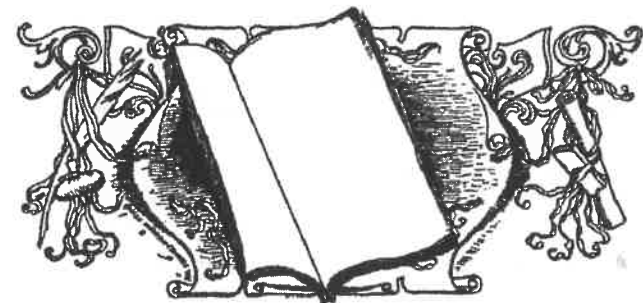


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COLLECTIVISTIC ASPECTS OF ADVOCACY ADVERTISING

Abstract

Both common perceptions and academic reflection on human behaviour reflect the conviction that there are two organisational forms of social life which are usually described in terms of two opposite categories – collectivism and individualism. Whereas advocacy advertising, non-profit activities are associated with altruism and charity, aiming to promote certain values. Advocacy advertising is discussed in the context of various campaigns designed to inform, educate or warn, as well as to encourage, whose core are behaviours or issues considered to be socially important. Advocacy advertising is an instrument employed in a variety of social campaigns. It is therefore an element of a broader process, termed social marketing in the literature on the subject. Another important feature of advocacy advertising is that it is about rejecting current social attitudes and behaviours and shaping their alternatives. The paper examines the question whether it is a truth that message conveyed by advocacy advertising includes the call to share and cultivate the collectivistic concept of the world and human beings?

Key words: individualism, collectivism, advocacy advertising

1. Collectivistic system of meanings

Both common perceptions and academic reflection on human behaviour reflect the conviction that there are two organisational forms of social life: “[o]ne is based on the principle of the supremacy of groups over individuals, whereas the other one – on the principle of the supremacy of individuals over groups.” (Reykowski, 1993, p. 148) They are usually described in terms of two opposite categories – collectivism and individualism (Szlachta, 2004; Moorman, Blakely, 1995).

It is a fundamental principle of the collectivistic concept of the world that the group is a ‘primal being’, whereas the individual is secondary. By this token, groups are ‘independent beings,’ while individuals cannot function outside of groups, because they depend on them. In the collectivistic ap-

proach, the human is approached as a part, a member of a certain social whole, be it a family, clan, nation or a religious community; what is more, individuals are completely subjected to groups. For collectivists, the group is responsible for individuals, the group is the source of the criteria of what is good and evil, and individuals are obliged to work for their groups and make sacrifices for them (Reykowski, 1993, p. 24).

The collectivistic organisation of social life, or rather the belief in such an organisation, produces defined consequences. One of them, practically a fundamental one, is the attitude to surrounding reality. It is expressed in terms of normative opinions, a vision of reality constructed as a response to the question of how things should be. Such normative opinions introduce order to the world perceived by individual minds and constitute a criterion for the assessment of socio-political reality (Marody, 1987, pp. 217–223). It is a collectivistic assumption that the social world is a system of relations between various social wholes. The relations between these wholes can be based on competition, collaboration or mutual interdependence. Additionally, internal relations within groups are based on the identification of their members with the group and its interests. Individuals themselves are defined within the group and assessed in terms of the functions they hold and the degree to which their activities are useful and important for the group objectives to be achieved. In a structure that is operationalised in this manner, collective activities are expected rather than individual ones, as is conformity rather than independent opinions and activities (Skarżyńska, 2005, p. 29). It can thus be said that collectivism is present in those societies that are characterised by strong group bonds and the collective good is supreme (Izdebska, 2009, p. 91).

Collectivism is a set of slogans that defy the rights of individuals and assign superiority, moral authority and unlimited power to society, while depreciating the significance of those who remain outside the group. Egalitarianism prevails in this attitude, which does not assume political equality, however, but rather a metaphysical equality concerning individual attributes and virtues, individual choices and the character of individuals (Wojtyszyn, 2009, pp. 74–75). Collectivism is characterised by tight social bonds in which the individual 'I' is subjected to the objectives and interests of one's 'own'; the clearly identified social category of 'aliens' ('they') switches the psychosocial functioning to the mode of group distance, the lack of pro-social regulations and prejudices (Boski, 1995, pp. 133–134).

There are different interpretations of collectivism. Following G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede, it can be assumed that collectivism concerns cul-

tural values (Hofstede, Hofstede, 2007; Fiske, 2006), the principles serving the purpose of describing the differences between societies in terms of the system of values. Collectivism is composed of three components here: perceived interdependence on others, the belief that collective goals are either identical with individual goals, or that the former should prevail whenever these two are in conflict, and a strong sense of bond with one's own group. In this theoretical proposition, the values of kindness, tradition and conformity are instruments serving the needs of the group (Miluska, 1998, p. 147). Additionally, the preference given to collectivistic values and attitudes constitutes an extremely important dimension of intercultural relations, which can be significant in shaping their course and directly affect their dynamics (Korporowicz, 2007, p. 15).

J. Rentoul makes a direct reference to the world of politics, suggesting that collectivism is a kind of political attitude or attitudes (Rentoul, 1989). Collectivism is approached as a point of view that can be examined by means of analysing the approach to collective services, the rationale behind uniting organisations and their activities and the extent of identification with different collectives (social classes) (Miluska, 1998, p. 147). C. Tilly understands collectivism as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses interests, behaviours and organisations. It is treated as a certain set of attributes of attitudes towards surrounding reality (Tilly, 1978). J. Reykowski approaches collectivism as a kind of concealed normative assumptions (Reykowski, 1990). It is an element of human mentality, understood as a system of general principles applied by individuals and communities while processing information about social life. Collectivism understood as communality¹ is the belief that the good of social groups is superior to the individual good. This is primarily manifested by acknowledging that the common good is a superior value, by stressing the importance of working within a social group, the significance of community, orientation towards collaboration and unity in an organisation and creating the cult of group work (Kozioł, Wojtowicz, 2005, p. 13).

Summing up, collectivism stands for individual goals being subordinated to group goals (collective goals), which is related to the sense of har-

¹ The terms collectivism and communality are used alternatively in this study. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the actual opposition of individualism is not collectivism, but communality, and that this division is of particular importance to Thomists, whose standpoint is not the main field of the present considerations (Gawkowska, 2010, p. 35).

mony, interdependence on others and caring for others. This is expressed in at least seven detailed attributes:

- a) individuals take into account how their decisions influence their partners;
- b) they share material resources;
- c) they share other, intangible, resources, for instance sacrificing their own interesting activities to help partners instead;
- d) they are ready to accept the opinions of their partners;
- e) they care for how they present themselves to others, and fear losing face;
- f) they believe that the outcomes of a given conduct are going to influence both the actors and their partners;
- g) they feel involved in the lives of others (Koralewicz, Ziółkowski, 2003, pp. 26–27).

Therefore, collectivism is strongly related to individual social identity, the sense of belonging to certain groups and to the sense of distance, aversion or conflict between one's own group and the groups of 'others' (Goncalo, Staw, 2006, p. 97).

2. Advocacy advertising and the argument of communality

In advocacy advertising, non-profit activities are associated with altruism and charity, aiming to promote certain values. Advocacy advertising is discussed in the context of various campaigns designed to inform, educate or warn, as well as to encourage, whose core are behaviours or issues considered to be socially important. Advocacy advertising is an instrument employed in a variety of social campaigns. It is therefore an element of a broader process, termed social marketing in the literature on the subject. Another important feature of advocacy advertising is that it is about rejecting current social attitudes and behaviours and shaping their alternatives. Advertising as a persuasive message is primarily intended to alter our way of thinking and perception of reality. It is equally important that the intended change is aimed to serve not only an individual or a given group, but the entire society (Kozłowska, 2008, p. 628). In the opinion of M. Boguni-Borkowska, the purpose of advocacy advertising is "to modify social reality by means of explaining some phenomena, expanding knowledge, making recipients sensitive to certain topics, involving them in social matters that concern all members of society" (Bogunia-Borkowska, 2004, p. 131). Advocacy advertising aims to provoke thought, stimulate

interest in difficult issues, frequently to make people realise that such issues exist, to change attitudes as well as to shape concrete, socially desirable human behaviours and creating social relations. Advocacy advertising constitutes a specific communication process which aims to stimulate behaviours and attitudes in its recipients that are perceived as appropriate by the majority.

The literature on the topic also expresses the view that advocacy advertising is an attempt at steering social consciousness, including individual consciousness. There are also opinions that advocacy advertising is another form of social engineering, which seeks to trigger and control the process of the self-education of society – a collective for whom the 'hyper-reality' of television and advertising has become the main point of reference (Drozdowski, p. 1). The real world is increasingly often replaced by mass media messages which explain how to live, what life style should be considered appropriate and desirable, but which more and more often force recipients to adjust to them, to submit completely and to be incapacitated. The slogans of advocacy advertisements and the visuals presented on billboards, in press adverts and commercials are an additional advertising message with ideological content (albeit not always). Advocacy advertising incessantly promotes a certain behaviour and a certain value system.

Advocacy advertising constitutes a significant instrument of social influence. It is a factor in generating social change of a completely conscious and planned character, in contrast to chaotic and incidental changes. The purpose of advocacy advertising is to modify social reality. Advocacy advertisements convey concrete, frequently specialist, knowledge and reliable information. What is particularly significant for the context of this study, however, is that advocacy advertising makes a frequent reference to the argument of communality. The messages conveyed by advocacy advertising define individuals in terms of their participation in a social community, and the object promoted in such advertising is most often the common good (Parlicki, 2011, pp. 147–150).

This issue is especially stressed by Maria Gołębiwska who writes that "advocacy advertising refers to the argument of communality, to the 'We' of the intersubjective field of communication as the condition of any kind of communication whatsoever, and to the possibility of 'I' existing in the area of what is common, and to the possibility of distinguishing between 'I' and 'You'." The same author observes that "[t]he above mentioned intersubjective communality encompasses the common field of values we

receive with a certain culture. Advocacy advertising treats values as goods but, unlike commercial advertising, it is not concerned with convincing recipients about a single value competing against other values on the market, but aims to convince them of some value that is related to other values and ourselves. In this context, 'We' are defined primarily as recipients (of products, including advertisements) and consumers – creative and active partners in social and cultural communication and partners in the process of objectivisation of subjective assessment, thereby creating an intersubjective field of values. Therefore, advocacy advertising promotes a vision of the universe we inhabit entering relations with others – free as consumers, but obliged to bear some limited responsibility or co-responsibility (the imperative of total responsibility excludes the possibility of making a truly free choice, which concerns participation in and support for different campaigns, including charity campaigns). If we want to, we can feel responsible or co-responsible, which means that we become a part of a selected group and advocacy advertising indicates the possibility of making a free choice to us" (Gołębiewska, 2002, p. 214).

Making reference to values, and even describing them as social values, is a direct implication of their opposition to individual values. If values are assumed to be states of considerable importance which determine the direction of human activities, the antinomy of individual and social values can consist in the fact that what is highly important for a community does not necessarily have the same importance for an individual. This contradiction can even assume the form of a motivational conflict, defined as a social dilemma, where activities beneficial for individuals can be harmful to the community if they are chosen by a majority of its members. What is good and pleasant for individuals can bring about adverse outcomes on a macro scale. Following this line of thought, it can be said that promoting social values frequently means that individuals have to be convinced to accept these values and change their own behaviour in the interest of society (the community) in spite of their short-time gains (Bartkowska-Nowak, p. 32). Individuals are therefore supposed to submit to the community. In advocacy advertising, values are not related to the individual assessment of the world, but to the participation in the social and cultural world of assigning values (Gołębiewska, 2002, p. 215).

If the message conveyed by advocacy advertising is the call for the modification of reality, and if the authors of advocacy advertising care about the improved welfare of individuals belonging to a certain community, it can be ventured to conclude that the sense of advocacy adver-

tising is to depict and improve the social (economic, intellectual and moral) condition. Additionally, this picture is perceived by practically every member of the community (Małeck, 2003, p. 8). Even when advocacy advertising concerns a singular case which calls for intervention, it points to the existence of a certain general (social or national) problem calling for its solution and a commitment to solving it (Gołębiewska, 2002, p. 220).

The strong bond of advocacy advertising with a collective system of meanings concerns more than its content or reference to the field of shared values. One of the basic functions of advocacy advertising, the integrational function, plays an important role. In principle, the integrational function is present only in advocacy advertising, because the main purpose of many advertising campaigns is to define a problem and aid specified groups and their normal (whatever that means) functioning in society. "The 'integrationality' of advocacy advertising, following solely from its content, would lead to an oversimplification because, apart from touching on certain issues, advocacy advertising performs an integrational function, which is understood as a connector among different social groups. The exchange of information and social contacts are a kind of integrational factor" (Leń, 2004, p. 137) which complements the collectivistic aspect of the persuasive message conveyed by advocacy advertising.

In conclusion, the image of reality presented in advocacy advertising (whether on the level of the content, shared values and functions performed by a given message) is as follows: it is an absolutely objective, relatively stable and certain reality where social norms, laws and operating principles are clearly defined. We – participants of this reality – depend on it in every fundamental matter of existence. The individual – as one of the beings present in reality – can only have a limited influence on how it operates. As a consequence, all the knowledge we have access to is given to us in the form of principles from 'above.' By this token, the perception of reality is unified and it becomes possible to determine the manner of operating in this reality. This, however, makes the recipients of this image obliged to register the information conveyed to them almost exclusively in a passive manner. This clearly restricts the image of the world and the possibility to learn about it. Therefore, the position of humans living in this reality is defined as one of individuals integrated with the communality of norms, laws, rules and common (collective), shared values (Sowała, 2007, p. 47), values that constitute components providing the foundation of every message.

Conclusions

In the light of the above presented observations, one can venture the statement that the message conveyed by advocacy advertising includes the call to share and cultivate the collectivistic concept of the world and human beings. Advocacy advertising constitutes the following:

- 1) a call for sacrifices to be made for the sake of the given group and for subjecting to the values that the group is focused around;
- 2) encouragement for individual and group activities always in the name of the community and for its good;
- 3) creation of a certain social reality, where the good of the community and respect for the values this community shares is a superior value that needs to be sought, defended and modified and improved it as far as possible.

It is worth noting here that in the case of collectivism, one can speak about its presence at many levels of organisation: social, political, cultural and economic. Collective messages of advocacy advertising primarily concern the social and cultural reality and its ideology. This gives rise to yet another problem, which has to remain unsolved here, on account of the editorial limitations: is it a justified tendency to touch upon these social issues that include the collective system of meanings and which most often are issues that have been agreed with the public opinion to be worth involvement. "The question is whether mere 'acquiescence' suffices to persuade the recipients of advocacy advertisements to alter their attitudes. Is not it true that we are slowly beginning to react indifferently to advocacy advertising spots and posters because we increasingly more often agree with them? This is not about our agreement, though, but about the altered perception of socially negative phenomena and their elimination thanks to new attitudes and new behaviour models. This, after all, is the source of the power of advocacy advertising." (Małecki, 2003, p. 12)

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Streszczenie

Zarówno potoczna, jak i naukowa refleksja nad zachowaniem się ludzi bazuje na przekonaniu, że istnieją dwie formy organizacji życia społecznego, które zwykle określa się mianem indywidualizmu i kolektywizmu. Zarazem w przypadku reklamy społecznej działania niezarobkowe są kojarzone ze sferą altruizmu i dobroczynności nastawionej na promocję określonych wartości. O samej reklamie społecznej pisze się zaś w kontekście różnego rodzaju akcji informacyjnych, edukacyjnych, ostrzegawczych, ale i nakłaniających, których sednem są zachowania czy kwestie uznawane za społecznie ważne. Reklama społeczna jest instrumentem wykorzystywanym w różnego rodzaju kampaniach społecznych. Jest przez to również elementem szerszego procesu, który w literaturze przedmiotu określony jest jako marketing społeczny. Istotne jest również to, że w reklamie społecznej idzie o odrzucenie dotychczasowych postaw i zachowań społecznych, z jednoczesnym kształtowaniem innych. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy przekaz reklamy społecznej zawiera w sobie wezwanie do dzielenia i kultywowania kolektywistycznej koncepcji świata i człowieka.

Słowa kluczowe: indywidualizm, kolektywizm, reklama społeczna

Резюме

Как обыденные, так и научные размышления над поведением людей основываются на убеждении, что существуют две формы организации общественной жизни, которые обычно именуется индивидуализмом и коллективизмом. Вместе с тем в случае социальной рекламы некоммерческие действия ассоциируются со сферой альтруизма и милосердия, направленной на популяризацию определенных ценностей. О самой социальной рекламе пишется в контексте разного рода информационных, образовательных, предупредительных, но и призывающих кампаний, сутью которых является поведение или социальные значимые вопросы. Социальная реклама является инструментом, используемым в разного вида социальных кампаниях. Следовательно, также является элементом более широкого процесса, который в литературе определяется как социальный маркетинг. Существенно и то, что в социальной рекламе отвергаются существующие положения и социальное поведение, с одновременным формированием других. Данная статья представляет собой попытку ответить на вопрос, включает ли в себя передача социальной рекламы воззвание к разделению и культивированию коллективистской концепции мира и человека.

Ключевые слова: индивидуализм, коллективизм, социальная реклама

Анотація

Як публіцистичні, так і наукові роздуми про поведінку людей, спираються на переконання, що існують дві форми організації суспільного життя, які називають індивідуалізмом та колективізмом. У випадку суспільної реклами, неоплачувана діяльність асоціюється з альтруїзмом і добродійністю, і спрямована на

рекламу визначених цінностей. Про саму суспільну рекламу пишеться в контексті різноманітних інформаційних, освітніх, попереджувальних і заохочувальних акцій. Суспільна реклама є інструментом, який використовується в різноманітних суспільних рекламах. Є елементом ширшого процесу, який в літературі отримав назву суспільного маркетингу. Важливим є те, що в суспільній рекламі показується відмова від існуючих принципів та суспільної поведінки. Ця стаття є спробою відповісти на питання, чи містить в собі переказ суспільної реклами виклик поділу та культивування колективної концепції світу та людини.

Ключові слова: індивідуалізм, колективізм, суспільна реклама

Section 4.

STUDIES ON LEADERSHIP
