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Brief Communication

Cartoons as information

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Abstract:

Today the impact of cartoons has a new status in social communication research. Animation has gained a new and wider use, especially in situations where it is important to get the message through and have it internalized, e.g. in marketing and learning. The present study examined whether internal messages presented with humour and in the form of cartoons have a greater impact power than traditional messages among the employees in an organization. The object was to study whether the messages in the form of comic cartoons were better noticed by the employees, whether they were received to a higher degree and whether they more efficiently achieved the desired effect among the employees.

1. Objective of the study

This article summarizes a study on whether communication within an organization becomes more efficient if some messages are transmitted in the form of cartoons instead of a traditional written message.

Today's turbulent society needs a fast and efficient internal information supply in most organizations. It is

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a question of transmitting large amounts of information to the employees quickly and efficiently and with as great an impact as possible. In most organizations this has led to a rapidly increasing flow of internal information, which makes it difficult [1] for the employees to efficiently get acquainted with all distributed messages. The valuable message easily disappears in the enormous information overload, thus making problem solving and decision-making more difficult. It has become obvious that there is a need to develop new and more efficient forms of distribution for the company's internal information. Previous communication studies have shown that an important factor for a message to be received and complied with is, apart from its content, the way in which the information is presented [1].

The object of the present study was to examine whether internal messages presented with humour and in the form of cartoons have a greater impact than traditional messages among the employees in an organization.

2. Background

People have always used images in their daily communication. When information is visualized, data and information which are not inherently spatial are transmitted in visual form in order to improve the receiver's possibilities to observe and understand the message better [2]. The challenges in this process are the ability to create the visual metaphors and the adapted interactivity for the message to be transmitted. The process demands therefore both familiarity with visual perception and visual presentation as well as knowledge of human decision-making and of the influence of cognitive factors on people's information processing.

The historical origins of cartoons are to be found in the simple, unsigned, visual messages drawn on walls since ancient times, often revealing the ordinary citizen's opinion of the establishment [3]. In spite of the recent, new interest in cartoons and pictures, there is relatively little research on their content and on the ways in which people seek pictures and use them. Likewise, our knowledge about the mechanisms underlying the effect of cartoons and pictures on adults is rather limited [4, 5]. Mostly, comic strips, comic books and animated films are seen as 'junk' for children and unworthy of the serious interest of researchers. However, from a semiotic point of view cartoons, particularly comics, according to Clive Ashwin, belong to one of the most complex and sophisticated areas of drawn communication [3]. The emotional power of pictures combined with a critical analysis of social or political behaviour have created many unforgettable products which aptly describe the culture, society and everyday life in which they were created. Today the impact of cartoons has even gained a new status in social communication research. An increasing number of researchers are fascinated by the contrast between the simple artistic design and the complex and ambiguous visual and verbal symbolism transmitted by cartoons [3]. Today, animation has gained a new and wider use, especially in situations where it is important to get the message through and have it internalized, e.g. in marketing and learning. It is true that animation has been used for a long time in marketing, but new techniques combined with new marketing have today changed the way in which it is used. For example, there is more stress put on the artistic design [6]. However, the interest in visual information is not limited to cartoons, but concerns all kinds of pictures. The new media have brought forth the picture and given it a new status and importance as a form of communication. It has attracted the attention of many different disciplines, such as the communication sciences. It has become obvious that text is only one of many possible interfaces with information users in electronic form. In the digital world the story is no longer fixed in advance, as in traditional text. It can be a collection of places, events or adventures reachable through different links and digital paths accentuating the importance of the picture. The picture gains a new life and transmits a new dimension, a new kind of message, which no media has yet been able to transmit [7]. In this light, the comic cartoon attracts new attention too. Its value as an information medium depends, however, to a large extent on the impact of the visual information compared with its verbal alternative and

on the ability of the cartoons' elements of humour and caricatures to strengthen the receptivity of the message in the target population. However, three conditions must be met if a piece of information is to be received by the target group and have the desired effect: (1) the receiver must notice the message (perception); (2) the receiver must understand the message and be able/willing to receive it; and (3) the receiver must become aware of any action that may be demanded by the message [8].

These conditions constitute the starting point of the present research, the object of which was to measure the efficiency of an internal communication in picture form compared with traditional written messages with reference to the receptivity of the message in the target group. The object was to study whether the messages in the form of comic cartoons were better noticed by the employees, whether they were received to a higher degree and whether they more efficiently achieved the desired effect among the employees.

2.1. Visual vs verbal information

The importance of visual information in the context of learning has been shown in several studies, among others in connection with different kinds of learning processes. As an example we can mention Jewitt *et al.*'s [11] study of the efficiency of different educational aids used by teachers in the classroom to raise the meaningfulness of the information they were transmitting to the pupils. The results showed that information in visual form had a positive effect on the pupils' receptivity of the transmitted message.

Other studies, too, have shown that people remember pictures better than, for example, verbal messages [12]. The explanation of the phenomenon has usually been in an improved memory function. It seems that pictures stimulate the process of recalling previously experienced stimuli more easily, which supports the learning process. The efficiency of the process is further increased if the phenomena to be recalled are depicted as interacting in some way. Bransford *et al.* [13] showed that information in picture form was more efficient in situations where information needs to be received and remembered that is difficult to understand. The advantages of distributing information in picture form become even more pronounced if the memory is tested later. Visual information seems to demand less repetition to stay in the memory over longer periods of time. Visual information has also proved to be particularly useful when the receiving population is less motivated to receive the message [12].

Since the interpretation of the information content in cartoons is flexible and personal there is, however, also a risk of misinterpretation. Therefore, the communication succeeds better among persons sharing a similar cultural identity, which gives a mutual, unambiguous understanding of the symbols used. The greater the concordance of the communicating parties' reference frames, the more likely it is that they share not only a common language and terminology but also a similar visual symbolism. Packalén and Odoi [14] note that cartoons are an essential part of every country's culture. The cartoon heroes reflect values and convictions that are common in the prevailing culture and its symbolism, which allows people to identify themselves with the presented types, situations and trains of thought. The image of reality reflected in the cartoons, however, is not always exclusively anchored in the actual reality but often transmits instead an idealized and incisive image of everyday life. That is why cartoons reveal underlying facts and values both among their creators and among the consumers [10]. Since the humour of cartoons is mostly anchored in the receivers' everyday environment, the demand for a good knowledge of the consumers' culture is accentuated for the humour to have its full effect. If the cartoons are created by local artists, the visual world will be correctly designed and the meaning of the message will be easily interpreted by the receiver. Cartoons created in a foreign culture can produce stories which will leave the readers confused and display types or events which are seen as foreign and incomprehensible [14]. When communicating via cartoons, particularly comic ones, the time and space coordinates therefore become important.

2.2. Humour

One way of attracting attention is also to dramatize the message on the basis of the humour and drama in the receiver's everyday life. It can be particularly efficient to include humour in the ordinary activities of an organization, according to Black and Forro [15]. They also state that many avoid humour in written internal information because of fear of not being taken seriously. They stress, however, the fact that an element of humour can attract the attention of the receivers and stimulate their interest in the message that the sender hopes to transmit. Particularly in the case of sensitive information from the administration, a humorous angle could improve the receptivity of the message. Other communication researchers have also highlighted the advantages of the playful and ambiguous nature of

humorous messages when transmitting difficult and sensitive messages or when giving information to new employees [14, 16, 17]. Humorous messages have been seen to contribute to the socializing of employees as members of the collective in an organization. The characteristics and content of humour change over time and strengthen the social structures and the collective identity. Jokes and humorous elements in communication and stories instantly reveal changes in culture, status system and the drawing-up of boundaries [18].

Research into the psychological and physiological effects of humour is relatively new, even though its relation to the individual's well-being has been anticipated for a long time. The introduction of humour in a working community is considered to increase teamwork and reduce stress, stimulate the employees' creativity, improve the communication climate, raise the morale and increase productivity [15]. The positive effect of humour has inspired many companies to employ humour consultants and to introduce humour-raising programmes. The truth is that humour is not a congenital but an acquired characteristic. It is a question of the ability to see the absurd in difficult situations, to have a disciplined joy of living and the ability not to take oneself but the task seriously. The reported results of the work of these consultants have been very satisfactory. The results indicate substantial improvements in both marketing and the working environments in the form of increased creativity, motivation, morale and flexibility, as well as reduced stress and better cooperation and communication among the entire personnel. Humour consultants have been employed by many big companies, such as Hewlett-Packard, Wells Fargo, AT&T, Dupont, Kodak, IBM and Manville [15].

3. The study

The study was carried out at the Finnish branch of an international company in the construction and tool field. At the time of the study the company did not use e-mail in its internal communication. The research material was collected through three different questionnaires. Two of them were directed to the employees and one to the administration of the company in question.

The objective of the first questionnaire to the employees was to make a survey of the internal information behaviour and communication problems in the company. The aim was also to study the employees' attitudes to pictures and cartoons in general. The questionnaire included both structured and open questions. The questions included aspects concerning the

information channels used, how much the messages were read, and in what form the respondents wanted the message (printed, tables or images). The respondents were also asked what kind of message they preferred, for instance just facts, a short message, a story or with humour. In the first questionnaire the respondents were also asked if they remembered some message they had got lately and how they had reacted to it.

After returning the first questionnaire the respondents received the second questionnaire, where they were asked to look at a number of internal messages distributed by the employers over the previous month. This questionnaire aimed at a comparison between messages in different forms as traditional text, images, tables and cartoons. Most of the messages were in traditional form, but there were also messages which included pictures and cartoons. The objective of this questionnaire was to measure whether the employees had perceived and internalized the information more easily in cartoon form. The employees were not informed that they should particularly observe the cartoon information; they believed that the study was a general survey on internal information. This questionnaire, too, included both structured and open questions.

The third questionnaire was given to the administration and aimed to measure their objectives for, and opinions on, the company's internal communication. This questionnaire included only open questions.

The major problem in collecting material turned out to be the rather low response. Out of 70 employees, 27 (38.5%) returned the first questionnaire and only 10 of these 27 (37%) returned the second questionnaire. Because of the low response the results cannot be seen as representative of the entire personnel of the company. This report will therefore analyse the persons who did answer as individual cases, stressing their answers to the open questions.

The returned questionnaires reveal that the majority of the respondents receive internal information daily and also read it conscientiously. It is likely that the persons who answered also belong to the most information-conscious employees in the organization, which makes them particularly interesting considering the objective of the survey. The group also included the younger employees in the company. The respondents who answered the first questionnaire were 25 persons under 40 years of age (among whom eight were under 30) and only two between 40 and 50 years. No one over 50 answered the inquiry. All the respondents were active in the company's sales activities. All also had experience in using computers and approximately half

of them had used computers over five years. The usage frequency was, however, surprisingly low. Only five respondents used a computer daily and two-thirds considered themselves as having only a little experience of computers.

4. Results

4.1. Pictures and cartoons

In the first questionnaire, the respondents were asked to estimate the amount of internal information received and to rate the different internal sources of information according to importance. All stated that the flow of internal information was enormous. The most widely used sources were reported to be internal circulars, but a lot of internal information was also transmitted orally via co-workers and foremen. From a perception point of view it is not surprising that co-workers were ranked as a more important source of information than internal circulars. A circular remains more easily unnoticed than a personal message, for instance from the foreman. The majority of the respondents ascribed an overall important position to the foreman in the transmission of information. In third place came the staff magazine. The answers showed that approximately half of those responding read the staff magazine and that they ascribed a medium-level importance to it as an information channel. While e-mail has become the main means of communication in many organizations, it received a very low rating both from the administration and the staff in the organization examined. On the other hand, several respondents mentioned the lack of e-mail and added that internal communication would be greatly improved by the use of e-mail.

The most important information content in internal information was reported to be product, sales and competitor information, delivery delays, marketing information, statistics, prices, key persons and technical information. Other items mentioned included trends and news, training and internal events. There was a divergence of opinions as to the scope of the messages. While some respondents wanted facts and nothing unnecessary, others wanted to have information about everything related to work and to be able to choose the interesting items for themselves.

When the respondents were asked what a written message should be like in order to be noticed, the answer was unequivocal. It should be short, clear, exact, summarized, stress the important parts, and be objective and concentrated. In another question they were asked to express opinions regarding seven

assumptions as to how the message would be registered more easily. The answers highlighted the same pattern. The message should transmit facts and be well thought out. It should also be easy to read and typographically clear. The information should be directed to the receiver personally and not be too long.

The respondents were also asked to express an opinion on a specific piece of information in three different forms: text, table and picture. It turned out that more than half of the respondents preferred to receive the information in the form of a picture. One-third chose the table and only two out of 27 chose the text. The choice showed no relation to the age of those asked. Practically all of the subjects considered the picture to increase the receptivity of a message.

A majority also considered that a message is best presented in the form of a picture, if the receiver can identify him or herself with the given information, i.e. the content of the picture relates to something he has experience of that is a part of his everyday life. Previous experience was important, particularly when it came to the content of the cartoon information, but it had less importance in relation to the form of the message as such. The priority was not higher among the two-thirds who read cartoons privately, than among the third who did not.

Opinions diverged more concerning which kind of information would be most suitable for transmission in picture form. A quarter thought that any or almost any information could be transmitted with the help of pictures. They considered that a well-made picture makes all information transmission clearer and increases the interest of a dull text. Specific types of information such as product information, technical information, analyses and work methods were quoted separately as particularly suitable for the use of pictures. Further mentions of the suitability of pictures included information about new working methods, announcements concerning operations and announcements referring to some kind of training.

However, all were not as positive. Some of the salesmen thought that pictures were best suited to less important information, e.g. simple reminders, slogans, short announcements and to make a less serious text lighter. Mentions were also made on the picture's importance as a transmitter of jokes, mottoes and caricatures.

The respondents' answers further revealed that they saw the strength of the picture in its ability to show the whole, in helping to identify different things, or in bringing up an issue for discussion. The picture also reduces the risk of misunderstandings. A couple of

answers also mentioned suitability for sensitive questions and provocative issues.

The respondents' opinions about which media in which they would prefer to receive picture information varied. Five respondents thought that picture information should come in printed form and only two thought that it should come in electronic form. Humour and a blend of text and pictures was also strongly stressed.

In the present study, the respondents' opinions on information in cartoon form were somewhat more hesitant than their opinions on pictures as a form of communication. They were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of cartoons in the company's internal communications. The attitude to cartoons was slightly more restrictive than that to pictures in general. Only five respondents out of 27 saw no disadvantages in information in cartoon form. Slightly less than a half of them considered that information in cartoon form is best suited to some kind of information. Seven respondents stated that cartoons stay in the mind because they stand out from the mass of communications. Others said that the cartoon expresses a message clearly, that it makes it interesting and lively, and that certain things are better transmitted with the help of a cartoon than by other means.

According to the respondents, the strength of the cartoon seems to be in the combination of picture and humour. Humour is beneficial in order to lighten up the text and to provide variety, and the picture contributes to the efficiency of the message. Information is rapidly retrievable in a message and a picture can be used to sum up a text even though it was also stated that the cartoon works best in short messages.

The stated disadvantages of the use of cartoons included the risk of missing the actual message or that the humour distracted the attention from the actual information (five respondents). Three respondents did not think that the cartoon would always be taken seriously, since it is easily associated with entertainment and a couple of respondents expressed their doubt about the credibility of a cartoon message. One respondent considered a cartoon to be suitable only for persons who just read headlines and cartoons in newspapers. A cartoon was also seen as space-consuming (four respondents). According to some respondents a cartoon is not suitable for all types of information, and as examples they mentioned general information and technical specifications of machines. Other comments stated that the text in a cartoon should not be too long, that the issue is presented in an artificial way in a cartoon and that a cartoon gives very little information,

that it is easy to ignore and that it is not taken seriously and therefore has little effect.

4.2. *Is the cartoon a more efficient form than text?*

The respondents' opinions on the importance of cartoons for the transmission of information show that information given in cartoon form has both advantages and disadvantages, according to the opinions of the interviewed salesmen. These opinions do not, however, tell us whether the cartoons are more efficient in reality. In this survey the efficiency of cartoon information in real life was examined through the first and second questionnaires. In the first questionnaire the salesmen were asked whether they remembered any information given to them during the previous week or month. They were asked to describe the content of the information and what made them remember it. Did the message stick in the mind because of its content or the way it was presented and for what reasons? The objective was to examine whether the information containing pictures or cartoons had a greater receptivity.

The respondents were asked to describe freely chosen messages that they remembered among those distributed during the previous week and during the previous month. With one exception all respondents remembered messages they had received during the previous week. The messages dealt mostly with product facts and economic information (product prices and sales figures). The factors that made the respondents remember the information were either the message's direct connection to money or its direct relevance to the person's own work. Approximately a third of them pointed out, however, that the appearance of the message implied importance and that pictures contributed to it being noticed and remembered.

Time is important in this context. After one month only 75% of the respondents remembered the content of some information they had received one month earlier. Although product and price information were the main content among the remembered messages, there was now a greater spread of subjects that had stuck in the mind and the description of the content was more vague than in the case of information from the previous week. Regarding content-related reasons for a message to stick better in the mind, the respondents stated that the information had been clear, that it was based on a good train of thought and that it had an economic relevance. The pictures included in the messages also contributed to the information being remembered. Among single messages the most often

mentioned was a piece of information called the 'Millennium rally'. Its content was a sales contest and the reason for it sticking in the mind was the good prizes.

In the second questionnaire, distributed approximately one month after the first one, the respondents were presented with 11 messages and asked to describe which messages they remembered (the scale was: remember well, rather well, vaguely, not at all). There were only two messages that more than half of the asked salesmen remembered well or rather well. Approximately half of the respondents remembered one message while the other messages received only a few mentions.

Here also the first place went to the 'Millennium rally', already mentioned by the respondents in the first questionnaire. All the respondents who answered the questionnaire remembered the information and were able to describe its content. This time the answers to the question why they remembered it revealed that the message was appealing both in its content and appearance. The information presented a professional challenge; it was motivating and profitable (good prices). The contest was also a general subject of discussion in the organization. The comments included: 'everything is going fine, everyone still has a chance'; 'motivating'; 'supports us in trying harder'; 'the best are rewarded with a computer and all get a provision'; 'new customers for key products'; 'possibility to win good prizes'; 'new market shares'; 'spurs everyone to do new business'; 'increases sales'; 'exciting contest and prizes'; and 'information worth money'. It seems that challenge combined with personal advantage is a highly motivating factor for the receptivity of the message.

When asked about the importance of the way the information was presented more than half of the respondents stated that their attention was first drawn to the attractive picture in the information. The picture (a rally car) reflected speed and excitement and attracted interest.

In second place among the messages that the salesmen remembered best was a message containing information about the necessity for, and advantages in, using a sales folder on the products. The comments on why the respondents found the content interesting could be summed up by saying that they considered it sensible, motivating, activating and supporting. The comments were: 'positive'; 'leads to good work routine, which gives better results'; 'a means of growing'; 'educating'; 'humorous support'; 'shows that better results can be achieved using pictures and models and being active'; 'motivating'; and 'increases

sales'. Comparing these motivations with the ones on the Millennium rally message it can be noticed that this information also contains a challenge, but no possibilities for personal profit. Instead, there is a strong, direct connection to the daily work. In the case of this message the appearance was of decisive importance for the message to stick in the mind. The information was given in the form of a cartoon with humorous elements. The opinions pronounced stressed the cartoon's possibilities to highlight the distinctive character of the message and to draw attention. The message was considered clear and colourful.

The message that approximately half of the respondents remembered dealt with returned products and refunds and contained no information about how it was presented.

The two messages which received most mentions as something people vaguely remembered were also examined. Both of these were also given as pictures. In both cases it was product information, which guarantees a high level of interest among the salesmen.

Slightly more than half of the respondents remembered vaguely a piece of information sent with the headline 'new power sockets'. This was a new product and therefore it caught the interest of the salesmen. However, they all also remembered its appearance, i.e. the picture, which had caused annoyance. In this case, the reasons for the information being remembered were totally negative. The quality of the picture was considered to be poor. It was out of focus and considered to be bad.

The same pattern was repeated in the other information that half of the respondents remembered vaguely. The information was entitled 'Fist ratchets', which also was a new product. The information was vaguely recalled as informative and useful as it dealt with a welcome new product. Most of the respondents did remember that the information came in the form of pictures, which were, however, of poor quality.

An interesting question in this connection is what caused a piece of information which was interesting to the receivers to become, over time, a diffuse memory. Since all respondents mentioned the picture and its poor quality as something that made them remember the information, this could be significant. Can a bad picture directly obstruct the reception of a message? If the picture quality is so bad that it reduces the understanding of the message, it is naturally plausible that this obstructs the receptivity. Yet it seems that a negative reaction on perceiving the message had hindered the storage of the information in the long-term memory of most respondents.

4.3. *Is the administration's objective fulfilled?*

It is not possible to evaluate the impact of internal communication without considering what the administration wants to achieve with the messages and the organization's policy.

The third questionnaire of the survey, directed to two administrators of the company showed that, according to both directors, the basic principles of internal information were to arouse positive ideas and reinforce faith in the staff's service function. The administration was seeking a clear, plain, topical and open communication. However, the company did not have written guidelines for its internal communication. The two directors answered with varying levels of detail when asked what they wanted to convey. One of the directors stressed that they had been concentrating on dispensing product information, directives on activities and performance reviews. The aim was to inform the personnel about expected results with the anticipation of a change in the future. The expected change was more sales and more satisfied salesmen. The other director answered that they had been sending out an information compendium every week with the aim of informing about current issues. The expectation was that the employees would receive the given information and incorporate it immediately into their behaviour. Neither of the directors gave any indication about the desired effect. Neither of them knew what the effect was in practice. Both thought that internal information was struggling with problems because there was too much information.

When asked how the transmission of messages could be improved, both stressed improvements in the manner in which the messages are transmitted to make the information more attractive to the receivers. As remedies they suggested an increase in humour and personal elements in the message. Both directors also made the same assessment of the efficiency of different information channels for internal information. A personal telephone call was viewed as by far the most efficient method of getting the message through. In joint second place both mentioned discussion at meetings or information in cartoon form or as pictures. Both directors considered e-mail, notice boards, circulars and text messages as weak or downright bad information forms. Considering that more than half of the salesmen in the organization remembered only two messages out of 11 among those sent during the previous month, one can agree with the directors that the organization does have a problem with its internal communication. It seems manifestly clear that most of the information transmitted does not achieve the desired effect.

5. Discussion

In order to form an opinion regarding the efficiency of pictures and cartoons as a means of expression in this company's internal information, people's ability both to apprehend and to receive information in this form and to act on the basis of the received message should be considered. The result of the study showed that more than half of the respondents preferred to receive their information as a picture and all (except two) considered that the picture increased the receptivity of a message. Most respondents thought that a message in cartoon form is received better if the receiver can identify himself or herself with the given information, i.e. if the picture relates to something the person has experience of and which is a part of everyday life. The information conveyed by the picture receives its meaning and its value for the receiver on the basis of the social situation in which the person lives his or her daily life. It is, therefore, particularly important to discuss personal interpretation in connection with information based on pictures, because the internal constructive process is accentuated when we apprehend pictures.

When directing information towards a large number of people, e.g. members of an organization, the best information forms will be those allowing a broad variety of interpretations, i.e. information that allows personal interpretations of different types. In this respect the picture as a code form for the message becomes very interesting.

In his book *A Psychology of Perception* [9], Kennedy describes how different viewers can interpret a circle as a ball, a lake or 'a top of a round peg in a round hole'. Each time a drawing is provided with a new meaning, it seems to Kennedy to change to some extent according to the viewer's conception, although it remains physically unchanged. The essential thing here is, therefore, how different individuals understand the picture and which factors influence and govern this phenomenon. A picture can probably only function as a carrier of information if the information is produced within the framework of a similar environment to the one in which it will be interpreted.

This study of the respondents' memory of distributed information supports the assumption that information based on pictures is very efficient if the circumstances are right. Communication based on pictures is more personal but also more flexible than communication based only on text. A text can never entirely be free from the coolness and communicative restraints of the written word. Cartoons have been defined as a visual

art of narration where text and effects have been added to give more meaning to the story [14]. The combination of picture and humour makes the stories in the cartoons more dynamic and personal. On the basis of the situation and personal interests the receiver can more easily construct a unique interpretation of the message, which will be adapted to the familiar environment and everyday life. The difference compared with written messages will therefore be the larger freedom of choice in connection with the receiver's construction of meaning and content. We do not yet know how these wider frames in the creation of meaning and personal interpretations influence the receptivity of the message, although the results, among others in this study, suggest a positive connection.

The use of humour in internal communication was stressed by the interviewed salesmen to be by no means problem-free. According to Black and Forro [15] it is important that the humour is not sarcastic, sexist or based on power. The wrong kind of humour in visual messages may be disastrous. Since pictures influence the viewer in a more emotional manner than words, stereotypic pictures can give misleading associations. Such pictures can remain in people's minds for a long time and consciously or subconsciously govern their attitudes and communicative behaviour. As stereotypes are repeated their position in the social culture will be strengthened. They become a part of the intellectual and cognitive platform of the acquired and accepted laws that govern the communicative behaviour in the society. In comic cartoons there is also reason to pay attention to the quality of the story. In this type of communication the story is the most important element. Without a good story the cartoon will be nothing more than a row of pictures. Likewise, the placing of humour in the text is in no way casual. For instance, if the information in a humorous cartoon is intended to teach and to inform, it is essential that the dramatic and humorous elements occur before the pedagogical ones [14].

6. Conclusion

The results of this study could be summarized by stating that there is much evidence to suggest that the message is more easily registered if presented with humour and based on pictures, although some of the salesmen interviewed had doubts about cartoons for more serious information. The strength of the cartoon seems to be in the fact that it improves perception. However, if the information is also to be experienced as

valuable and be understood, it must fulfil the following criteria:

- the transmitted message should generate positive feelings, e.g. be motivating and challenging;
- the content of the message should be seen as important on a personal level and also in the receiver's own economics or work;
- the design of the message should also meet aesthetic and ethical demands, i.e. the cartoon's picture quality and story should correspond to the receiver's quality criteria.

This study scratched the surface of a wide research field which could continue in many directions. It would be interesting to look at the use of cartoons in a firm using email heavily. Do cartoons vanish in the information flow or do they catch the attention of the user? In what form and how are they best presented? A study of the use of cartoons in multinational companies would reveal the impact of cultural differences. Is the company culture stronger than the society's cultural differences? Could the company culture connect people so that cartoons could be a common information source?

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