

SOCIAL ADVERTISING AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING THE ATTITUDES OF CONSUMERS IN LIGHT OF SURVEY RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Social advertising is present in mass media. It's difficult to be indifferent against this kind of advertising. The two main reasons behind the social advertising is the belief that you can influence moral attitudes as well as to each other and that the easiest way to do this by referring to emotions. The social advertising is defined as the process of persuasive communication, whose main aim is to induce socially desirable attitudes or behaviours. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the role of advertising in shaping social attitudes and the way it is perceived by society.

Introduction

Nowadays, no one doubts that advertising influences the consumers' attitudes and purchasing decisions; it shapes their awareness, and sometimes even views. Although advertising is often equated with manipulating the consumer so as to generate benefits, it can also be used for inducing attitudes and behaviors that are socially desirable (Maison and Maliszewski, 2008: 113–120; Maison and Bruin, 2008: 148–172; Prochenko and Stafiej,

2008: 191–196). This kind of advertising is known as social advertising. Its task is not to manipulate human choices, but lead to making conscious and socially responsible decisions.

Social advertising has a tremendous power to influence behavior towards the world around us. Sometimes, all it takes is several seconds to convince people e.g. to help those affected by natural disaster. Such advertising inspires to take action, changes negative attitudes, brings us to making more conscious choices. It is difficult to remain indifferent to social advertising. It is usually accompanied by two conditions: influencing moral attitudes and appealing to emotions.

The aim of this paper was to present the role of social advertising in the shaping of social attitudes and the way of perceiving it by society. In the implementation of the aim the results of research were helpful, which were conducted in the spring of 2014 years on a group of 2,257 respondents. The questionnaire contained 13 questions, the results are based on 1,849 completed questionnaires correctly.

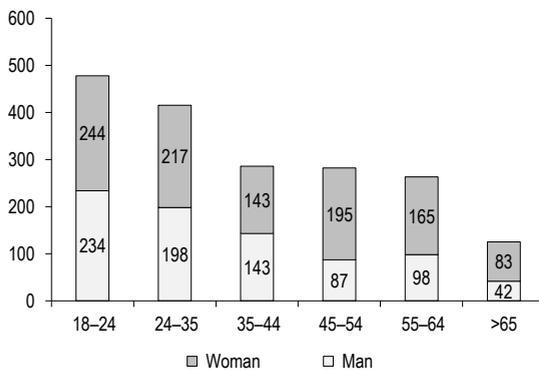


Figure 1 Distribution of respondents according to age

Source: based on own studies.

In the surveyed group there were 1,047 women (57%) and 802 men (43%). The structure of the respondents due to age is shown in Figure 1. Due to the age and sex the structure of the population is consistent to the structure of the country (CSO 2014). The similarity of distributions were tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and the obtained the critical values of the test ($\lambda = 1.027 < \lambda_{0.05} = 1.358$ for age, and $\lambda = 0.943 < \lambda_{0.05} = 1.358$ for sex) led to adopt the hypotheses that the distribution of the number of Polish citizens and persons surveyed due to age and gender are not significantly different from each other. The most numerous group was people aged 18–24 years, another very large group was represented by people aged 25–34 years. Obtained in research the structure and the large number and diversity of respondents, it can be inferred that the test sample can be considered as representative for the country.

Social advertising and change of social attitudes

For many years, advertising has been an integral part of contemporary reality. We come across it everywhere. Advertising is the thing that draws our attention to particular products, and makes us buy them. The strength

and importance of advertising in shaping company's attitudes have already been discovered a long time ago. For some time, however, we have been seeing advertising, whose purpose is not to present a particular product or service, but to draw attention to social problems and offer solutions to deal with them. It means the process of persuasive communication, typically implemented in two ways (Maison and Maliszewski, 2008; Maison and Bruin, 2008; Prochenko and Stafiej, 2008):

- encouraging pro-social behaviors,
- inducing to refrain from undesirable behaviors.

Undesirable behavior should be construed as harmful to individuals subject to influence, and also for their environment: be it social, cultural, economic or political one. Advertising serves the interest of society, and its purpose is to educate, raise awareness about important social issues, change attitudes and behaviors, as well as stimulate positive social change (Izdebski, 2006: 25–31; Ewen, 2008: 64–69). Social advertising is also a “form of a message consisting of raising awareness about a social problem and calling for pro-social behavior” (Statut, 2014; Talarek and Ruzzkawska, 2013).

Social advertisements can be divided on the basis of their content and purpose. In the first case, we deal with advertisements showing a given problem and raising public awareness; in the second case – these are advertisements that use social ideas to promote a particular brand, or are purely social advertisements. The latter is supposed to make us think, sometimes feel moved, cause someone who hears or sees it realize the problem and reflect on it.

An essential element of any social advertisement is the man. After all, they are created by people and for people. Each average consumer sees in it themselves, their family, neighbors, friends, and also ordinary people whom they pass every day on the street or in the supermarket. Another important element of social advertisements is the ability to project events, so that everyone can identify with them.

The main purpose for the broadcasters of social advertisements is to spark in their recipients the need for changing their attitudes (e.g. helping others, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, caring for the environment, etc.). Attitudes that are subject to change due to social advertising are generally firmly connected to traditions and social values. They stem from popular habits and preferences, religion and education. Being deeply rooted in tradition, they are therefore more complex than most consumer attitudes (Maison and Maliszewski, 2008; Maison and Bruin, 2008; Prochenko and Stafiej, 2008).

Changing attitudes can be viewed in two dimensions, of character and strength (Maison and Maliszewski, 2008; Maison and Bruin, 2008; Prochenko and Stafiej, 2008). These dimensions, in general, make it difficult to change attitudes. In the case of character of attitudes, the purpose of social advertising is to change the attitude from neutral or unfavorable to favorable. With regard to strength, the advertising message is focused on strengthening the already existing favorable attitude. In this context, the objective of social advertising is to change attitude into its opposite (for example, negative – the reluctance to persons of different nationalities, on the positive – a positive attitude towards them), or simply change existing behavior (e.g. change of reckless driving to the mild.).

The main difference between social advertising and commercial one is the fact that the former encourages consumers to change their habits, and do not induce them to purchase a specific product (e.g. drug, exercise equipment). Such advertising draws attention to the needs of the needy, or the disabled, the hazards that may be encountered by children using the Internet or carelessly swimming in lakes and pools. It strives to persuade people not to be indifferent, encourages research and disease prevention. Furthermore, it invites us to donate 1% of our

income tax to charitable organizations, etc. Many organizations and companies remind of the sale of alcohol and tobacco products to minors being illegal, or the necessity to use child seats in cars. Social advertisements inform, educate, warn, and encourage socially responsible action. They never offer any product or service (IAB, 2009: 1–10).

Social advertisements are usually aversive, sad or frightening; they talk about issues that cause anxiety and resentment, and which concern matters that most people would rather not think about. And this is why they often make the recipient feel negative.

Due to the fact that social advertising relates to social problems – human intimacy, suffering and moral choices – it most often refers to emotions. It aims to induce positive and pejorative feelings in the recipient, which cannot be achieved without sincerity and authenticity, rather than intellectual coquetry. In order to convince us to change our behaviors, social advertising refers to the sensations and negative emotions, often implementing the system of rewards and punishments. Social advertising achieves positive effects by appealing for compassion – for example, in a situation where one must help others (donate blood, support financially, etc.) – and anxiety, in a bid to change the behavior of individuals (e.g. quitting smoking) (Doliński, 1998: 25–31; Doliński, 2000: 62–114; Doliński, 2003: 11–34; Doliński, 2005: 12–65). It is worth noting that anxiety belongs to the group of the so-called dominant emotions, the occurrence of which leads to behaviors consistent with the universally acceptable standards and principles. Guilt, shame and embarrassment are also considered to be this type of emotions (Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011: 71–107).

Achieving the goals of social advertising requires presenting in them both a superhero, who is the ultimate authority, and an average, ordinary person, such as any of us. While more and more people become aware of the benefits of advertising promoting socially desirable attitudes and behaviors, many of these advertisements still do not fulfill their role. Why? The reasons can be many. They can arise both from over-reliance on intuition and disregard for expertise in this field. They can also (and perhaps primarily) be a consequence of ignorance of the target audience, their expectations and preferences (Youn-Kyung et al., 2001: 41–45).

Social advertising in the eyes of recipients

The distinction between social advertising and commercial seems simple enough, in the study group 84% of respondents correctly defined the term “social advertising”. This group is dominated by women aged 25–34 years, which point concerning the quality of life and treatment of children. This fact is quite easily explicable, women aged 25–34 are often young mothers, hence their greater sensitivity to issues related to children.

Respondents have quite different attitude to social advertising, despite the fact that the dominate group of people with a positive attitude in society, there is a large group of people for whom social ads are neutral (Figure 2).

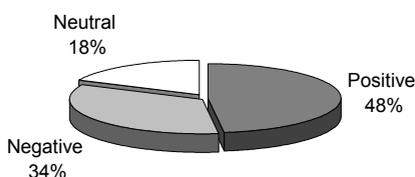


Figure 2. Attitudes towards social advertising

Source: based on own studies.

According to the respondents mostly social advertising can be found on large billboards (43% of respondents), on TV (32% of respondents) and radio (24% of respondents). The billboards were mostly pointed by men aged 35–44 years, coming from large cities (more than 50 thousand inhabitants). They pointed out that they most pay attention to billboards when driving a car to and from work. To social advertising are noticeably least by people aged over 65 years, unless they are related to issues which affect to life of seniors.

The creators of social advertising, and an advertising in general, used a different of methods and techniques to draw the attention of the consumer. It is widely known that the most influence on the consumer strong incentives, thanks to emotions which stimulate, the social advertising are passed in memory. Among the respondents we can see the diversity of gender in relation to the factors that attract the most attention. Women and men in similar way pay attention to the catchy slogan – slogan for a given social campaign (Figure 3). In social advertisement woman often pay attention to specialist and statistical data. Men nearly three times more likely than woman pay attention to who is in the ad (which is known/actor/politician/singer).

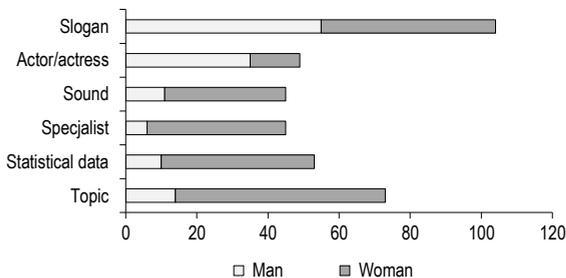


Figure 3. The factor by which we draw attention to social advertising (%)

Source: based on own studies.

Social advertisements relate to different issues, presents many problems. To had their effect, the presentation of which relate to the topic should be different. 69% of the respondents felt that social advertising should stimulate reflection, 14% expect that social advertising will be shocking 11% – funny and the others agreed that it is to be widespread and getting to the widest range of audience.

According to the respondents the most important functions of social advertising are informative and educational. Through them you can give the public, important information related to the majority. Sequentially, respondents pay attention to the persuasive function of social advertising and handling function (Figure 4). The first one is to convince consumers to watch advertisement and forming a specific opinion on the subject. By contrast, the handling function, as the name implies, is aimed at form a false opinion on the topic.

Making the social advertisement the authors want to make that people help each others, led a healthy lifestyle, care about the environment. Social advertising is different from the rest, it does not indicate the product (a drug for a disease, exercise equipment for obesity), only encourages us to change your habits. The correct interpretation of the content of social advertising can, but studies show that does not have to, affect behavioral change. If social advertising has any effect on the consumer, it means that it raised any interest in him and make him perhaps to change their behavior. More than 70% of respondents admit that thanks to social advertising changed their behavior

for short periods (36%) or occasionally (35%). According to 14%, including 3% women, socially advertising do not have any effect on them. Respondents who gave this reply, they can not read properly which brings social advertising. They are neutral for topics presented in social advertising, they do not cause them any emotion.

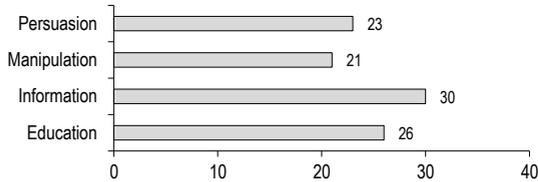


Figure 4. The functions of social advertising (%)

Source: based on own studies.

Social advertisements relate to many aspects of our lives, however, respondents most frequently mentioned as the point: safety on the roads (45% of responses), the fight against violence (42% of responses), prevention care (38% of responses). These topics relate to almost all of us, because many of the respondents granted just such answers.

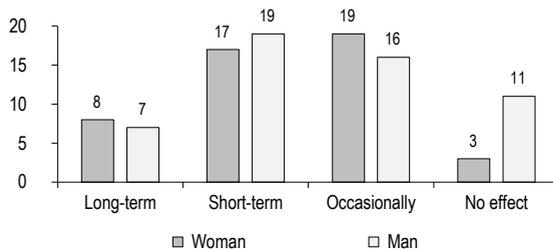


Figure 5. For how long are we willing to change their behavior under the influence of social advertising (%)

Source: based on own studies.

Conclusions

Right topic, not a thing, whether the service can be a hero of advertising. The social advertising is to persuade us to change our behavior. It's such a proposal "to acquire" good deeds. The authors wish to make social ads to viewers or listeners help others, led a healthy lifestyle, care about the environment. Social advertising is different from the other (commercial) that does not indicate the product (a drug for a disease, exercise equipment for obesity), only encourages us to change your habits

Social advertisement occurs in the media almost daily. The development of the media led to the development of advertising, including social advertising that draws attention to the problems of the majority of society. Measuring the effectiveness of social advertising is often more difficult than in the case of commercial advertising.

The study shows that social advertising provides relevant information of the recipient and has an impact on respondents. Attitudes towards social advertising largely depends on what the topic concerned. It is obvious that parents with small children often pay attention to those advertisement that relate to children and persons who have suffered violence, pay attention to the ads on this topic. But we can not clearly answer the question: if whether social advertising is needed today? Additionally, you should note that the insistence ads may discourage consumers and advertising have the opposite effect to that intended.

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