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Multicultural Elements in Press Advertisements – an Analysis of Newsweek Poland

Abstract: *Advertisements are an essential element of marketing and strongly connected with our daily life. Now, in our modern time, the definition of advertisement is changing. Advertisements are becoming not only an instrument for the promotion of products, but also of political parties and cultural events, and even of educational lessons. Marketing advertisements very often use slogans and pictures which are generally recognizable and accepted by consumers. In this way producers and advertisers efficiently influence potential consumers. An analysis of advertisements from Newsweek Polska shows that only a few of them take into account elements of foreign culture, or even our national traditional culture. Could this be clear evidence that in our country the elements of foreign culture are still not recognizable in the eyes of consumers?*

Key words: *advertisement, multiculturalism, slogan, weekly*

Advertisements are a permanent and, from the perspective of marketing, necessary element of our reality. We are familiar with their existence even in places that are controversial from an ethical and cultural point of view. Certainly those places include kindergartens, schools and university buildings, religious and cultural centers and hospitals. Roadside billboards are controversial as well. It will be important for our discussion to remark at this point that billboards along routes include a few multicultural elements. This is fully understandable because international or even local roads are places where we meet people from different cultural and religious origins. The places where we encounter advertisements is not the only problem in our research. The next issue is the definition of advertisement. In this context it is possible to speak about a broad

and a narrow definition. In the narrow sense, advertisements only provide information about a product. This type of promotion has existed since people began the exchange of products [Lisowska-Magdziarz Z., 2006, p. 183; Bajka M., 2008, pp. 180–188]. The broad definition, which now has many supporters, states that advertisements not only inform the audience about the products and the service industry but also convey some ideas [*Reklama*, 2000, p. 185; Watson J., Hill A., 2007, pp. 2–5]. This kind of information concerns political parties, social movements and religious services as well. We have to add at this point with regard to the changing of the definition of advertisements that there is a certain dehumanization in advertising. Our money, which is the result of our hard work, in the language of banking becomes a product which can be the subject of advertising and of competition between banks. Even a human being can advertise himself. More and more often in offices and in management trainings we hear about self promotion.

Now, it is not only producers and consumers who are interested in advertisements. The literature on the subject discusses the history of advertising as well as the educational and even the multicultural meaning of advertisements. Psychologists, sociologists, ethicists and cultural analysts are also interested in advertising. We could even say that today culture must advertise itself. The issue concerns not only popular culture but also high culture. There are more and more critical studies of advertisements, which are approved of by teachers and educationalists who try to minimize their negative influences on children. They have also accepted that there is no possibility to remove advertisements from our modern society. This is why in many works one can find the main idea of using advertisements for educational aims. There are some opportunities to do it. For example, the advertisements inform us not only about new products but also, especially at Christmas time, remind us about our friends and families. At special times, like Children's Day or Mother's Day, advertisements make us more sensitive to the people with whom we are strongly connected. Obviously, by their nature, advertisements always promote a consumer style of life. On the other hand, advertisements not only create consumerism but also use our natural predisposition to acquiring possessions. Perhaps a fundamental law in our European culture is the right to private property and it is in human nature to be an owner. If this is true, then advertisements are not only responsible for the creation of consumerism but also use the fundamental instincts of man, which are strongly connected with our Western culture.

A very important question is the differences between advertisements. In many articles and discussions which deal with the ethical, cultural, historical and educational meaning of advertisements, the authors do not address those differences [Gajlewicz M., 2005, pp 55– 62; Biedroń M., 2007, pp. 167–172;

Dudziak A., 2008, pp 113–123]. But from the point of view of the nature of the media, we must speak about press and television advertisements. The first type contains more information. The second type, which are broadcast on television, are more emotional than the first. In the first case the people who read the advertisements have more time to check the information, to analyze and to understand them. In television spots, the most important aspect is the person or celebrity who promotes the product (Czarnecki P., 2008, pp 209–210). In our discussion it is interesting to note that advertisers promoting Polish banks and factories are engaging foreign actors and well-known people more often now.

The first advertisements were directed to women. Producers discovered that women were most often engaged in buying products [Gorman L., McLean D., 2010, p. 83]. This idea has a foundation in our civilization and culture in which the woman has traditionally been responsible for taking care of the home. Perhaps this is why in the literature there are many works about the negative image of women in advertising. For some time now, we have been witnessing the rapid development of advertisements directed to men. Surely this is proof of the changing of our society in which the rules have been rooted for ages.

The main topic of our discussion is the elements of multiculturalism in magazine advertising. An important question is why the basis of our research is *Newsweek Polska*. First of all, this magazine is one of the most popular. The number of readers is crucial for our research and for the influence of advertisements on the society. The second point is that it is the Polish edition of the very popular American weekly of the same name. Multiculturalism is one of the most important elements of American society. *Newsweek* is a weekly publication. Every issue of the magazine from the year 2011, which is the focus of our attention in this article, has up to one hundred pages. The magazine is very often published with different supplements. But in our analysis the advertisements from supplements are not taken into account. The number of ads is not consistent. It varies from issue to issue. There are rarely more than forty five advertisements, generally no more than thirty. They are of different sizes. Some are full-page, while others are much smaller, even difficult to notice. From time to time, one product is advertised over several pages. For example, one sports newspaper was advertised on nine pages. It is necessary to mention that even *Newsweek* is advertised on its own pages. However, there are some general rules. There were fewer advertisements during the summer months. The number grew after the summer holidays but never reached the high level that appeared before. To sum up our previous discussion we can draw three conclusions. As it was mentioned earlier, advertisements can focus on holidays; however, the advertisements included in *Newsweek Polska* do not use Children's Day and Mother Day's to promote products very often. Like in other publications, in *Newsweek* we find celebrities and well-known people advertising products. For

example, in *Newsweek Polska* Tom Cruise advertises a luxury watch, José Mourinho an electric razor, and Chuck Norris a bank. *Newsweek* follows the developing trend of including advertisements aimed at men.

The aspect of multiculturalism in advertising can be difficult to understand and viewed as controversial [Sułkowski 2002]. However, cultural aspects are becoming an important issue in management. A problem concerns the stereotypical images and the language of slogans which are used to promote every product [Kurcz I., 2003, pp. 112–128; Krzanowska A., 2007, pp. 56–62]. To win a client, an advertiser has to use basic and understandable pictures and language which include the cultural context in which the advertisement is broadcast. Both the pictures and the slogans must take into account the education level and the shared values of the society. That is why the topic of multicultural elements can be provocative. The most understandable elements are the components of our culture. If advertisements used elements of other cultures, it would be a clear sign of the acceptance of those components and perhaps those values by the consumers. Poland was always multicultural. Here in the centre of our country, the Polish, Jewish and German cultures existed together. In the east, the Eastern, Latin, Jewish and Islamic cultures co-existed for centuries. Even before and some years after the end of the Second World War, we witnessed some conflicting elements and the process of the closing of the cultures, but still we were open to different cultural and social groups. Since Poland has joined the European Community the components of Eastern and Western cultures are systematically coming to us. The mosques, synagogues and Orthodox churches have legal rights in our environment. Now, not only the Jewish cemetery and the memory of the participation of the Muslim Tatars in the Polish Wars of the past centuries are a witness of our multiculturalism. In that context of growing multiculturalism the analysis of advertisements has an important role. The question is whether our producers of advertisements are ready to take into account elements of foreign cultures? The people who are responsible for production of advertisements know the market and know our opinions and our ideas. No producer or marketing firm would spend money on advertising without first recognizing the market and the values that are important to the society. The message of the promotional campaign must be clear, recognizable and easy to understand and also take into account the age of the audience, their spending power and their worldview. First, if we meet different cultural components in advertisements, it will be evidence that other cultures can be understood and can coexist. Secondly, and also importantly, the presence of multicultural elements can be used to influence our consciousness. In other words, they are becoming not elements of foreign culture but our culture.

The research emphasizes that today, it is more difficult to determine what is an advertisement and what is not [Perczak, J., 2011, s. 296–300] because some reviews of new films and other programs can be used for promotion of private and public television or radio stations where they are broadcast. Another form of hidden advertisement can be the promotion of new cosmetics, which are presented and written about in special parts of magazines. In special publications devoted to television programming, emphasis on certain programs may also be a form of advertising. Even a game published by a newspaper can be recognized as advertising as well. The winner receives some special products, and the papers publish a photo of the prizes. In this case the prizes are kitchen equipment, bicycles, cars, and electronics. The question is: how many examples of this kind of promotion are presented in the Polish edition of *Newsweek*? In fact, there are not many advertisements like this. They appear only occasionally. Sometimes, in book reviews, the name of the publishing house is clearly emphasized. In *Newsweek* the games are sponsored by newspapers, magazines, telecommunications firms, insurance firms, jewelry shops, exclusive cosmetics shops, Internet portals, private radio stations, bookshops, hotels, home goods stores, and car manufacturers. Occasionally, on athletes' uniforms we find the names of sponsors. But more often products which are sold by exclusive supermarket chains are featured on several pages and in several issues. These include imported cheeses as well as other products such as mustards, sausages, and ham. In the information and articles about new watches, the Internet page where you have the possibility to buy them is emphasized. Another example of hidden advertising is the articles about the history of firms. In the same article, the magazine may publish photos not only of old but also of new products. To summarize, it is important note that “*Nesweek Poland*” does not have many hidden advertisements in comparison to other newspapers and magazines like, for example, “*Tele Tydzień*”.

In our discussion, we will focus on regular advertisements. First, we have to observe that in *Newsweek* there are no ads that use our national and traditional culture in the promotion of Polish products or our companies. This is a general approach. For example, an advertisement of a foreign airline from the Middle East shows several male passengers dressed in T-shirts and athletic shorts. Because we do not find many elements of foreign cultures, we are obliged to analyze the details more closely. First, we will concentrate on the background of the ads. The background of a mobile phone advertisement is an American pub and in another it is the Eiffel Tower. It is interesting that the page informs us about the technical specifications of the tower which are characteristic for the capital of France. In another advertisement for a mobile phone service, the background is a characteristic oil lamp from the Middle East. The background

for several beer and car advertisements is strange-looking foreign mountains. But to recognize that this chain of mountains is foreign the audience must be familiar with geography. This is not the case in the next advertisements; namely, beaches and countryside are used to promote another car. We immediately recognize that they are foreign beaches because rocks rise from the water and because of the long road which is along the beaches. Everybody knows that rocks and wonderful roads are not found along Polish beaches. Cars are also advertised between American skyscrapers. Interestingly, the background for an advertisement for another car is four elephants. We can add that in many cases it is actually difficult to associate one advertisement with one car because three or four of them are advertised on the same page. Perhaps elements of foreign culture can be found in a cosmetics advertisement featuring nearly naked men and women. Nudity is still not acceptable to many parts of Polish society [Gawroński, S., 2009, p. 98]. But that specific promotional ad campaign is directed to the younger generation. For them nudity is more familiar and acceptable. In an advertisement for a private radio station the background is an African desert, and another depicts the North Sea, the contours of the European continent and Great Britain.

Now, we can focus on advertisements for holidays in exotic or distant countries. In the background of one such advertisement there is the old town of Jerusalem and a mosque. An old Orthodox church, something difficult to find in Poland, is presented in the same image. Other elements of the same holiday proposition include dolphins, a clear blue sea, and modern buildings. But another advertisement from the same office and for the same holiday includes only tall modern buildings. The most interesting background used for an advertisement for a vacation in Egypt is not the pyramids but other ancient buildings. We do not recognize them immediately, even after examining the details. In this context we can add the flag of Norway. It is used in an advertisement for natural cosmetics. In short, summarizing this part of our research, we must state that there are not many components of foreign culture in the advertising in *Newsweek Polska*. The presented elements are used to shock or to persuade us to further trawl for information.

Perhaps other components of culture foreign to Poland could include advertisements for shops featuring women in monks' clothes. Although the image of monks' clothing is familiar and still present in Poland, it would be difficult to use it in this way. The same situation occurs with the police uniform in advertisements of one bank which also appear in *Newsweek*. In another spot about the same bank, a Polish celebrity is dressed in an American basketball uniform. Can the boomerang be an element of foreign culture when it is used in an advertisement for office supplies? Undoubtedly, it is a multicultural

element that is recognized in all cultures and countries. Advertisements for private universities use American graduation caps and gowns. But those elements of students' clothes have found their permanent place in our culture. To conclude this part of our analysis we can state that private universities very often advertise in Newsweek.

Looking for the components of foreign culture in Newsweek, we discover new airline connections with the Far East. There we encounter four lions with open mouths and fangs. This is a specific and easily recognizable element of the Far East. A very popular mobile phone service is advertised by Eskimos wearing animal skins. An interesting element is a fishing pole at the end of which is a pair of modern women's shoes. On the cover of another weekly, that is advertised in Newsweek there is a man from the Indonesian islands. Another man in the same advertisement appears to be from an African tribe. Because the main topic of the magazine is medicine, the first man is holding a syringe and the second is wearing a stethoscope. We can also point to the advertisement for a Ceylon tea. The women are dressed in characteristic clothes for that region. A small hummingbird is a distinct component of an advertisement of a modern camera. The ad for a private television station uses a picture of London's Palace of Westminster with an image of the Big Ben Clock Tower, which is very recognizable.

At the end of our article we must deal with slogans. Advertisements not only use slogans which are present in our culture but also create new ones. We are witnessing the gradual influence of ad slogans on our daily language, and so on the language of official communication. This process is slow enough that it depends on the generation and the level of its openness to change. In Newsweek Polska some slogans and mottos are written in Polish, others in English and we also find mixed Polish and English slogans. A very popular and expensive men's clothing company uses only English slogans. It is worth emphasizing that these are not easy English words recognized and understood by everybody, although it would be difficult now to say that the English language is foreign for us. In addition, some English words cannot be replaced by Polish words, and they have found a permanent place in our modern culture. For example, the words "weekend" or "all inclusive" are very popular in our daily conversations and they are used in the advertisements of hotels and phone services, in Newsweek as well. Moreover, it would be difficult to find and replace them with Polish words. This short presentation of slogans shows that it is not easy to find the details of foreign culture in the language of advertising.

Conclusions

As it was said at the beginning of our article, advertisements are an important element of marketing and of our modern culture. To encourage

people to buy products and tie them to the brand, the advertisers are obliged of use clear pictures and understandable slogans. In a multicultural society the advertisements must take into account the social context and the possibility of acceptance of universal values. The advertisements published in *Newsweek Polska* rarely use either the elements of foreign culture or our traditional values. This would be a general trend or evidence of the fact that we still do not recognize foreign values and the Polish consumer is not ready to accept different traditions. But in using some English words and a few components of foreign cultures, the advertisers are conscious of change in our society and the modern trends in advertising.

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