**Integrated promo communications: need of the post-post-modern**

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Abstract: Any promo message includes a pragmatic component (goods-related discourse) and a social-cultural component (social-cultural discourse). Within the scope of direct advertising social-cultural discourse often becomes a latent source of social conflict. For instance, in the whole of Russia only 9% of population earn incomes above the “middle-class threshold”, while federal TV channels constantly broadcast barely affordable goods and lifestyles onto this low-income audience. This creates an urgent social need in diversification of promo campaigns’ content, methods and promotion techniques, which would also allow for an integrating effect. Content of such communications may be built on post-post-modern basis that is currently displacing disintegration and eclectics of post-modernism. This basis includes virtualization, techno-images, glocalization, neo-conservative axiology. The greatest challenge in this list for Russia appears to be associated with development of a glocal style of promo messaging and communications as a whole.

Keywords: integrated communications, social-cultural discourse of promo messages, post-post-modern, neo-conservative axiology, glocal style.

Any promo message (a poster, commercial or leaflet) is in effect an information model of certain good carried to a particular market type for social exchange. First of all, this model includes pragmatic information about a product. For instance, a typical toothpaste commercial represents us information about its consumer properties (it tastes nice), its difference from other toothpastes (it whitens teeth better), demonstrates a product’s appearance, names a trade mark, producer etc. *We call this promo message component «goods-related advertising discourse».*

Secondly, advertising being a product information model includes a social-cultural component: commercial images, consuming situations, motivation, value aspect, stereotypes used, verbal constructions, color combinations etc. Let us analyze from this point of view a typical toothpaste commercial. Substantially, it is announced that white teeth are considered as a cultural norm and yellow teeth – a violation of this norm[[1]](#footnote-1). It is declared that easiness and productivity of social intercourse depends on our teeth appearance (rather on keeping to a norm accepted by the society with regard to teeth appearance). From the promo message it becomes clear that this intercourse is absolutely important for our success in life, which includes progress of social status, positive interpersonal relationships etc. Therefore, to violate a social norm (i.e. to have yellow teeth) means to reduce your social capital and to jeopardize you life chances. It is better not to risk but to buy an offered toothpaste and to use it to the maximum extent possible. This and other corresponding commercial components form second discourse of the promo message that is social-cultural. *Advertising social-cultural discourse is social and cultural aspects of a presentation of an advertised product to the audience that correlate this product with culture and social dimensions of the audience. The discourse attributes social and cultural meanings to a product.*

Social-cultural advertising discourse is mostly hinged on a persuasive advertising component. The purpose is to make a person believe that by using an advertised product he will improve or, at least, confirm his social position, accumulate (save) his social and cultural capitals (according to Pierre Bourdieu terminology). A famous French advertising theory specialist A. Deiyan underlines that, without any doubt, advertising may be considered as a method of information transfer in business. On this count advertising informs the audience about supply of goods, its price, appearance etc. But the main purpose of advertising is to stimulate to buy. For this purpose advertisement “represents a person his own image that meets his hopes and expectations”. The last mentioned represent a social - cultural environment function and therefore dominate: first and foremost, advertising must focus on them. [A. Deiyan, 1993, p.6]. R. Bart talked about this idea expressively: “Any advertising names a product (it is its connotation) but tells about other things (it is its denotation); that is why it may be included into the number of basic products of mental nutrition on equal terms with literature, performance, cinema, sport, print media, fashion. When advertising addresses to a product people add some meaningfulness to it and in doing so convert simple usage of a product into mental experience. [R. Bart, 2003, p. 415]. In a promo message social-cultural advertising discourse frequently enough dominates over product discourse and at first sight such advertising seems to be more social than commercial.

Let us look at advertising from a perspective of a sociologist R. Merton’s theory about evident and latent results of social conduct. Goods-related discourse is connected with explicit advertising functions (sales promotion) and social-cultural discourse – with latent advertising functions: impact on value priorities and norms of the audience, formation of social expectations, behavior patterns, and cultural ideals, which are not directly connected with an advertised product. These latent functions do not assume conscious and forethought conduct of an advertising specialist. In other words, by creating a commercial a specialist is not intended to educate, teach or form ideals. He has far more pragmatic goals such as to promote a product or a service into the audience consciousness, to form a desire of a purchase and to stimulate to make it. The latent results appear due to particularities of advertising impact, namely, the existence of specific social-cultural discourse connected with a persuasive advertising component.

It is for this reason that social-cultural advertising discourse is associated with numerous claims to the Advertising Institute in general and to a particular advertising, which are put forward by both wide audience and teachers and psychologists. The main point of these reproaches is that advertising forms wrong ideas and behavior patterns, creates unnecessary needs and makes people spend more than they can effectively afford. Meanwhile it may safely be said that the reproaches can be significantly decreased if the task of driving advertising to its target audience, its “own” recipient could be completed.

The Russian advertising law dated y.2006 defines advertising as information being spread by any means in any form and in every way possible that is addressed to *general public* and focuses on drawing attention to an advertised product, forming and keeping an interest to it and its promotion (art.3). Meanwhile, in effect, advertising specialists create and spread promo messages focusing on so-called “target advertising audience”, the particular market segment. It may be retired elderly ladies with an income below the “middle-class threshold” or young professionals with an income starting with €100 000 per year. In other words, advertising is aimed at “certain” public in spite of the literal understanding of the law. For a reason a new term “advertising consumers” (art. 3, cl. 8) was introduced into the law, which means “individuals that are intended to be attracted to a certain product by advertising”. Advertising of expensive perfume is not intended to draw attention of low-income sections of the population and advertising of arthritis ointment is not aimed at teenagers. For hitting the target (reaching the target audience) advertising specialists not only aim social-cultural advertising discourse at a typical representative of “their” audience but also choose certain communication channels.

But in effect, as a rule, advertising does not hit only the target audience.

Advertising of a € 50 000 automobile on an overt TV channel is aimed at a very small part of the audience but all the TV audience “have consumed this advertising”. The social-cultural discourse, which was intended to affect quite a few, affected more or less everybody. Moreover, advertising perception by the “off-target” audience may be absolutely different from the impact, which was intended by an advertising specialist. For instance, back in the day an advertisement of expensive beer was launched on Russian television, which demonstrated a young businessman enjoying luxurious life on his yacht. The target audience appreciated the advertisement while “the off-target” audience was indignant about demonstrative violation of the accepted cultural norms. Notably, “the off-target” audience prevailed.

Consequently, according to R. Merton’s terminology, advertising impact may lead to “unforeseen consequences of social conduct”, which are not connected with conscious motivation of an agent, appeared and developed as a result of objective nature of a product, particularly social structure of the target audience. Advertising “unforeseen consequences” may reach systematic social conflict caused by constant disparities between target audiences and real advertising consumers, by mass demonstration of life patterns, which cannot be realized by popular majority in current social and economic conditions. Let us bring to notice that in y.2013 in China with the aim of avoiding such systematic conflicts advertising of any luxury goods was banned.

Let us consider the situation in Russia from this point of view. One of the social differentiation factors to prime importance is social standard of living. In Russian statistics it is calculated as consumption standard that a person can afford per capita income (monthly income per member of a family). The first consumption standard is minimum living wage that means the funds essential for social survival. Its monthly amount is set in accordance with the Federal minimum living wage in the Russian Federation Law № 134-F3 dated y.1997 and constitutes cost estimate of a consumer basket and obligatory payments and collections. A consumer basket includes minimum set of food products, non-food products and services that are essential for saving a human’s health and his life support. The minimum level of the cost of living is given in the table 1.

Table 1.

The Level of the Cost of Living in the Russian Federation

(as of the end of y.2012)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category of citizens | Rubles |
| C Countrywide | 6705 |
| Working population | 7263 |
| R Retired persons | 5281 |
| Children | 6432 |

[Standard of living, 2012, P. 17-18].

The second consumption standard is reconstructive consumer budget. This is the funds essential for complete reconstruction of working capacity and certain development. At the end of y.2012 the reconstructive consumer budget was equal to 17433 RUR (approximately € 435) per member of a family per month. The third consumption standard is a “middle-class threshold” budget. This is the funds essential for sound physical and mental development of a human. On the same period it was equal to 45825 RUR (approximately € 1145) per member of a family per month.

Citizens of the Russian Federation with the income below the minimum living wage are recognized as “the neediest” and have a right to receive social government assistance. “Low-income” citizens have income above the minimum living wage but below reconstructive consumer budget. Citizens with income below the middle-class threshold are those who earn incomes between reconstructive consumer budget and a middle-class threshold budget. Finally, middle-class and wealthy are those whose monthly income is above the middle-class budget. Let us look at estimated data given in the table 2:

Table 2.

Consumption standard system grouping of Russian population (y.2011, as % of total population)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Social group | Nationwide |
| T The neediest citizens | 11,4 |
| Low-income citizens | 48,5 |
| Below the middle-class income citizens | 31,7 |
| Middle-class and wealthy citizens | 8,4 |

According to this data, almost 60% of Russian population has income level assuming only one product selection criterion, which is the lowest price. Correspondingly, more or less any advertising represents irritating information for them, demonstrating only so-called comparative comparison groups: which means those population groups to whom a consumer does not belong and whose consumption standards he cannot afford in the current social situation. The matters are compounded by the fact that very significant advertising information volume is broadcasted in Russia on TV. (see table 3).

Table 3.

Structure and dynamics of Russian advertising market

by advertising communication lines

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Advertising market segment | y. 2012 | y.2012 gainas compared to 2011 |
| billions of RUR | % |
| Television | 143.2 | 9 |
| *incl. terrestrial television* | *139.9* | *9* |
| *cable-satellite television\** | *3.31* | *27* |
| Radio | 14.6 | 23 |
| Print media | 41.2 | 2 |
| *incl. newspapers* | *9.5* | *8* |
| *magazines* | *20.1* | *1* |
| *advertising literature* | *11.6* | *-1* |
| Outdoor advertising | 37.7 | 10 |
| Internet | 56.3 | 35 |
| *incl.media advertising* | *17.9* | *17* |
| *contextual advertising* | *38.4* | *45* |
| Other media | 4.9 | 14 |
| *incl. Indoor-advertising* | *3.8* | *13* |
| *advertising in cinemas* | *1.11* | *18* |
| Segment ATL communications | 297,8 | 13 |
| Segment BTL communications | 80,4 | 18 |
| Russian advertising market total | 378,2 | - |

According to expert data per y.2012 with the advertising market (ATL and BTL communications) total volume of 378,2 billion of RUR (approximately **€** 9,5 billion) advertising volume was amounting to 143,2 billion of RUR (i.e. 38% of the market). [Market volume…, 2012]. The main audience is represented by low-income people who do not have any other opportunities to obtain information and occupy themselves in their spare time. It is not surprise that advertising outcome is often opposite to the one expected by advertisers. According to the data of a “Komkon” research company 65% of the TV audience disapprove advertising and only 10% consider it useful.

Day by day advertising represents effectively unachievable behavior patterns and “life rules” to the major part of the population. A person associates these patterns with the estimation of his life chances based on their realization. If the estimation is negative such patterns do not serve as a guide for productive social conduct but become a source of growing deep and extensive social discontent. Bright and innocent advertising world modeled by network agencies on a global basis turned out to be only a social irritant for a significant part of Russian population. Probably advertising specialists operating within Russian market must find another basic paradigm of delivering integrative advertising information to the audience.

In the early nineties Russian advertising specialists were trying to find their own way in advertising, their own topics and idioms. For instance, the advertising of the bank “Imperial” sent a viewer back to the “grand style” and brought with it some education traditionally valued by the nation. National saga about an ordinary shareholder Lenya Golubkov, his family and neighbors was an echo of an idea of a “little man” trying to survive during modern times. At the same times the image of Lenya Golubkov was in between a folklore hero and a Russian Charlie who despite everything never gives up. But afterwards the times of global postmodern approaches arrived and paying attention to common interests, principles, values and style became simply out of fashion. Post modern focusing on values and norms of restricted or foreign audiences when using mass broadcasting channels of corresponding content led to a situation of systematic conflict, which was described earlier.

However, the postmodern message was exhausted rather quickly. As early as the mid-nineties the situation began to shift. In addition to cause fatigue chaos started to be a danger. Eclecticism including cultural eclecticism did not lead to creation of new agreement but to contradictions and conflicts. New technologies permitted to move from a game with reality to reality change in the real world; particularly they created a social technological platform for a change of political realias. It is instructive to recall political flash mobs, which were taking place in different countries on a regular basis in y.2010, where social networks and mobile phones played an important role. At the moment the most prominent public officials talk about great influence of advanced information technologies on practical politics. The concept of reality created by new technologies has become more significant for people’s lives than the reality itself. Particularly, a famous American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander gave a convincing talk about this computer-based variation of “Thomas theorem” during his speech in State University – Higher School of Economics in y.2013. [J. Alexander, 2013].

Correspondingly, a complex of views and conceptions began to settle in the intellectual environment and was named (at least, for now) post-postmodernism, though I prefer a term “archaeo modern”. This social cultural paradigm that will probably replace postmodernism is being discussed in philosophical and culturological literature for more than 15 years. However, time frame of academic recognition of new paradigm basis of world perception is quite vague. For instance, academic views onto this phenomenon in Russia appeared only in the latter half of the nineties [M. Epshtein, 1996; V. Kuritsyn, 1997; N.Mankovskaya, 1998], journalistic work appeared close to the nineties as part of the Moscow Conceptualist School. [D. Prigov, 1994]. Despite rather incredulous looks regarding the existence of post-postmodern, quite thoroughgoing investigators are dealing with identification of the components that form principal modernity of this social life paradigm. [A. Buzgalin, 2004; F. Mofra, 2006]. Gradually the following post-postmodern components settled: virtualization of social interactions limits, creation of techno-images, which are specific attractors of social interactions, communities glocalization within the scope of globalization and transsentimentalism. These four are the basis of post-postmodern. Virtualization, techno-images and transsentimentalism were investigated by N. Mankovskaya [N.B. Mankovskaya, 2000; N. Mankovskaya 2005]. Glocalization was introduced by us.

*Virtualistic*. Virtual world is not a parody of reality anymore but its substitution. It claims to be reality and in a digitized world people do not so much play as make their living, which is eventful, if not fully productive yet. Ordinary human perceptions multiply in the scope of virtual world. Totally new opportunities to manipulate collective consciousness appear, which are used not only by the authorities or media-owners but also by bloggers without any administrative resource, virtual communities, social networks and resources. This virtual world is the most appropriate environment for the purpose of integrated communications and achievement of synergetic effect in this field.

*Techno-images* (a term introduced by a French sociologist and culture specialist A. Koklen) are nonmaterial, flexible and unstable objects created in network by some users and changed by others. As a result of such interactivity everybody becomes a coauthor, an agent and a subject of social conduct. The object starts to live independently from his author being a product of collective mind but numerous authors and followers consider it as their own creation, the reflection of their thoughts and feelings. The interface between a creator and the audience gets diffused and something new (like a centaur) appears. This new is focused on communication and therefore realizes itself in the network as a collective subject of social conduct.

The main purpose of techno-images is to attract social interactions and to assist a self-organizing system in choosing one of all existing scenarios. Probably, a techno-image may be called a happening-object due to its constant transformation but these transformations are in the least (if at all) controlled by the author. Recently there appeared an active object of such transformations. It is a “Stoned fox” – a stuffed fox badly made by a taxidermist newcomer. The actual fox is set to show as an art-object: the last exhibition was held in the beginning of May 2013 in Saint Petersburg and actually caused a political scandal. The image of the fox was punned in the Internet by different users. Sometimes the author is left only with one means of control, which is to close the project, put it under a ban using the law of copyright. “The father” of a popular animated character O. Kuvaev closed his project “Masyanya” for several times trying to regain control over a popular folklore meme.

Post-postmodern is forming in the scope of globalizing social space. But inside of the global space an explicit process of societies glocalization on different grounds is taking place. The postmodern was spreading the idea of considering the uniqueness of every individual but the post-postmodern moves this approach to the level of societies of different kinds. Substantially, post-postmodern represents glocalization as an emphasis on social (not personal like in postmodern) uniqueness in the scope of the global social space. Thereby, all members of the glocal society are more or less aware of themselves as the members of the global community. Today only few societies are attracted by complete isolation.

The informative aspect of post-postmodern is transsementalism that represents exhaustion of constant nonclassics deconstructions, which lasted for 100 years. In effect, this means coming back to lyricism, respectful but not ironic citation of “high” paragons, deideologization of historical legacy and hope for bright future. Regarding this we consider glamour to be more post-postmodern than postmodern aesthetic orientation because its followers take “class and splendor” very seriously. But it is probably far enough from “timeless values”, sentimentalism, and academism, even with the prefix “-neo”. Today new “vanilla” aesthetics took glamour’s place. Its ingenious sincerity, hope for bright future and desire of everyday “exquisite beauty” is closer to post-postmodern than “classic glamour”. We believe that transformed socialist realism may become post-postmodern most significant aesthetic basis for formation. Today grand style kindles lively, to say the least, interest of distinct categories of audiences including very refined ones. Such concepts as of “simple happiness”, “sound society”, “work for the common good”, “a true character” are appropriate to socialist realism and make a very significant and actual object of social research.

Nostalgia is another promising option of post-postmodern aesthetics. A French and Belgian film “The Artist” of y.2012, which was stunning success, was styled on silent cinema and it is obviously not accidental. A nostalgic by its fundamental nature film “№ 17” about V. Kharlamov, which box-office takings during the first weeks of showing were unprecedented for our country, supports this idea. These examples may be considered as quite modern demonstrations of neo-conservatism ideology, which is becoming a more significant component of political, scientific and other discourses in Russia.

So, the logical conclusion is the following: firstly, sooner rather than later interactive virtual impact will become socially actual and lacking great social risks advertising impact. Secondly, this impact will be assuming creation of folk techno-images, as a component of audiences’ impact, whose coauthors will be the audience itself. The images will serve as attractors of social actions. Thirdly, such impact must be focused on glocal societies that, however, represent a global social space component and above all identify themselves as such. Fourthly, axiology in the scope of which the impact will be carried out assumes the priority of “timeless values”, “bright future”, the concept of happiness etc., which reduce the feeling of routine.

So, a question arises: how the axiology will be aesthetically expressed in respect of Russian audiences? More precisely, what the basis for Russian advertising glocal style should be: ethnic culture, Russian national values or general links of Russian political nation? We believe that aesthetically post-postmodern Russian axiology will probably be the most appropriately expressed in the scope of some new grand style, the historical basis for which will be neoclassicism in all of its aspects even maybe expressed in creative reincarnation of Moscow high-rises style.

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1. By the way, in some countries of Southeast Asia yellow teeth are considered as a social norm, while black teeth are in fashion. Back in medieval Moscow beautiful ladies thickly whitened their faces and blackened their teeth (for the sake of contrast). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)