Character's visual image creation in multimedia projects

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Abstract. In the modern information society, character design plays a key role in shaping visual culture and effective communication in the media space. Characters become conductors of meaning, brand symbols, narrative elements that influence the emotional perception of the audience. The relevance of this study was driven by the rapid development of digital technologies, the integration of visual content into various fields (from education to advertising), and the growing role of characters in digital communications, where not only aesthetics but also the psychological persuasiveness of the image is significant. The purpose of the present study was to consider character design as a crucial element of multimedia projects, analyse animation works, and identify key stages that influence the formation of a visual image. The study employed an integrated approach that combines visual, comparative, and content analysis, typology, and descriptive methods. The study explored the process of creating and developing character design in animated films, video games, and other multimedia products. The artistic, technical, and conceptual solutions employed by designers were analysed, and the criteria for an effective visual image, such as recognisability, emotional expressiveness, adaptability, and stylistic relevance to the context were identified. Particular attention was paid to the influence of cultural, social, and psychological factors on the formation of characters and their role in the narrative structure of the artistic work. Based on the analysis of seven popular characters of different eras, styles, and formats, the study generalised the key features of successful design. It was found that the combination of simplicity of form, cultural symbolism, and design flexibility ensures an emotional connection with the audience and effective communication in the media. The findings of this study can be used in the practice of character design for animation, games, cinema, and interactive media

Keywords: character design; animation; multimedia design; graphic solution; emotional expression; adaptability; media

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INTRODUCTION

In animated films, the central element is the character, which plays a key role in the perception of the storyline and the construction of the visual environment. The character's design features help to convey information about their character, functions, and the specifics of the environment in which they exist. The use of visual elements allows creating associative connections that contribute to a better understanding of the overall concept of the work by the audience. Characters are present not only in animation but also in various art forms, such as literature, painting, theatre, and folk art. Despite the growing interest in animation art, the issues of character design in the context of their artistic expression and role in projects are still understudied. Identification of the specific features that distinguish animated characters from images from other artistic fields is a relevant area of research.

In the scientific discourse, character design has been viewed as an interdisciplinary field that combines artistic expression, psychological depth, cultural representation, and technological innovation. Contemporary research has covered various aspects of character creation, from stylisation and semiotics of images to the impact of artificial intelligence and digital platforms on the creative process. Many researchers have focused on the visual style and cultural context of images. Y. Eldris *et al.* (2023) analysed the influence of fashion and style on the creation of unique video game characters, emphasising the significance of aesthetics as a means of creating character recognition. V.V. Parkina (2023) proposed a methodology for creating an illustrative character using digital graphics, factoring in the visual language of form and viewer perception. M. Kalmakurki (2022) explored the role of costume in the design of characters in feature-length animated films, emphasising the role of styling clothing as a means of visual characterisation. U.K. Nasution & A. Rahmi (2024) focused on the language of form in 2D animation, which allows creating images with a clear symbolic meaning.

The issue of technical embodiment of characters has been explored in studies on concept art, digital technologies, and the use of artificial intelligence. A. Seleznyova (2024) analysed the stages of creating a conceptual image using computer graphics, paying special attention to the silhouette, colour palette, and characteristic features. O.S. Vasylieva *et al.* (2021), O. Kolysnyk *et al.* (2022), O. Oliinyk (2023) explored the specific features of creating animated characters in the context of the rapid development of digital tools, focusing on the adaptability and innovation of approaches. M. Lataifeh *et al.* (2023) made a valuable contribution to the study of generative technologies. The researchers considered the possibilities of using generative adversarial networks (GANs) to increase the creativity of designers. M. Tang & Y. Chen (2024) developed an analogous topic, highlighting the effectiveness and interface convenience of digital solutions, particularly in the context of inclusive design. X. Chen & J. Chung (2023) analysed the use of the Midjourney platform for character creation, which illustrated the shift in emphasis towards artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools.

Another group of researchers has been considering the psychological aspects of design. Thus, K. Isbister (2022) proposed a psychological approach to creating compelling characters for video games, focusing on the player's emotional interaction with the visual image. O.O. Slitiuk & K.A. Danylchuk (2022) stressed the role of animated images in conveying character and plot, while P. Bilotsyts (2022) explored the technique of dehumanisation in creating hostile characters in video games as a tool to influence the player through emotional distancing. M. Wegiel (2021) addressed the significance of details, specifically, bodily modifications and accessories, pointing out the value of these elements in the formation of a unique style. H. Hromko (2023) covered the cultural and historical aspect of image formation, which provided an overview of the evolution of animation art – from shadow theatre to digital animation. This approach allows tracing the transformation of the character's role from a conventional image to a full-fledged personality with a profound emotional profile.

Thus, the analysis of the above sources suggested a prominent level of scientific interest in the problem of character creation as a complex process that combines artistic vision, emotional communication, and technological innovation. The findings of these sources were valuable for the present study, as they helped to summarise existing approaches to character design, adapt the methodology to the current conditions of animation production, and outline the parameters of an effective visual image for the short film format. The purpose of the present study was to investigate character design in contemporary animation projects, analyse the artistic techniques, the design solutions used to create them, and identify the features of visual design, including the placement of key elements: character style, image, accessories, emotional expressiveness, etc.

The study examined the character design of seven multimedia projects selected by the criteria of recognisability, genre diversity, cultural context, and format of implementation. The analysis covered the following examples: Mickey Mouse (Steamboat Willie, Walt Disney Studios, 1928), Sonic the Hedgehog (Sega, 1991), Jack Skellington (The Nightmare Before Christmas, Touchstone Pictures, 1993), Groot (Guardians of the Galaxy, Marvel Studios, 2014), Jett ("Valorant", Riot Games, 2020), Kotyhoroshko ("The Tale of Kotyhoroshko and His Friends", Ukrainamovie, 1970), Mavka ("Mavka. The Forest Song, Animagrad, 2023). The study was based on the integrated use of qualitative methods: visual analysis – to assess the shape, colour, stylisation,

and facial expressions; comparative method – to compare characters with each other by key parameters; content analysis – to explore the narrative function of characters in the stories; typology – to classify the characters by the level of stylisation, emotionality, and adaptability; descriptive method – to summarise visual and behavioural characteristics. The character design was evaluated based on four indicators: recognisability, simplicity and expressiveness of design, adaptability to formats (2D, 3D, games, cinema), and relevance to the cultural context. The findings became the basis for drawing conclusions on effective design solutions in modern multimedia projects.

🍃 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CHARACTER EVOLUTION

The character is a key element present in most art forms and plays a crucial role not only in artworks, but also in advertising and corporate identity, helping to attract consumers and increase brand awareness. Overall, a character serves as an actor in a work of art, which can be an embodiment of both anthropomorphic images and animate objects or natural phenomena. At the same time, the term "character" is emotionally neutral and defines a subject with distinct individual and psychological characteristics that bring it closer to real human images. Characters are mostly fictional but may have real-life prototypes. Character design plays a key role in revealing the plot and forming an idea of the world of the work, demonstrating its dynamism or, conversely, static nature. The character's visual characteristics, behavioural traits, and communication tools reflect the author's conceptual ideas, which helps to establish an emotional connection between the audience and the artistic work. As a result, characters in animated films often become objects of audience identification, allowing the audience to project their individual experiences and values onto the images presented in the visual narrative.

A historical analysis of character development in animation art requires a consideration of the stages of development of animation itself. One of the oldest manifestations of animation art is considered the shadowplay, which originated in China around 200 AD. This form of entertainment involved the use of flat images that were set in motion between a light source and a translucent screen, creating the illusion of animated figures. To identify the characters, silhouettes cut out of paper with distinctive shapes were used. In Europe, this technology gained popularity in the 18th century, particularly in France, thanks to the missionary Jules Alod. Later, the development of animation art was driven by the improvement of optical mechanisms that allowed creating the effect of a moving image. Inventors, including the Lumiere brothers, Joseph Plateau, and other researchers, developed devices based on the principles of rotating discs or tapes with sequential patterns projected using a mirror system and a light source. The

official date of birth of animation is 30 August 1877, when French inventor Emile Renaud patented a device for frame-by-frame animation, which became the basis for the further development of this art form. This invention launched a technological process that later defined the principles of creating animated characters and their visual identity.

The character is the central element of animation art that defines the narrative structure of the work and forms an emotional connection with the audience. As animation has evolved, characters have gradually evolved, acquiring more complex visual characteristics that corresponded to the technological capabilities and artistic trends of certain periods. One of the first iconic animated characters was Felix the Cat (Fig. 1), who first appeared on 9 November 1919 in the animated film Feline Follies by Paramount Pictures. Thanks to its expressive silhouette, minimalist yet recognisable design, and plasticity of movement, this character became a reference example of an effective visual solution for animation at the time. His image demonstrated the value of graphic stylisation and visual expressiveness, which became the basis for the further development of animated character design.

Figure 1. Keith Felix, Paramount Pictures, 1919
Source: Studio Paramount Pictures. Felix the Cat (n.d.)

Walt Disney made an enormous contribution to the development of animated character design by introducing the principles of classical animation, which are fundamental to the present day. Thanks to the introduction of colour, synchronous sound, and advanced animation techniques, characters became more detailed and expressive. Further development of the genre included experiments with form and style: iconic characters such as Tom and Jerry and the Flintstones appeared, expanding the target audience of animation to include not only children but also adults. The transition to computer graphics in the 1990s was revolutionary for character design. The use of 3D modelling made possible the creation of more complex shapes, textures, and effects, which greatly expanded the expressive possibilities of animation. This contributed to the emergence of new artistic solutions that allowed not only improving the realism of images but also developing innovative stylised images.

VISUAL AND FUNCTIONAL DESIGN FEATURES

Contemporary character design is based on a combination of conventional artistic techniques and digital technologies, which allows creating both realistic and expressive stylised images. Animated projects actively use symbolism, colour codes, unique shapes and textures to enhance the personality of the characters and their relevance to the overall concept of the artistic work. Over the past decade, there has been a trend towards increasing the realism of animated characters in both physical and emotional aspects. Thanks to motion capture technologies, actors can give characters intricate detail and natural expressions. Furthermore, modern animation increasingly factors in the aspects of inclusivity, representation of diverse cultures and social groups, which helps to expand the range of characters and images. With the development of animation art, the role of the character has been changing, which has led to the emergence of distinct types and classifications. According to certain characteristics, the following types of characters can be distinguished:

By significance: main characters (protagonists), antagonists (characters who oppose the main character), and secondary characters who perform a supporting function in the plot.

By function: active characters that directly influence the plot development, and passive characters that create an atmosphere or complement the overall context.

By complexity: multifaceted characters with a complex psychological structure and internal development, and one-dimensional characters with a simplified set of traits.

By way of creation: realistic characters whose behaviour and appearance correspond to human characteristics, and fantastic characters with unique, unrealistic features.

By form of existence: animated characters depicted in traditional or digital animation and virtual characters used in video games, advertising, or digital environments.

Determination of the character typology underlies the development of its visual design. The protagonistm as a rule, must be clearly distinguished from other characters to facilitate their identification by the audience. However, all characters, regardless of their role, should have distinctive features consistent with the overall concept of the artistic work. Characters in animation can perform various functions, including plot development, conveying ideas, creating conflict, forming an emotional connection, aesthetic value (they can have artistic value and become symbols of a certain style or era), comedic support (they act as humour elements that help diversify the narrative and balance its emotional tension). Thus, the design of a character in animation is determined not only by visual parameters but also by functional characteristics that determine their interaction with the world of the work and the viewer.

Each animated short film has its unique features in style, plot, and expressiveness, as the runtime is limited. The character must be expressive and understandable, as the design should be memorable to the audience in a brief time, while leaving room for emotional depth. To determine the design for such a character, there are several things to consider. Firstly, brevity and simplicity are essential characteristics. A character that is not overloaded with details is more memorable. The simplicity of forms that can evoke associations makes it more recognisable and easier to perceive. Such a design emphasises the character's traits, which allows the audience to follow their development with engagement. Secondly, memorability is crucial: too simple a design can make a character get lost among other characters. However, expressiveness can also be determined by bright elements in the design, such as behaviour and appearance features. It can also be influenced by the choice of a colour palette that emphasises an emotional state or reinforces the story. One can also use special details, such as a favourite object or a unique habit, which can add to the character's complexity.

ARCHETYPES, DYNAMICS, AND STRUCTURE OF IMAGE CREATION

To define the role of a character visually, they must have their "quick identification". One of these elements is an archetype – a universal image or type that is deeply rooted in the collective unconscious of humanity. Carl Jung developed this concept (Jung, 2018). Archetypes are the basis for creating characters, stories, and interactions in art, literature, film, and other forms of creativity. They evoke understandable emotions in people because they correspond to a shared cultural and psychological experience. Therefore, to make a character more recognisable, a strong archetype is created for them, making them understandable through their actions or appearance. Thus, the audience can instantly identify the character through the understandable signs of their archetype.

According to the generalised interpretation of archetypes based on the descriptions in Jung's book (Jung, 2018), there are nine main types. The Persona archetype reflects the social mask of the hero – the image that the character shows outwardly, not always corresponding to their essence. The Shadow archetype embodies hidden or repressed personality traits, such as aggression or fears, which can manifest themselves in stressful or critical situations. The Self archetype symbolises the integrated integrity of the hero – the unity of their conscious and unconscious. The Mother archetype, or the Goddess archetype, appears as the personification of care, protection, gentleness, and compassion. It is opposed to the Wise Old Man archetype, which is associated with a fatherly figure – experienced, authoritative, capable of mentoring. The Anima and Animus,

respectively, represent the feminine and masculine in the psyche of the individual, specifically as internal images that are often associated with the ideals of what is desired. The Trickster archetype represents a chaotic, dishonest character who breaks the rules and provokes conflicts. The Shapeshifter is someone who undergoes a significant transformation over the course of the narrative, changing their characteristics or moral guidelines. The Harbinger archetype is associated with characters who bring unexpected or disturbing news. The Femme Fatale is the personification of an attractive but dangerous force that is both admirable and threatening.

The character's transition between archetypes or the combination of several archetypes in them is a vital characteristic of development. Jung pointed out the need to include four archetypes (hero, villain, mentor, and object of desire) that form two pairs of opposites. The use of archetypes simplifies the creation of characters and facilitates the perception of the story. Gestures and facial expressions can be used to distinguish between characters with the same archetype. In a short format, movements and emotions convey more than words. Animators can use exaggerated facial expressions or behaviour to enhance understanding. These elements also include emotional depth in a short form. Character development can be achieved through context, which means that instead of long explanations, an environment or event is used to reveal the character. Thus, at the beginning, the character has their unique look and personality, but they cannot be stable all the time. As the story progresses, the character's personality and philosophy can be greatly affected, because circumstances and other characters influence the protagonist, and this happens due to the plot dynamics. The protagonist must change or have new experiences, even in a short story. This can be a change in emotional state or a rethinking of their purpose. However, as the plot develops, the short film should not lose touch with the main theme of the film. The character and the plot should reflect and convey the main idea and message of the film without losing the primary purpose. That is, if the theme is about friendship, then the character can have traits that emphasise this, such as interaction with other characters. If the film is about overcoming hardships, the character can start from a weak position but achieve inner strength.

One of the elements that can also be used is a minimum of dialogue. Short films often use non-verbal means of communication (gestures, music, sounds) to save time and maintain versatility. This also includes the individuality of the voice, which can highlight and emphasise the personality of the protagonist. Another prominent element is interaction with the environment, where the character must interact with the world around them so that their reactions and actions reinforce and correspond to the plot. Notably, creating a character for a short film means striking a balance between brevity, expressiveness, and depth. The character must be visually striking, emotionally accessible, and closely related to the main theme of the artistic work. In this format, every detail matters, because they form the complete image of the character in the eyes of the audience.

To understand the process of creating a character, it is worth highlighting its main stages. At the initial stage of character development, the target audience is determined. It is crucial to consider the genre features, stylistic decisions, and emotional impact that the character should have on the audience. Accordingly, the role of the character in the story is analysed: their relationship to the narrative structure, their place in the plot composition, and their function in the story. It is determined whether the character is the protagonist, antagonist, or a secondary character, which directly affects the development of their personality, behavioural patterns, and visual image. The next stage is the formation of the character's personal features, which includes determining their motivation, values, internal conflicts, fears, and aspirations. At this stage, potential plot transformations of the character are analysed, which can lead to changes in their personality or reveal its hidden aspects. For example, a secondary character who initially appears to be the protagonist's ally may later turn out to be their antagonist, or, conversely, an adversary at the beginning of the story may transform into an ally.

After defining the conceptual basis of the character, the development of its visual image begins. First, a basic sketch is created that meets the established characteristics. At this stage, the project style, silhouette features, proportions, colour scheme, and visual elements that emphasise the character's personality are determined. A prominent aspect is to factor in the specific cultural, professional, and social features of the world where the character exists, which contributes to a holistic and authentic image. If necessary, supplementary concepts are developed that reflect the character in different periods of their life, as well as key events that influenced their development. The final stage is to detail and refine the image. The characteristic features that distinguish the character from others are identified: manner of speech, style of behaviour, symbolic or characteristic elements of appearance. Subsequently, the authors assess whether the created image is consistent with the original concept and the expected reaction of the audience. If necessary, adjustments are made to ensure maximum correspondence with the specified characteristics and impact on the viewers.

Despite the basic rules for creating a harmonious design, there will always be exceptions when designs are not quite successful and are often forgotten by the audience, while successful ones often stay memorable. As an example, it is worth considering the works of large studios to analyse their successful character designs that stay recognisable to many viewers. One of such characters is Mickey Mouse (Fig. 2) from the

Disney studio, who is known all over the world and is a kind of representative of the studio.

Figure 2. First design of Mickey Mouse, Disney studio, 1928
Source: Disney Pictures: Mickey Mouse (n.d.)

Since the Disney studio originally produced black-and-white projects, the colour palette itself also consisted of black and white with clear lines and shapes. It also helps to make the character emotionally expressive, with a strong emphasis on the eyes and clear facial expressions. It is thanks to this clear and uncomplicated design that Mickey Mouse is remembered by viewers, especially children. Even though the works became coloured over time and 3D technologies were employed, the design of the character itself did not undergo significant changes. The striking design elements were the shorts, which were made in red, and the shoes, which were made in yellow (Fig. 3), making the Mickey Mouse design versatile and adaptable to various formats and media.

Figure 3. Modern Mickey Mouse design, Disney studio, 2006
Source: Modern Mickey Mouse design (n.d.)

This also applies to many other early Disney characters who were transferred to new formats, adding only colours and not making significant changes, such as Minnie Mouse. A character that is not vastly different from the previous one is Sonic the Hedgehog (Fig. 4) from the eponymous animated work. The character's design itself is also characterised by simplicity of form, but with more complicated shapes. His feature is a dynamic design with bright colours: blue and red, which are associated with speed. Against the background of other characters, which are mostly warm colours, Sonic stands out with a significant amount of cold colour. The silhouette also stands out greatly, making the character easily recognisable with its unique elements, namely spikes and large boots. Such design was developed for a correspondingly older audience, and therefore it was created in a modern and energetic way that attracts young audience. Notably, with the advancement of technology and the transition to 3D, the overall design has not changed, which may indicate its easy adaptability across various media.

Figure 4. Sonic the Hedgehog, TMS Entertainment, 2003
Source: Sonic the Hedgehog (n.d.)

Jack Skellington (Fig. 5) from the animated film The Nightmare Before Christmas is a representative for a more adult audience with a successful design. The work was created using 3D animation technologies and has its unique scary and no less enchanting atmosphere. But even though this character was not created for children, the silhouette and shape in the design are easily recognisable and simplistic with some pronounced elements that are easy to read. As in the style of the artwork itself, the character design is made in a minimalistic, but no less expressive style that emphasises the theme of a Gothic fairy tale. Another thing worth noting is the silhouette, as it has a contrast between a thin body and a large head, which adds to the stylised charm. In terms of contrast, the colour palette, albeit not distinguished by a large variety of colours, contrasts perfectly thanks to shades. At the same time, this character design can be easily adapted to various situations and media due to the versatility of facial expressions.

Figure 5. Jack Skellington, Tim Burton, 1993
Source: The Nightmare Before Christmas pictures: Jack Skellington (n.d.)

Considering the representatives of Ukrainian artistic works, it is worth mentioning such a character as Kotigoroshko (Fig. 6) from the children's fairy tale Adventures of Kotigoroshko and His Friends. Developed as an animated series and based on Ukrainian folklore, which many viewers have known since childhood, the character evokes a sense of national identity. Even though the design looks simplistic, it has significant elements that suggest the personality of the characters and their principal features. The characters have a heroic design with traditional elements (vyshyvanka shirt, etc.) and bright colours that contrast with each other. The characters are portrayed as positive heroes with a motivating image that is easily and successfully adapted for a children's audience.

Figure 6. Adventures of Kotigoroshko and His Friends, Ukranimafilm Studio, 2014
Source: "Adventures of Kotigoroshko" campaign for users of the "Children's World" portal (n.d.)

Considering newer projects, The Guardians of The Galaxy series of films by Marvel Studios deserves attention, where one of the characters is Groot (Fig. 7). His design stands out for its simplicity and uniqueness and is based on a plant texture that creates an association with nature. Furthermore, the character stands out not only for its design, but also for the feature that is associated with a limited vocabulary consisting of the phrase "I am Groot". This is compensated for by the character's rich facial expressions and gestures, and during the plot he is helped to reveal himself by other characters in the film, which makes it much easier to understand the character. Additionally, Groot is amiable to many viewers due to his naive nature and loyalty.

Figure 7. Groot, Marvel Studios, 2014
Source: Marvel pictures: Groot (n.d.)

When discussing natural motifs, a character like Mavka (Fig. 8) from the "Mavka. The Forest Song" animation project by Animagrad animation studio can also be used as an example. Although many fans of the project preferred the original design, the current one was also well-received by many viewers. What made the design of Mavka stand out was that the design was based on Ukrainian culture and natural themes, with some emphasis on environmental awareness; natural motifs and organic elements can be traced in the character's design, which are in harmony with the refined facial features, such as floral motifs on the dress, green hair reflecting elements of vegetation, emphasising the connection with nature. This has its own harmony and symbolism, because the colour palette is quite soft, with predominantly cool and warm colour accents that add natural charm. It is also worth mentioning the detailed texture and visual expressiveness, with the character embodying the mysticism and beauty of folklore images in a modern interpretation. Although the character's silhouette is somewhat reminiscent of modern Disney models, this does not prevent it from expressing the emotional depth of the character and her story, which resonates with a modern audience.

Figure 8. Mavka, Animagrad studio, 2023
Source: "Mavka" outperformed "Avatar… (n.d.)

However, it is not just animation projects that have examples of successful character designs; it is also worth considering video game characters, which are presently also distinguished by their themes, style, and design. One representative of the gaming industry is Jett (Fig. 9) from the game Valorant by Riot Games. Character design in such projects requires the creation of recognisable images with unique characteristics. Jett is distinguished by her silhouette, hairstyle, and colour scheme, which emphasises her speed and lightness. Her design combines visual expressiveness with technical optimisation for dynamic gameplay. The creators also factored in the cultural adaptation for a global audience and consistency with the overall style of the game, which combines futuristic technology with bright, stylised graphics.

Figure 9. Jett, Riot Games, 2020
Source: Jett (n.d.)

Jett's design is sophisticated, with a look that matches her abilities, as well as clothing and weapons with technological elements that emphasise her playstyle. The choice of colours – blue, white, and grey – plays a notable role, conveying cold confidence and lightness. Jett's short white hair not only makes her easily recognisable but also gives her a modern and rebellious look. Notably, Jett is from South Korea and her design contains subtle cultural references, as well as her cheeky smile and casual demeanour reflect her rebellious and self-assured nature. The design features are designed with the gaming audience in mind, with a strong emphasis on branded abilities. As a result, Jett from Valorant is one of the most recognisable characters in the game, and her design was created with the unique requirements of a shooter focused on team tactics and visual variety in mind.

Thus, the research findings confirmed that effective character design is based on simplicity, recognisability, emotional expressiveness, and relevance to the cultural context. These characteristics can be traced in most of the analysed images – from the stylised Mickey Mouse to the modern Jett from Valorant. A. Seleznyova (2024) and Y. Eldris *et al.* (2023) presented analogous conclusions, emphasising the significance of a concise visual image and stylisation to create a bright and memorable character. At the same time, the present study paid special attention to the relevance of the design to the cultural context.

Greater depth in the analysis of the character creation process was provided by the results of recent research, which should be considered in the context of multimedia practices. O. Berlach & O. Lesyk-Bondaruk (2020) focused on the artistic and technological aspects of vector animation, emphasising the need for harmony between creative intent and technical implementation. The researchers highlighted the significance

of simplifying the shape, colour schemes, and stylisation to achieve character expressiveness in the digital environment. Analogous approaches are also observed in projects with a short runtime, where the conciseness of the design is crucial. O. Levadnyi *et al.* (2021) focused on the imaginative potential of mascots, exploring them as culturally marked symbols in education, economics, and sports. Particular attention was paid to the character's ability to represent national identities in a global context. These conclusions correlate with contemporary approaches to cultural representation in design, which can be observed, specifically, in the cases of Ukrainian characters such as Mavka or Kotigoroshko. N.S. Vergunova & E.S. Stepanenko (2021) focused on the creation of concept art in computer games, with an emphasis on the design's compliance with the atmosphere and emotional tone of the project. The issues of detail and stylistic consistency are crucial in achieving an immersive effect, which is significant not only in video games but also in short animation.

L. Chen & R. Khynevych (2024) approached character design in the context of cultural self-sufficiency by analysing the visual solutions of Chinese animations. The researchers pointed out the ability of design to translate traditional cultural narratives through modern art forms, which contributes to the innovative transformation of heritage. This approach is especially relevant in projects where the character is a carrier of a cultural code. O. Levadnyi *et al.* (2021) and K.T. Nguyen *et al.* (2023) examined the aesthetic evolution of the character in animation, addressing the rethinking of the ideals of beauty and heroism. Changes in design reflect not only aesthetic trends, but also socio-cultural transformations, which indicates the character's relationship with the current social discourse. Analogous trends can be traced in global design, where characters should reflect the values of the modern time. Thus, these sources expanded the theoretical framework of the present study, emphasising the value of stylistic consistency, cultural identity, technological optimisation, and psychological expressiveness in character design. By considering these approaches, it is possible to form a multifaceted image that effectively communicates with the audience in various formats, from animation to interactive media.

The findings of U.K. Nasution & A. Rahmi (2024) focused on shape as a carrier of symbolism, which is consistent with the above observations on the role of silhouette and gestures in short form. O.S. Vasylieva *et al.* (2021) emphasised the significance of adaptive design, which was also confirmed in the presented analysis, specifically, by the examples of Groot and Sonic. The difference from the studies of M. Lataifeh *et al.* (2023)

and M. Tang & Y. Chen (2024) lies in the focus: the present study analysed implemented designs, while the above-mentioned researchers investigated automated methods of image generation. However, a clear visual code is crucial for both studies. Thus, the results of the analysis were consistent with the key trends in the scientific literature, while expanding them through a comparative approach and an emphasis on cross-format character adaptation.

CONCLUSIONS

The character is one of the key elements in multimedia projects, as it is through them that the viewer or user establishes an emotional connection with the artistic work. An effective character design is created at the intersection of aesthetics, functionality, cultural symbolism, and the image's communicative ability. A crucial factor in the development process is the determination of the character's environment, which directly affects their appearance, personality, behaviour, and plot role. The findings of the present study revealed that the most effective designs have shared features: a recognisable silhouette, minimalistic but expressive shape, clear colour palette, characteristic accents (hairstyle, accessories, plastic), and compliance with archetypal models. The study found that the most emotionally convincing characters are those who combine simplicity of form with the depth of inner transformation. The analysis of archetypes revealed that it is the clear structure of the image that facilitates the quick identification of the character by the viewer. Particular attention was paid to the typology of characters in terms of their functional load and the degree of influence on the plot dynamics. Specifically, the study highlighted the role of design conciseness for short formats, where the time to reveal the character is limited. The analysis of examples from animation and video games confirmed that the adaptability of the image to various formats and platforms is one of the most significant characteristics of a modern character. Prospects for further research include investigating the effects of artificial intelligence on character generation, algorithmisation of design individualisation, and research into viewer interaction with the character in VR/AR environments.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None.

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Формування візуального образу персонажа у мультимедійних проєктах

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Анотація. У сучасному інформаційному суспільстві дизайн персонажа відіграє ключову роль у формуванні візуальної культури та ефективної комунікації в медіапросторі. Персонажі стають провідниками смислів, символами брендів, елементами наративу, що впливають на емоційне сприйняття аудиторії. Актуальність теми дослідження зумовлена стрімким розвитком цифрових технологій, інтеграцією візуального контенту в різні сфери (від освіти до реклами) та зростанням ролі персонажів у цифрових комунікаціях, де важлива не лише естетика, а й психологічна переконливість образу. Метою дослідження був розгляд дизайну персонажа як важливого елементу мультимедійних проєктів, аналіз анімаційних робіт та виявлення ключових етапів, що впливають на формування візуального образу. У роботі застосовано комплексний підхід, що поєднує візуальний, порівняльний і контент-аналіз, типологізацію та дескриптивні методи. Було досліджено процес створення та розвитку дизайну персонажів в анімаційних фільмах, відеоіграх та інших мультимедійних продуктах. Проаналізовано художні, технічні й концептуальні рішення, що використовуються дизайнерами, а також визначено критерії ефективного візуального образу, такі як впізнаваність, емоційна виразність, адаптивність і стилістична відповідність контексту. Окрему увагу приділено впливу культурних, соціальних та психологічних факторів на формування персонажів і їхню роль у наративній структурі твору. На основі аналізу семи відомих персонажів різних епох, стилів і форматів зроблено узагальнення щодо ключових ознак успішного дизайну. Визначено, що поєднання простоти форми, культурної символіки та гнучкості дизайну забезпечує емоційний зв'язок з аудиторією та ефективну комунікацію в медіа. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані у практиці дизайну персонажів для анімації, ігор, кіно та інтерактивних медіа

Ключові слова: дизайн персонажа; анімація; мультимедійний дизайн; графічне рішення; емоційна виразність; адаптивність; медіа