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**Social advertising, with its potential for society consolidation, as a basis
for awareness-raising activities in the public sphere of Ukraine**

Social and economic reforms that have recently taken place in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states have led to fundamental changes in the lives of their societies. The social system has undergone certain transformations, which have also affected social relations. As a result, traditions have been undermined, which in its turn has caused the decline of ethical and social norms as well as that of the national culture.

At present, the problem of establishing new ethical norms and values, maintaining general welfare, forming correct state policies in the sphere of social relations, reaching charitable goals, and achieving socially beneficial results is very topical for the Ukrainian society. Accordingly, the instruments, employed by the society and its public institutions in their aspiration for social balance, are gaining in significance. These instruments include social advertising, since, apart from its informative function, it also performs adaptive and educational functions. Moreover, the pronounced emotive character of advertisement provides for a quick and proper inclusion of any person into the system of social relations. Therefore, it is no surprise that the role of social advertising in creating instruments of social protection in Ukraine has greatly increased recently.

When speaking about social advertising as a means of society consolidation, one should mention that, in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries, ‘social advertising’ is the word combination used to denote the phenomena and processes, usually designated in Europe by such terms as ‘public service advertising’, ‘public

service announcement’, ‘non-commercial advertising’. In Ukraine, social advertising is any type of information, regardless of its distribution form, aimed at achieving socially beneficial goals, popularizing universal values, and disseminated without any profit motives.¹ One could say that it is a special kind of non-commercial information distribution, employed so that the state or local authorities could accomplish certain purposes. The main source of social advertising is modern public life, rich in conflicts and confrontations among social groups, requiring instant solutions based on creative motives and processes. This sort of advertising represents both public and state interests, and focuses on achieving charitable goals. Some scholars argue that social advertising is an element of public relations, and therefore should be treated not as a separate phenomenon, but in the general framework of public relations system.² We believe that social advertising can and even must be treated as a work tool of Ukrainian social services. We also consider development, distribution, and social advertising quality monitoring to be the basis for efficient awareness-raising activities in the public sphere. Having analysed the functional duties of employees working in various public spheres, we have arrived at the conclusion that socially related awareness-raising activities constitute an essential part of professional life not only for employees of advertising industry but also for those working in the public sphere, namely social educators and social workers.

Social advertising is a very subtle and sophisticated instrument for influencing the society. Hence the significant topicality of issues concerning the ethics and responsibilities of those who commission and perform it. For Ukraine, as well as for other emerging democracies, a particularly acute problem in this regard is that of drawing a clear line between social and political or commercial advertising. Unfortunately, the legislation preferences accorded to social advertising precondition its dishonest exploitation as a means of surreptitious

1 The law of Ukraine “On Advertising” [Online resource]. – URL: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws>

2 Parshentseva N. Social advertising [Online resource] / Natalia Parshentseva. – URL: <http://www.gumer.info>

propaganda or hidden commercial advertising. What matters is the fact that social advertising has the potential for forming a positive attitude towards advertisement in general, and for improving the reputation of advertising agencies and mass media. Moreover, social advertising may bring about positive changes in relations between the state, commercial organizations, and people.

Social advertising is often aimed at a wide audience, concerned with such universal problems as: fighting violence, environment conservation, health care, bad habits prevention, AIDS etc. It can unite millions of people in their aspiration to change the life of society for the better. Its main goal is to alter society's attitude towards a problem, and to form new social values in the long run.

The characteristic feature of this advertisement type is that, unlike commercial advertising, social advertising may be commissioned by any person, and must contain no references to any goods, their producers, objects of intellectual property etc. Some may point out that sometimes social advertising materials bear the logos of Greenpeace and several other organizations. Greenpeace, however, is a non-commercial organization, receiving no profit from its activities, i.e. is not a producer. The red ribbon, serving as a symbol for tolerance towards HIV infected people and AIDS patients, is not a trademark. That is, all the emblems affixed to social advertisements are the logos and symbols of non-commercial organizations, which gain no profit from it.

As for the efficiency of awareness-raising activities in the public sphere of Ukraine, one should mention its scarcity in Ukrainian mass media and in the streets of Ukrainian cities. Ukrainian TV channels, for instance, broadcast social advertisements only during the cheapest air time in midday and after 11 p.m., when few people can see them. This phenomenon is easy to explain: state-owned mass media are the only ones who broadcast social advertisements for free. The air time at private TV channels, however, is rather expensive, therefore, state and public organizations commissioning social advertising can hardly ever afford it.³ One of

³ Vovk A. On social advertising in Ukraine [Online resource] / Artem Vovk // Jeynews. – URL: <http://jeynews.com.ua>

the main problems related to performing awareness-raising activities in the public sphere of our country are the frequent cases of its inappropriate exploitation. Social advertising is often used for political or commercial purposes, which essentially discredits the very idea of such advertising, and poses a threat to the development of civil society in Ukraine. Regretfully, the latest legislative reforms cannot provide for an ultimate solution to this problem.⁴

As a conclusion of the above said, we would like to stress that, in the context of Ukrainian society's current development, the importance of systematic popularization of social and national values, achievement of socially beneficial goals, attracting public attention to social problems, and their possible solutions continues to increase. All the above-mentioned objectives are being fulfilled by means of efficient awareness-raising activities performed in the public sphere with no purpose of gaining any commercial profit. At present, there exists a great need for consistent and professional non-profit awareness-raising activities in Ukraine. The reason for this lies in that social advertising may serve as a basis and effective instrument of positive awareness-raising influence, and can unite a large number of people with the objective of changing life for the better and solving socially significant pressing problems. The aim traditionally assigned to it is to alter people's attitude towards certain social problems, and to form new social values in the long run.

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⁴ Bashuk T. Social advertising as a form of political technology / Tetiana Bashuk [Online resource]. – URL: <http://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua>

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