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Graphic Design

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND RELIGION

ANALYSIS OF HOLY WEEK POSTERS. CASE STUDIES: SPANISH CAPITALS, 2024

Clara Martínez Martínez¹⁾

Abstract. The main objective of this study is to analyse the graphic design of Holy Week posters from all Spanish provinces in 2024, as well as to examine how the religious, identity and cultural values of each territory are visually represented. To this end, research was conducted based on content analysis methodology, applying a quantitative approach that took the form of an observation sheet designed and applied to a corpus of 52 posters. The criteria for selecting this sample were the year 2024, as this was the most recent, and posters from all provincial capitals in Spain. The results show a strong presence of traditional elements, with a predominance of central religious figures, symmetrical compositions and dark and solemn colour ranges. However, a progressive introduction of contemporary resources is also detected, especially in the typographic treatment and iconographic simplification. There are notable differences between autonomous communities, with Andalusia and Castile and León tending most towards pictorial realism, while other regions experiment with more graphic or minimalist styles.

Keywords: poster; graphic design; visual analysis; Holy Week; cultural identities; tradition.

Resumen. El objetivo principal de este estudio es analizar el diseño gráfico de los carteles de Semana Santa de todas las provincias españolas en 2024, así como examinar cómo se representan visualmente los valores religiosos, identitarios y culturales de cada región. Para ello, se llevó a cabo una investigación mediante análisis de contenido y un enfoque cuantitativo, implementado a través de una ficha de observación diseñada y aplicada a un corpus de 52 carteles. Los criterios de selección de la muestra fueron el año 2024, por ser el más reciente, y la inclusión de carteles de todas las capitales de provincia de España. Los resultados muestran una fuerte presencia de elementos tradicionales, con predominio de figuras religiosas centrales, composiciones simétricas y paletas de colores oscuros y solemnes. Sin embargo, también se detecta una progresiva introducción de recursos contemporáneos, especialmente en el tratamiento tipográfico y la simplificación iconográfica. Se observan diferencias notables entre las comunidades autónomas: Andalucía y Castilla y León muestran la mayor tendencia hacia el realismo pictórico, mientras que otras regiones experimentan con estilos más gráficos o minimalistas.

Palabras clave: cartel; diseño gráfico; análisis visual; Semana Santa; identidades culturales; tradición.

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1. INTRODUCTION.
OBJECTIVES AND
HYPOTHESES

This project stems from an interest in studying the blend of graphic design and religion, focusing on designs linked to Holy Week in Spain: the cofrade poster. As an element of representation, it is a fundamental tool for understanding how faith, local identity and tradition are communicated visually.

The current state of affairs reveals that, although there is research focused on religious iconography or the history of posters, studies that analyse religious brotherhood posters from a graphic and contemporary perspective are scarce. Therefore, this work aims to provide a critical look at this visual production, with an academic and up-to-date approach.

Advertising posters have historically been a fundamental tool in visual communication, evolving from inscriptions on stone in ancient times to become an artistic and persuasive medium in the contemporary era. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century and the development of lithography in the 19th century marked key milestones in their expansion (Godoy, 2008). Throughout the 20th century, the poster incorporated influences from the artistic avant-garde, establishing itself as an expressive medium that combines art, design and communication strategy (Satué, 1999). In Spain, posters have reflected the country's cultural and political identity, being used both in propaganda and in traditional festivities.

In this context, the cofrade poster—linked to Holy Week—represents a unique manifestation of this evolution. According to Sánchez Gúzman (1982), as early as the Middle Ages, the Church used handwritten or woodcut announcements for fundraising and convocation purposes. In Spain, the use of this type of poster has been documented since the 17th century, initially produced by the brotherhoods themselves. Over time, this practice has become professionalised, incorporating artists and designers through competitions. Thus, the religious brotherhood poster has gone from being a simple informational tool to a key piece of religious and cultural communication, maintaining its relevance in both physical and digital environments.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the composition of the elements and techniques used in Holy Week posters in 2024.
2. To observe how the religious brotherhood poster adapts to changing times.
3. To examine the presence of cultural elements specific to each city.
4. To determine the graphic differences between the religious brotherhood elements in different regions of Spain.
5. Provide an analytical model for religious brotherhood posters.
6. Investigate the origin and evolution of religious brotherhood posters.

1.2 HYPOTHESES

- H.1. There are differences between the posters of the different regions of Spain.
- H.2. Due to new technologies, the Holy Week poster has evolved, however, traditional elements are still present.
- H.3. Photography predominates over illustration in today's posters.
- H.4. There is a tendency toward conceptual representation at the expense of realism.
- H.5. There is an attempt to spark the interest of younger generations, and this is evident in the graphic language.
- H.6. In addition to religious figures, elements specific to the city, such as monuments and landscapes, appear.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on quantitative content analysis, a widely used method in studies that allows for the systematic examination of the characteristics of a set of visual elements, in this case, the Holy Week posters of the Spanish provinces in 2024.

Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as a research technique that allows replicable and valid inferences to be made from data within its context. In the quantitative approach, this method focuses on measuring observable elements, such as the frequency of appearance of certain colours, fonts, compositions or symbols in the posters analysed. Its rigorous and systematic structure makes it an objective and reliable tool for identifying visual patterns and trends within a large set of images.

In relation to this technique, Hernández Sampieri (2020) adds that quantitative analysis is an approach based on the collection of numerical data and its subsequent statistical analysis to identify trends and correlations. This approach reduces researcher subjectivity by providing measurable and replicable results. In the context of this research, the use of quantifiable data facilitates the establishment of relationships between the visual characteristics of the posters and their communicative impact.

The choice of quantitative content analysis responds to the need to identify patterns and variations in the design of Holy Week posters, allowing for an objective evaluation of the hypotheses proposed in this research. This method makes it possible to analyse whether there are significant differences between the different regions of Spain in terms of visual composition, symbolism and graphic resources used.

Furthermore, given that one of the hypotheses maintains that, despite technological developments, posters continue to retain traditional elements, quantitative analysis facilitates the measurement of the presence of these elements in comparison with more contemporary resources. Similarly, when evaluating whether photography predominates over illus-

tration and whether there is a trend towards conceptual representation over realism, this approach allows for the accurate quantification of these characteristics within a broad sample of posters.

Another key aspect of this research is to analyse whether the graphic language of the posters is aimed at capturing the attention of a younger audience. Through quantitative analysis, the presence of modern graphic elements, striking colour palettes and innovative typographies can be measured. Finally, the hypothesis that the posters include elements representative of each city, such as monuments or urban landscapes, can also be validated by quantifying these elements in the different posters analysed.

In short, quantitative content analysis provides the appropriate structure for objectively comparing the different graphic aspects of the posters, ensuring that the results obtained are replicable, measurable, and statistically significant. This methodology not only allows the conclusions of this study to be based on verifiable data, but also provides a useful analytical framework for future research on graphic design and visual communication.

Below is the used analysis sheet matrix:

IDENTIFICATION CODE: 01

CITY:

ARTIST:

TECHNIQUE

PAINTING AND ILLUSTRATION
TECHNIQUES:

- Watercolor
- Oil
- Acrylic
- Ink
- Mixed
- Sculpture

GRAPHIC AND DIGITAL
TECHNIQUES:

- Airbrush
- Collage
- Digital illustration
- Color photograph
- Photomontage
- Artificial intelligence (AI)

STYLE AND REPRESENTATION

ARTISTIC STYLE:	TYPE OF REPRESENTATION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Baroque– Classicism– Art Nouveau– Art Deco– Expressionism– Abstract Expressionism– Cubism– Surrealism– Constructivism– Pop Art– High-tech– Graffiti– New wave graphic design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Realistic– Conceptual– Mixed

VISUAL COMPOSITION

COMPOSITION:	TYPES OF PLANS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Symmetrical– Rule of thirds– Golden ratio– Law of the gaze– Odd numbers– Guide lines– Diagonals– Patterns– Natural landmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Panorama– General– American– Figure– Half– Medio close-up– Close-up

TYPEFACES:	PREDOMINANT COLORS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– SERIF<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incised/lapidaryAncient RomanModern RomanEgyptian– SANS-SERIF<ul style="list-style-type: none">GrotesqueGeometricHumanists– SCRIPT/MANUSCRIPT– GOTHIC– DECORATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Cold:<ul style="list-style-type: none">BlueGreenPurpleBlack– Warm:<ul style="list-style-type: none">RedYellow/GoldLandOrangeWhite

ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS

CHARACTERS:	RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Christ– Virgin– Other Saints– Angel– Romano– Penitent– Nazarene– Woman in a mantilla– Acolyte– Costalero– Musician– Foreman– Priest– Public– Animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Rosario– Crown of thorns– Feet of Christ– Nails– Cruz– Corona– Powers– Candle– Incense– Sheet– Lighthouse– Chalice– Sanctuary– Custody– Medal– Vases– Candlesticks– Palio– Cloak– Throne– In the past– Hairpins
VEXILLOLOGY:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Flag– Coat of arms– Banner– Symbol	

ENVIRONMENT AND SCENARIOS

MONUMENTS:	LANDSCAPE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Cathedral– Church– Castillo– Tower– Bridge– Arch– Plaza– Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Sky– Officer– Sun– Stars– Mountain– Mar– Lake– River– urban complex– Domestic environment– Market– Street
PLANT ELEMENTS:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Tree– Stem– Remaining– Flores– Petals– Leaves– Plants	

The analysis was carried out on a corpus of 52 posters. The criteria for selecting this sample were those published for Easter 2024, as this is the most recent year for the current study, and they belonged to all the provincial capitals in Spain.

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Figure 1
Holy Week posters 2024



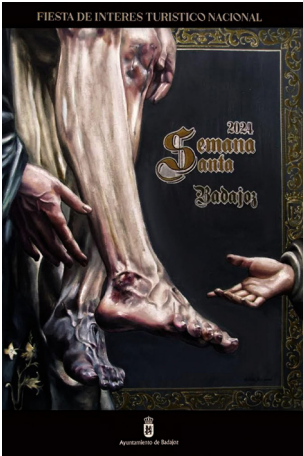
Note. Albacete



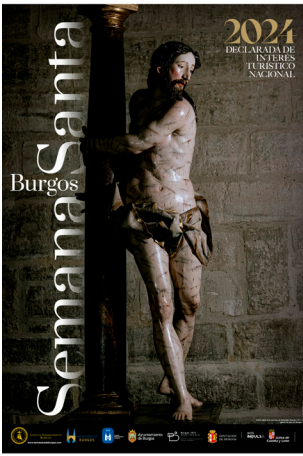
Note. Ávila



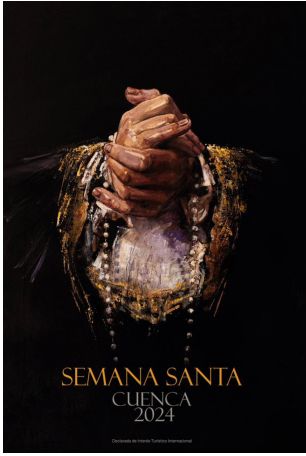
Note. Sevilla



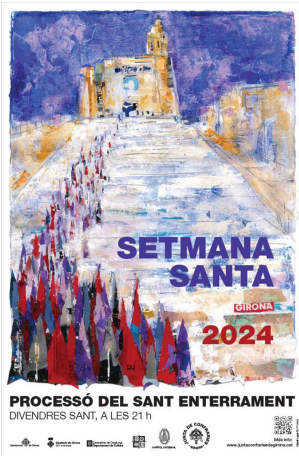
Note. Badajoz



Note. Burgos



Note. Cuenca



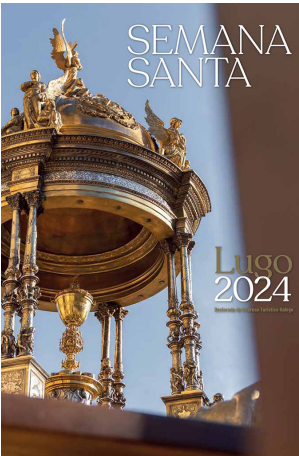
Note. Girona



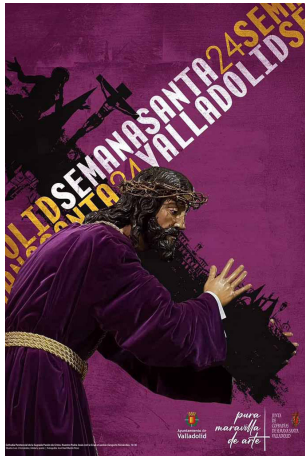
Note. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria



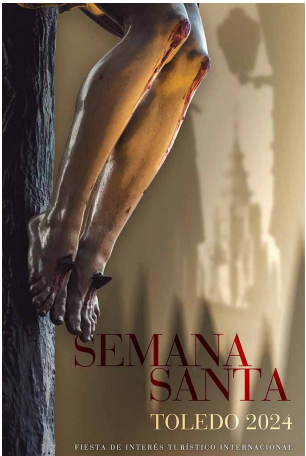
Note. Granada



Note. Lugo



Note. Valladolid



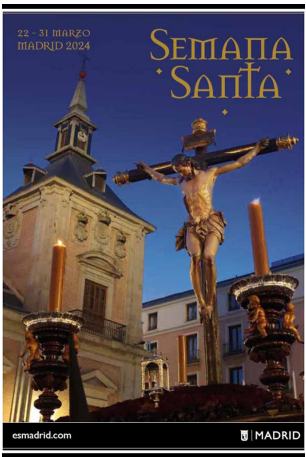
Note. Albacete



Note. Teruel



Note. Salamanca



Note. Madrid

3. RESULTS

Figure 2
Technique

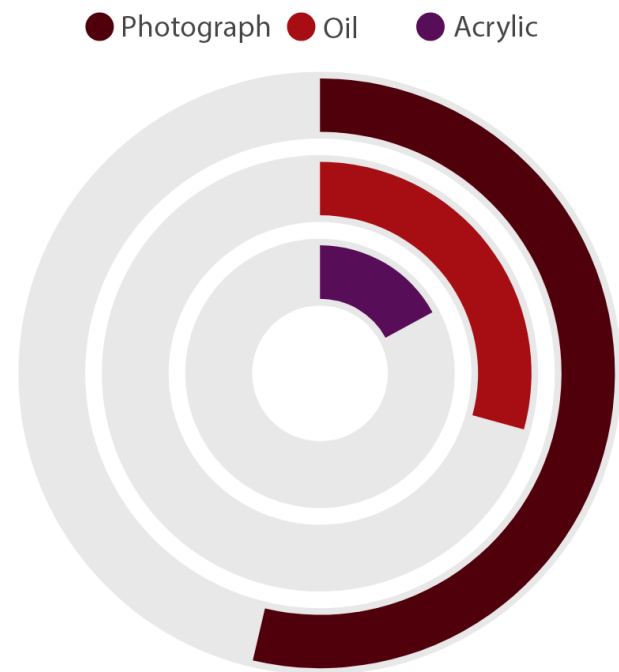


Figure 3
Representation

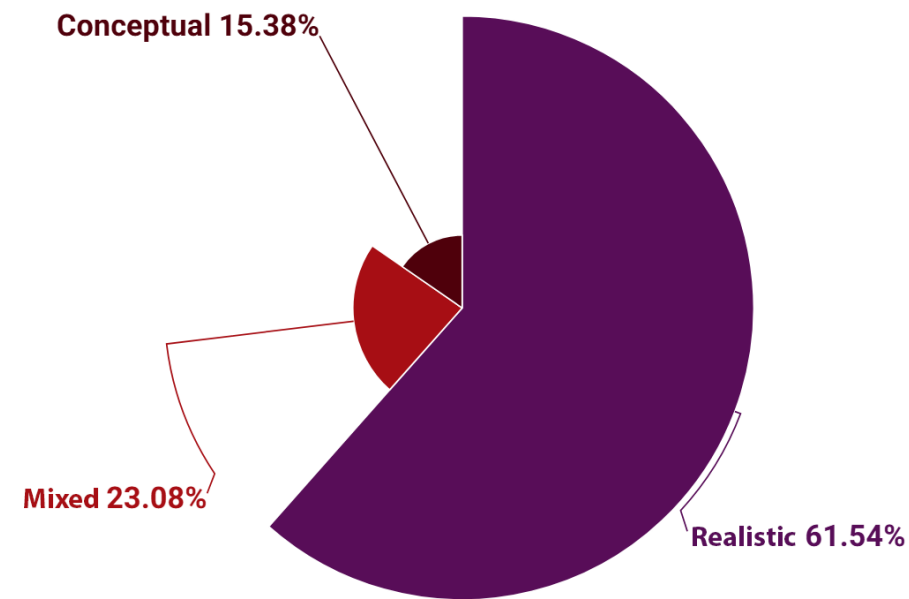


Figure 4
Typography

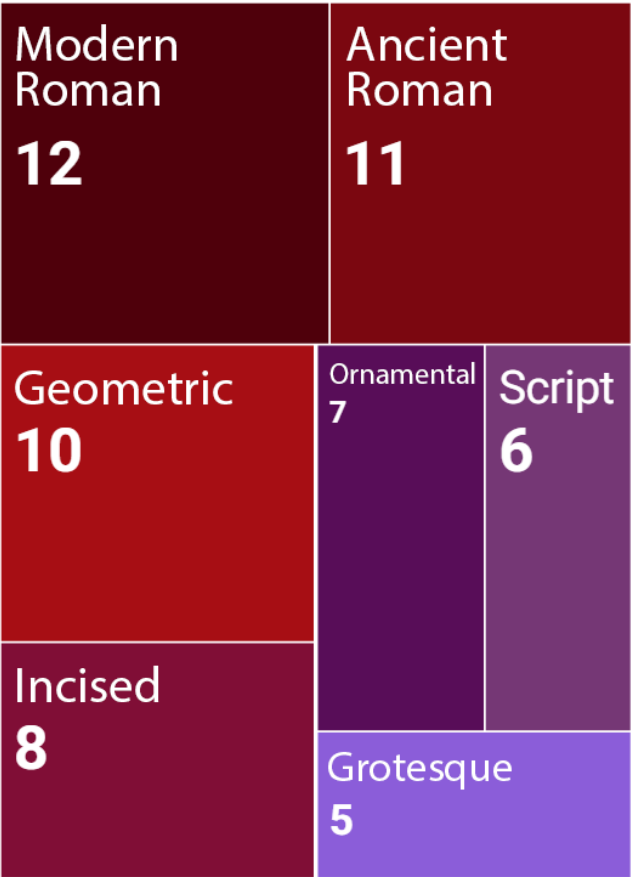


Figure 5
Characters

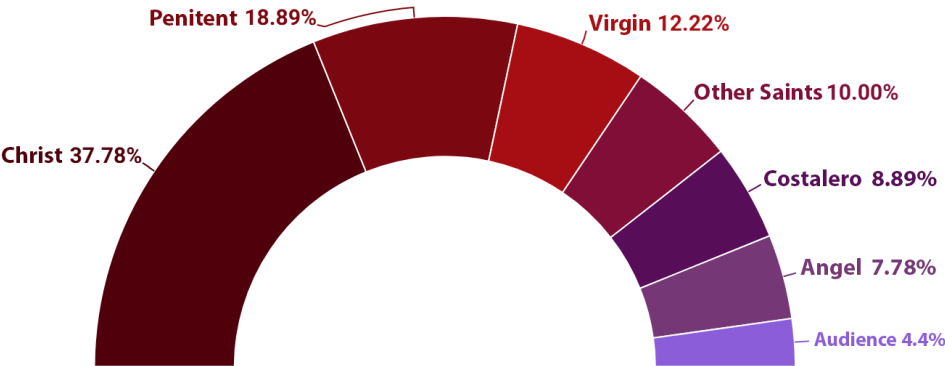


Figure 6
Monuments

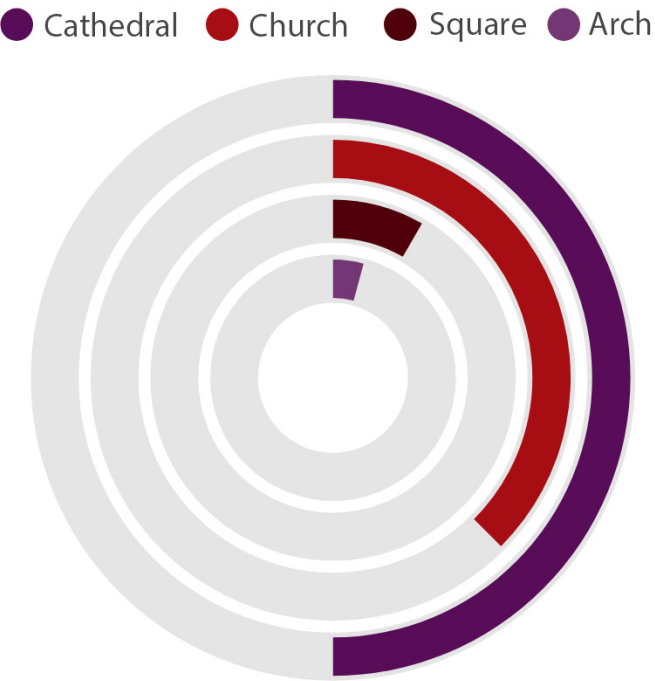
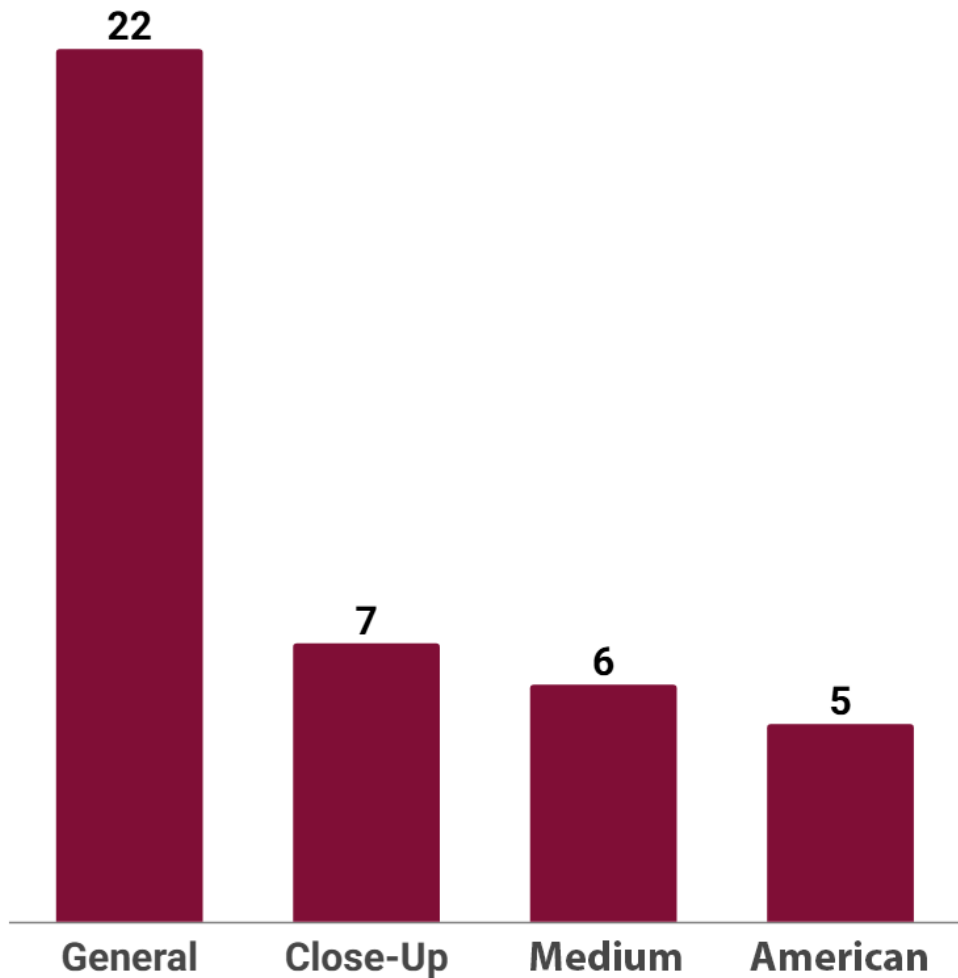


Figure 7
Landscape



Figure 8
Plan types



Throughout the project, the objectives set have been satisfactorily achieved, providing a current and detailed overview of religious brotherhood posters in Spain. The analysis has identified the main graphic, symbolic and compositional characteristics of the 2024 Holy Week posters, as well as highlighting the cultural elements specific to each province. In addition, a specific analysis sheet has been designed that may be useful for future research in the field of graphic design and religious visual communication.

With regard to the hypotheses, four have been confirmed, one has been partially verified and another has not been validated. Clear

differences between Spanish regions in terms of visual style, graphic resources and symbolic representation have been demonstrated. For example, in Andalusia, a baroque and realistic aesthetic predominates, with dark backgrounds, highly dramatic photography and references to the sea; while in communities such as Catalonia and Navarre, more conceptual proposals can be observed, with less direct religious content and a greater focus on landscape or contemporary themes.

The coexistence of new technologies and traditional techniques has also been noted, with digital photography being the predominant technique, although media such as oil

painting still persist, especially in the centre of the peninsula. Illustration appears to a lesser extent and is usually associated with more symbolic or stylised approaches.

On the other hand, although there are occasional attempts to modernise the visual language to attract young audiences, in general a sober aesthetic linked to tradition is maintained. Finally, the frequent inclusion of urban and architectural elements that reinforce local identity and the link with the territory has been confirmed.

Overall, the results obtained not only validate the initial hypotheses, but also open up new avenues for reflection on the role of graphic design in the representation of religion. The trends observed reflect a balance between tradition and innovation, and show how religious posters continue to be a vehicle of cultural expression deeply rooted in the collective imagination of each region.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the proposed hypotheses, four of the six were confirmed.

The initial hypothesis (H1), which proposed the existence of differences between posters from different regions of Spain, was confirmed. The study reveals notable variations in visual style, use of color, symbolism, and composition. For example, in Andalusia, a strong presence of the Baroque style is observed, with realistic, dramatic photographic images and a focus on elements related to the sea, accompanied by classic fonts and dark backgrounds. In regions such as Catalonia and Navarre, more conceptual proposals predominate, with less religious symbolism and greater attention to landscape elements or contemporary graphic design. These differences reflect not only different graphic sensibilities but also cultural and religious diversity among the regions.

The second hypothesis (H2), centered on the coexistence of new technologies and traditional elements in the current brotherhood poster, has also been confirmed. Although digital photography is the dominant technique—present in more than 70% of the posters analyzed—the use of traditional techniques such as oil or acrylic is still detected, especially in communities such as Castilla-La Mancha

and Castilla y León. This shows that, although technology has transformed production processes, there is still interest in maintaining techniques that connect with the aesthetic and devotional tradition of Holy Week.

The third hypothesis (H3), which affirmed the predominance of photography over illustration in the current poster, is also confirmed, but deserves further reflection. Photography is clearly the predominant technique, being the most frequently used in 39 of the 52 cases. However, this trend seems to respond to the intention of conveying an image of closeness, realism, and direct devotion. Illustrative techniques, although present, appear to a lesser extent and are usually associated with symbolic or minimalist approaches, as is the case in some proposals from the north of the peninsula.

In contrast, the fourth hypothesis (H4), which suggested a growing trend toward conceptual representations at the expense of realism, has not been validated. Although some posters, such as those from Álava, Barcelona, and Lugo, embrace a more symbolic aesthetic, the vast majority have a realistic approach, focusing on the main religious figure and faithfully represented. Conceptual representation is still an exception within the group and does not constitute a widespread trend.

The fifth hypothesis (H5), referring to a possible intention to attract younger generations through contemporary graphic resources, has been only partially confirmed. While it is true that some posters incorporate elements that we might associate with a modern visual language—such as sans serif fonts, cleaner compositions, or less traditional color schemes—in general, a sober, solemn graphic language strongly linked to the classic visual imagery of Holy Week persists. In other words, there are occasional attempts at aesthetic updating, but this does not represent a notable change.

Finally, the sixth hypothesis (H6), which proposed the recurrent inclusion of urban or architectural elements specific to the city alongside religious iconography, has been largely confirmed. In numerous posters—such as those from Cádiz, Granada, and Salamanca—local monuments, cathedrals, churches, and even emblematic streets are clearly visible,

providing a strong sense of identity and location. These elements serve a dual function: contextualizing the scene and reinforcing the connection between the religious celebration and the community that experiences it.

Overall, the data obtained not only allow us to validate or reject the initial hypotheses, but also open up new avenues for reflection on the current state of religious brotherhood graphic design in Spain. The balance between tradition and innovation, regional diversity, and the symbolic weight of visual elements remain key to understanding the evolution and communicative function of these posters.

In closing, it is worth noting that the analysis allows us to identify certain visual trends according to geographic region. In the south, especially in Andalusia, a traditional and baroque aesthetic predominates, with recurrent use of realistic photography, dark backgrounds, and a clear focus on religious figures. In contrast, in the north—Galicia, Asturias, the Basque Country, and Navarre—more conceptual or sober proposals emerge, with greater presence of landscapes, symbolism, and less conventional compositions. In the central Iberian Peninsula, especially in Castile and León and Castile-La Mancha, a classical and devotional approach is maintained, with some provinces where the use of oil paint and iconography faithful to the traditional religious imagery persist. The Mediterranean region, meanwhile, displays a duality: classic posters coexist with brighter designs that are more open to the urban or natural environment. These differences reflect not only graphic styles but also the cultural, heritage, and emotional significance that Holy Week carries in each region.

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