* showed works that came from private collections and public institutions: the National Museum in Warsaw, Musée d'art moderne André Malraux (Le Havre), Musée d'arts de Nantes (Centre Pompidou), Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création Industrielle (Paryż), MUDO – Musée de l'Oise (Beauvais), Musée des Beaux-Arts (Orléans), Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole, Musée d'art et d'histoire Paul Eluard (Saint-Denis). There were 57 Łempicka's works from 1921–1967 (paintings and drawings) showing the overview of her oeuvre. Additionally, the display presented works by selected painters from the period, the artist's masters and friends, as well as almost 200 objects from the 1920s and 30s representing Art Déco. The curator's concept² consisted in combining the presentation of Łempicka's art and that from her times, in relation to the places she was connected with or which she travelled to (Warsaw, France [Paris], Italy, the US, Mexico).

It goes without saying that Tamara Łempicka contributed to creating a new liberated woman of the 1920s. She expressed

her constant manifestation of freedom, contradiction of customs and socially accepted traditions as well as canons through numerous painted nudes and her dissolute lifestyle. She was successful as an artist unquestionably thanks to her talents, yet also thanks to her titanic work. Meanwhile, she succeeded commercially owing to her personality and intuition which made her resort to the media of the time, design communication on her oeuvre and image. It is difficult to discern which elements in Łempicka's life and accomplishments were an artistic creation and which served as orchestrated advertising. It was the mass media which were coming to existence at the time which helped the artist create her image, and which she skilfully took advantage of.³

Research goal and methods

The purpose of the present paper is to present the results of a research experiment which consisted in studying the whole process of designing communication, beginning with the Exhibition's narrative manner, selection of artefacts, scenography, impact on visitors, up to the verification of the effectiveness of the impact of informative actions in the media.⁴ What proved justified was the use of the monographic method⁵ which allowed an in-depth study of an individual case: a definite exhibition, institution, and place. Furthermore, I applied the method of a diagnostic survey

with questionnaires: to verify the efficiency of communication actions and to qualitatively assess the Exhibition's reception. The combination of various research methods was possible thanks to triangulation.

Furthermore, I used all the available tools and statistics of social media in order to evaluate the process of the information campaign conducted (Facebook, Instagram, Google Trends). This allowed to follow the interest in the event of residents of respective Voivodeships, followed by the questionnaire verification whether the interest in question coincided with an actual visit to the Museum to see the display.

In total 1,544 questionnaires were distributed among the individuals who had visited the Exhibition; the survey was to verify visitor satisfaction, identification of locations the public had come from, source of information on the Exhibition, Exhibition's clarity and perception, carrying capacity of communication actions, and visitor profiles. The questionnaires were filled in by visitors voluntarily, by themselves (without surveyor's assistance); the written information on the questionnaires was placed at the exit from the Exhibition. Anonymous, the questionnaires were available to respondents throughout the whole period of the Exhibition's duration; I was responsible for studying and interpreting them. Furthermore, the survey results were correlated with data derived from social media. The respondents provided information on e.g., their sex, education, age, the place they came from, where they had learnt about the event, whether they would recommend visiting the Exhibition, what they liked about the display, what were its strongest and weakest points, and whether they had found it interesting.⁶ Thanks to open-ended questions interesting visitors' qualitative observations and remarks were gathered; these helped me in the interpretation of the whole research. In the further part of the article I present the study of the survey results (my own questionnaires).

Based on the received answers and analyses, I undertook an attempt to answer the following research questions: what was the Exhibition's perception? What was the visitor profile? How were communication actions conducted in order to inform about the Exhibition? What role did social media play in promoting the Exhibition? Did the Exhibition's turn-out translate into interest in other city's attractions?

Visitor profile

All the visitors asked if they found the Exhibition interesting, gave a positive answer. Nobody replied 'no' or 'I have no opinion'. This may suggest that the public who visited the Exhibition were conscious of and focused on the topic.

The above thesis is confirmed by Visitors' declarations: as many as 94.5% of them came specially to visit the Exhibition, while merely 5.5% of the respondents saw it accidentally while visiting the National Museum in Lublin.

The next confirmation of the fact that the Exhibition was viewed by the public who had come specially to see it is the fact that almost half of the respondents (48%) declared they lived in a town of over 500,000 residents (the population of Lublin stands at around 350,000). In turn, the total of visitors who came from small and medium towns amounted in total to 20.7% of the public. The Exhibition incited the least interest among residents of rural areas (8.2%). According to the

Answers to the question: 'You visited the Tamara Łempicka Exhibition...' (in %)

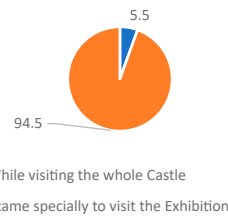


Chart 1. Circumstances of Exhibition visiting, Author's survey

Respondents structure according to their domicile (in %)

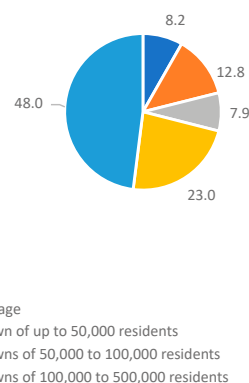


Chart 2. Visitors' domicile, Author's survey

Interest according to subregions



Source: Google Trends.

Chart 3. Report on the regions

declarations made by the respondents, the biggest city that they came from was Warsaw, then subsequently followed: Gdansk, Krakow, Katowice, Wrocław, Poznan, and Szczecin.

This is also confirmed by the report generated from Google Trends of 31 December 2022 showing that the information on the Lublin Exhibition was sought for most frequently by residents of the Lublin, Lesser Poland, and Mazovian Voivodeships (see Chart 3).

Interestingly, among the surveyed it was women who dominated (82.5% of the respondents); men constituted 17.5%. A similar tendency was visible among the people interested in the topic in social media, this reflected in Chart 4.

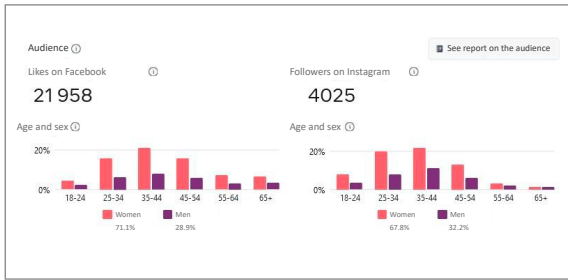


Chart 4. Age and sex report: social media: Facebook, Instagram

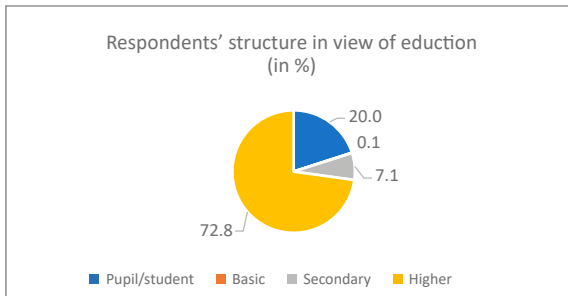


Chart 5. Respondents' education, Author's survey

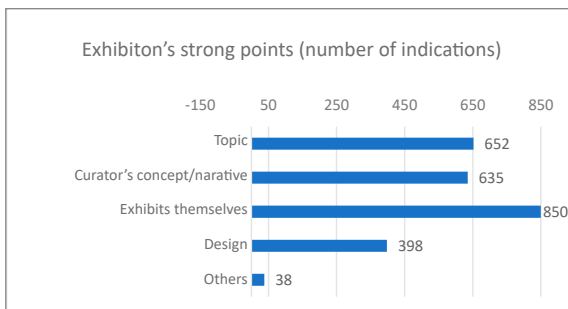


Chart 6. Exhibition's strong points, Author's survey

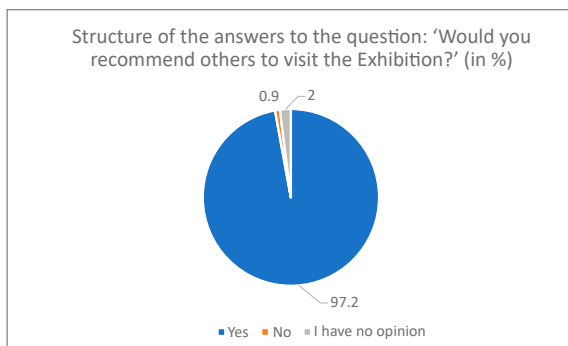


Chart 7. Exhibition's recommendation, Author's survey

This demonstrates that the image of Tamara Łempicka consolidated in the mass media of a symbol in the world of women is still topical, and incites first of all the interest of females. As research has shown, this interest was intense

regardless of the respondents' age. Meanwhile, as for education, the public were dominated by visitors boasting higher education.

Exhibition's assessment

Allowed to tick more than one item, the public judged as the strongest Exhibition's aspects the following elements (by order of preference): exhibits, topic, layout, narrative, curator's concept, and the design. Although the goal to visit the Exhibition was originally its topic: Tamara Łempicka and her works, having visited the display the public perceived the intention of the narrative and communication applied in it.

In the open-ended survey question the respondents claimed that they liked the Exhibition's narrative, interesting communication of the artist's biography, emphasizing as positive aspects the curator's guided tour, the story told in the Exhibition, the historical background of the period. In the open-ended question, in turn, the respondents named the following as negative aspects: too small print in labels, poor lighting, queues, too many visitors, too limited space.

When asked whether the visitors would recommend the Exhibition to others, 97.2% of the respondents said yes, the option 'I have no opinion' was chosen by 2% of them, while 0.9% did not declare that they would be eager to and had the intention of recommending the Exhibition to others.

The turnout versus communication actions

In relation to the *Tamara Łempicka: a Woman on the Road* Exhibition, the National Museum in Lublin conducted a campaign to inform on the event and promote it. The leading trademark of Łempicka's oeuvre was the iconic painting *Young Girl in a Green Dress*. It appeared most frequently online, in the outdoor campaign implemented with the use of billboards, mesh banners, citylights, and also less conventional pennants on lampposts and tramway tractions. Such outdoor actions were implemented in Lublin and in Warsaw. The posts on Facebook uploaded by the Museum with the above-mentioned painting had the following reach; over 60,000 of audience at a single moment and over 9,000 activities and reactions, this presented in the below screenshot.

Let us also mention here the communication actions promoting the Exhibition undertaken by the National Museum on their own premises, namely the Castle. The visual symbol of the Exhibition 'welcoming' visitors even before they entered the building was a suitcase: a scenography element referring to the Exhibition's title. Located in the city space, the object was perceived positively: the public would have their photo taken by the suitcase, posting it on their social media. It was possible to find photo sessions online, including models wearing the 1920s clothes posing against the suitcase and the Castle. Furthermore, during the Exhibition a Bugatti car was parked in the courtyard, which echoed the famous painting by Łempicka *Self-portrait (Tamara in a Green Bugatti)*. This best-known work by the artist boosted her popularity first of all thanks to the mass reach of the *Die Dame* magazine.

Furthermore, a photo set was arranged on the Museum premises; its design harmonized with the style of the period, mimicking a fragment of a theatre stage (stairs covered with



1. Screenshot of a post on the Facebook profile of the National Museum in Lublin



2. A suitcase, National Museum in Lublin, Photo Maciej Niećko

a red carpet, curtains). In the background a photo of Tamara Łempicka in Paris was placed; the whole was lit up with theatre floodlights. This was also very well received by the public who would post photos shot there on their social media over the period of the Exhibition's duration thanks to which a community was built moderated by the National Museum in Lublin through sharing, liking, and other activities. As a result, full accounts of the visit to the Exhibition and to Lublin were created.



3. A Bugatti in the Castle courtyard, National Museum in Lublin, Photo Maciej Niećko



4. A photo set, National Museum in Lublin, Photo Maciej Niećko

Running an information campaign via social media brought about the expected results, since the highest indication number as for the source of information on the Exhibition was the Internet, this demonstrated in Chart 8.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that over the duration of the Exhibition social media administrators recorded a substantial growth of the number of visits. In the case of the Facebook profile the increase stood at 54.8% *versus* the five previous months, while in the case of the Instagram profile, at as much as 202.6%. Also the number of posts increased: to 821,297 on Facebook, which means an increase by over 30%, and to 96,507 on Instagram, meaning almost by 65%. These data were gathered through generating reports on social media accounts as of 31 December 2022, this presented in Chart 9.

The above-quoted examples show the efficiency of communication actions undertaken by the Museum. The campaign's effects were measurable, which I have

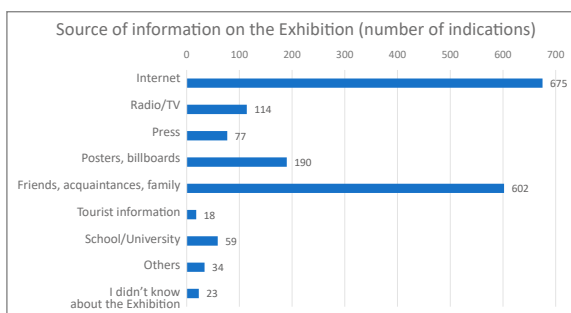


Chart 8. Source of information on the Exhibition, Author's survey



Chart 9. Report on the visits: social media: Facebook, Instagram

demonstrated in the above-discussed surveys. The fact that the communication actions were targeted at a definite region or voivodeship was reflected in the demographic profile of the public. Furthermore, the movement generated in social media contributed to consolidating and spreading the visual identification applied by the Museum (spread of the photos with the Bugatti car, the set for taking photos, etc.).

Communication actions versus tourist traffic

The above-identified trends have also been confirmed in the research into tourism performed as commissioned by the Lublin Municipality and the Local Tourist Organization of the Lublin Metropolis. The study was conducted on the grounds of historical data collected in big-data bases (observation-based data, not involving questionnaires, registering real behaviour). The data used for analysis came from DMP Selectivv data wholesales (so-called big data collections), and were collected in response to queries and ad displays in the mobile channel, as well as from publishers of definite apps.⁷ The Tables below present certain selected data related to tourist traffic over the period of the Exhibition's duration versus the past years.

According to the research and assessment conducted by the city of Lublin, the tourist traffic in 2022 resulted in the fact that the tourists visiting the city left PLN 360 million in the city. The tourist sector, and particularly hotel owners, emphasized that they had felt intensified traffic related to the Exhibition dedicated to Tamara Łempicka, effectively selling, e.g., hotel packages, namely a ticket combined with accommodation.⁸

Table 1. Tourist traffic: the Castle

Year	Quarter			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
2019	128 309	150 210	170 327	128 528
2020	76 655	73 833	148 096	45 674
2021	25 536	47 945	125 390	105 603
2022	109 316	120 238	226 715	154 199

Source: Author's own study of the data provided by the Municipality of Lublin.

Table 2. National tourist traffic at the time of the Exhibition

	2 nd quarter 2022	Share in the whole quarterly traffic	3 rd quarter 2022	Share in the whole quarterly traffic
Lublin	63 317	40%	118 474	41%
Mazovian	48 966	31%	100 107	35%
Lesser Poland	9 325	6%	12 347	4%
Silesian	6 247	4%	9 204	3%
Lower Silesian	6 372	4%	7 007	2%
National traffic in total	157,553	100%	287,927	100%

Source: Author's own study of the data provided by the Municipality of Lublin.

Conclusions

When attempting to respond the question about the phenomenal success of Tamara Łempicka, the unwavering interest in her person and art, it has to be stated with no doubt that she was an ageless creator of her own image and brand. On the one hand, she could easily find her ways in the era she lived in and created, dialoguing artistically with the Cubists, provoking the Avant-gardists, however, never declaring herself a representative of contemporary art. On the other hand, she created her own individual painterly style, and expressed much fondness of old art.

The potential of the 'product' she had turned into was soon spotted by contemporary fashion designers, authors of ads, films, or literature. All this caused that new media became the carrier of her brand, actually continuing to promote Łempicka's oeuvre. Another factor which contributed to the timeless promotion of her oeuvre was the fact that Łempicka's paintings decorated the covers of numerous books, e.g., *The Great Gatsby* by Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Among the brands which used the painter's works in order to promote their own products and create advertising

campaigns, mention can be made of e.g., Van Cleef & Arpels (producer of the Campari liqueur) or Myrurgia (Spanish perfume). Her works were also present in numerous film productions, e.g., *The Batman*, *The First Wives Club*, and even in computer games, such as *BioShock*.⁹

It should not thus be surprising that the promotion of the *Tamara Lempicka: a Woman on the Road* Exhibition was soon picked up by various media, such as e.g., Polish Radio Programme I, Radio Plus. *Rynek i Sztuka*, *Polityka*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Elle*, the *Wysokie Obcasy* supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Zwierciadło*, TVN, Onet, *VIVA*.¹⁰ PSMM Monitoring & More, a company dealing with measuring the effectiveness of media actions and media monitoring, analysed materials from over 1,100 press articles, 5 million online sources of social media, and over 100 radio stations and TV channels. According to PSMM's investigation, 1,486 publications were released whose marketing value was assessed at PLN 4,399,198.¹¹

At this point we need to emphasize the role played by the process of monitoring and studying the whole Exhibition project in the context of social communication. Thanks to the monitoring tools in social media, quantitative surveys, and open-ended questions contained in *nichempic*, it was possible to introduce changes to the Exhibition's duration.

The modifications applied, first of all, to boosting messages related to the Exhibition targeted at respective towns or age groups. Furthermore, thanks to continuous monitoring it was possible to manage the flow of information which appeared in electronic media. In the course of the Exhibition, the Museum also altered its marketing actions, increasing the number of paid ads in social media, targeting them at either definite public groups or places.

Following the conclusion of the event and summing up all the actions, a full evaluation was possible, and it was also possible to draw conclusions which can serve future display projects. The National Museum in Lublin applied this sort of monitoring for the first time, however, in view of the above experience it seems likely that tools can be created which will monitor effectiveness of communication on exhibitions both in order to improve the display itself and to manage the external flow of information. For this purpose the tool has to be extended, more quantitative questions should be asked, and gathering answers should be conducted with the participation of professional surveyors. To conclude, let us remind that museums in Poland rarely study their public or evaluate the efficiency of designing communication, therefore, there are no practiced or applied models in this respect.

Abstract: Between March and August 2022, the National Museum in Lublin mounted the first in Poland exhibition of the Polish painter Tamara Lempicka. The number of public who visited it reached 86,667, which made it an event of the highest turn-out in Poland.

An attempt to analyse the wonder of Lempicka's communication success, the unwavering interest in her personality and art, has been made by the Author. This effort was helped through reaching the current carriers of her brand, namely contemporary fashion designers, authors of adverts, films, or literature pieces. The Author analysed the results of the research conducted during the Exhibition, amounting to 1,544 surveys in total. The study's purpose was to verify public's satisfaction, locations visitors had come from, source of information on the Exhibition, efficiency of the Museum's communication endeavours, and the public's profile. The visitors considered the following

to have been the Exhibition's strongest points (by order of preference); exhibits, topic, layout, narrative, curator's concept, and the design. Interestingly, when the Exhibition was open to the public and the advertising and informing campaign was being implemented, the administrators of social media observed a significant increase in the number of visitors. The Facebook profile witnessed the increase by 54.8 per cent *versus* the previous five months, while the Instagram account's visits grew by as many as 202.6 per cent.

Furthermore, also the campaign promoting the event was analysed; it was not limited either to the Internet or external advertising, but was also conducted at the venue where the Exhibition was held. The power of social media was efficiently used and consciously managed by the Exhibition organizers, which substantially contributed to popularizing the project.

Keywords: communication efficiency, event's impact on the city and region, museums' communication challenge, new media in museums, exhibition as communication space, research into the public, research into communication efficiency.

Endnotes

- ¹ In 2022, after the Lublin Exhibition ended, the paintings from the French museums and several additional pieces from the US were displayed at the National Museum in Krakow. In turn, the majority of collection items from private collections were shown at the Villa La Fleur Museum in Konstancin-Jeziorna. Both enjoyed high popularity. It has to be emphasized, however, that the two were organized after the Exhibition at the National Museum in Lublin had ended, thus after the communication and marketing endeavours of the Museum had been discontinued. Additionally, neither of the two institutions investigated communication, thus I purposefully did not show any comparative research.
- ² The Exhibition was mounted on my initiative. In order to implement the task a curator team was established, grouping employees of the National Museum in Lublin: Łukasz Wiącek, Marcin Lachowski, Aleksandra Blonka-Drzażdżewska, Magdalena Norkowska, and the external curator Artur Winiarski (Villa La Fleur).
- ³ More on the artist's biography see A. Blondel, *Lempicka. Catalogue Raisonné 1921-1979*, Lausanne 1999; L. Claridge, *Tamara Lempicka. Sztuka i skandal*, transl. by E. Hornowska, Warszawa 2019; G. Mori, *Tamara de Lempicka. The Queen of Modern*, Milano 2011; M.A. Potocka, M. de Lempicka, *Tamara Lempicka*, Bosz, Olszanica 2020.

- 4 I study the questions of designing communication in harmony with communication theories. Owing to the limited size of the paper and its purpose, namely the presentation of the research results, I limit myself only to naming researchers who tackle these issues theoretically, and whose views I share: V. Papanek, *Design for the Real World*, New York-London 1973; M. Wszolek, *Teoria i praktyka projektowania (komunikacji)*. (*Re)design designu*, Wrocław 2021; *Dyskurs artystyczny*, ed. by G. Habrajska, Łódź 2018; M. Fleischer, *Sens – czyli co to jest. Perspektywa konstruktywistyczna*, Łódź 2019.
- 5 The monographic method consists in the selection of a unit which undergoes a thorough analysis. The research is composed of a numerical analysis as well as qualitative and quantitative one. More on the topic see T. Michalski, *Statystyka*, Warszawa 2004, p. 24.
- 6 The content of the questionnaire was worked out as a research tool to be applied by the team organizing the Exhibition at the National Museum in Lublin and was used for the first time.
- 7 The base collects data regarding the display of ads for unique users, thanks to which the following identifications can be performed: e.g., of domicile, work place, or journey directions. Mobile data allow to assess the age group, sex, domicile, or the number of days dedicated to visiting a given location. For this purpose the base administrator uses information on the phone's language, GPS coordinates at which the device is registered, the apps the telephone user uses, and mobile websites he/she visits.
- 8 See <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/lublin/do-lublina-juz-nie-przyjezdza-romantycy-i-to-bardzo-dobrze-rekordowa-liczba-turystow,n1000319799.html> (Accessed: 2 Feb 2023).
- 9 M.A. Potocka, M. de Lempicka, op. cit., p. 144.
- 10 See on-line sources.
- 11 The data come from the report 'Analysis of PGE Sponsoring Activity' put together by PSMM Monitoring & More as commissioned by the National Museum in Lublin.

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