

Activities for the benefit of people with disability in the media space

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Social and information campaigns play a very important role in attitude and opinion shaping. They allow for constructive use of media and public space for the activities dedicated to social inclusion, aid and support of various aspects of participation. It is worth to notice that at present the tendencies to “occupy” the public space by commercial broadcasters and advertising give way to the protection of this space. The activities from the field of social marketing and public information oriented on promoting the right opinions and attitudes such as tolerance, helping others are not only entitled to be present in public spaces but even hold the privileged status there.

When taking on the topic of media actions for the benefit of the disabled one need to start with the context of superior activities, realized in social spaces by institutions and organizations which operate within the system that is based on the distribution of tasks, standards, methods and accepted financial mechanisms. Within these frames they undertake the tasks of providing care, help, social and vocational rehabilitation, support and integration on many layers and on various levels. These forms can be located in the area of **social activities** or - to be more precise - activities realized in the social space e.g. in poviats, municipalities (Polish gminas), districts, local environment, with families and individuals in the forms of community work, assistance, rehabilitation, supported employment, trainings, adaptation etc. At the opposite pole we find the area of **media activities** that are realized not in the material environments but in the area of social communication, including mass and media communication (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007, 144). This category includes social

marketing which entails one of the basic tools, that is, social advertising, information and promotion activities and the elements of public relations (the identity of institutions, contacts with media and institutional environment) (Szyszka, 2013).

The question about the reason for activities in media spaces, thus it may seem rhetoric, is often raised in discussions and publications. This is partly due to the controversies around their effectiveness which is hard to measure and their funding from the public budget, especially in the context of the current resource crisis and shortages of funds, e.g. in rehabilitation area. Yet, it is worth to consider the wider perspective. Upon the analysis of the functions and objectives realized within the frames of the institutionalized rehabilitation, assistance and social integration system for the disabled, it becomes easily noticeable that one of the conditions for being effective is the proper development of inter-sector collaboration (Knecht, 2006): cooperation with NGOs, representative institutions, local communities, business (employers) as well as wide inter-institutional collaboration that is the result of complementarity of rehabilitation, assistance and support. In general, it is easy to list the real benefits resulting from the activities in the media spaces and the development of public relations. If then the primary goals of the support system are, among others, activation, integration, supporting social participation or building trust the thesis that these goals cannot be effectively realized without proper care for communication aspects would be a mere truism. Without efficient communication with the social and institutional environment many activities would not even start at all, while without the support from these environments many projects fails to succeed. Organizations that work for the benefit of the disabled enter the area of public benefit and thus perform an important function in the processes of self-determination and organization of

communities (Knecht, 2006: 44). The institutional system of public benefit is to ensure the social order, the access to various resources, social security, assistance in crisis. It is the area of social trust and special responsibility where communication, availability of reliable information about social problems and phenomena as well as possible support, promotion of socially accepted behaviors, ideas and attitudes play a significant role (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2002, 79).

As for the issue of social marketing the problem of disability takes special place in its creations as it reflects the most typical objectives, means of expression and mechanisms of functioning of social campaigns. Disability, in fact, belongs to the most typical and recognizable topics functioning in the social marketing (*Problemy społeczne*; <http://www.osocio.org>); if we look at the history of social advertisement in Poland, we can also notice that creations regarding problems of the disabled dominated its beginnings.

In this context it is worth to recall the results of the pilot research on the recognizability of social advertisements and their perception, perception styles and influence. In 2012 a study was conducted that involved the group of 100 employees of social assistance institutions in Silesia voivodship, the respondents were at the same time the students of master's degree studies in the field of social work. In one of the questions the respondents were asked to recall social marketing messages they had best remembered and this allowed for further conclusions about the most representative creations groups within this range. During the survey it turned out that the creations that stuck to mind the most were: the slogan and graphics in the campaign *Pij mleko – będziesz wielki* (*Drink milk - you'll be great*),¹ the

¹ "Pij mleko! Będziesz wielki" is one of the most known and the longest Polish social campaigns. According to the survey by MillwardBrown Institute SMG/KRC as much as 97% out of 86% of the respondents who had noticed the actions promoting milk,

slogan and graphics of the campaign by Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Osób, Organizacji i Instytucji Pomagających Ofiarom Przemocy w Rodzinie *Niebieska Linia* (the association that helps the victims of family violence, providing, among others, so called the “Blue Line” call service) - an action that functions in public opinion as “Because the soup was too salty” campaign (*Bo zupa była za słona*)² - and (as a thematically relevant group) the numerous campaigns for the benefit of the disabled. What is important is that the majority of answers did not recall the specific (and right) names of those actions (which does not, in fact, prove their distinctiveness). Then, the smaller, local but often very interesting initiatives and social projects were listed together with the national campaign *Cała Polska czyta dzieciom* (*All of Poland Reads to Kids*). After collecting the associations and descriptions of the third selected group the conclusion is that first of all the activities of the foundation Polska bez Barrier (Poland without Barriers) and Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Integracji (Friends of Integration Association) were described: two activities within the program *Niepelnosprawni - Normalna sprawa* (*Nie widzieć, nie słyszeć, nie wiedzieć i nie dotykać – VI–VIII 2000*) (The disabled - normal deal, Do not see, do not hear, do not touch) and *Rzeźby* (*The sculptures*) I-III 2000, <http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/>), *Czy naprawdę jesteśmy inni? (Are we really different?)* (especially the creations „Logo” – 2003), <http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/8>, program operated

remember the slogan of this particular campaign. The campaign has been conducted on regular basis since 2003 (Michniewicz 2010)

² One of the first and, due to memorable creations (by Tomasz Sikora), the most recognizable Polish social campaigns, realized since 1997. The campaign activities were conducted on many layers, there were 538 street billboards all over the country, most of them as free advertising space. The campaign involved sending out about 5 thousand educational kits and 17 thousand posters. The creations were present in about 250 “Blue line” member institutions and other health institutions and organizations. After: http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,1471,bo_zupa_byla_za_slon_a [11.09.2013].

since 1996 *Poland without Barriers* and *Płytką wyobraźnia to kalectwo* (*Shallow imagination is mutilation*) realized since 2001 (<http://www.plytkawyobraznia.pl>). Among the answers there were also descriptions of campaigns for employing people with disabilities, mainly *Pełnosprawni w pracy* (*Valid in the workplace*) (one of the campaigns addressed to employers).

We can conclude that the respondents pointed to the most recognizable nation-wide actions: some promoting children's health, some addressing family violence and many regarding the topic of disability. The aforementioned creations functioned in the public and media space, often on thousands of billboards or other mediums, in press, electronic media and public tv, they also used the public opinion-forming authorities (Maison, 2002; Wasilewski, 2007). On the other hand, and what should not surprise, the respondents often recalled the less spectacular actions (information programs, projects): low budget ones, using private media, prepared by social institutions with more limited, geographically or socially, area of influence. In those cases the local aspect of activities and addressing them to certain groups were very important.

What are the definitions of social marketing, what is its position in media and public communication system and in what way social advertising can support the activities for the disabled in further perspective? The aim of the aforementioned (and other alike) activities is, on one hand, to promote the opinions and attitudes considered as the right ones, which express the commonly accepted interest of society (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2002): in certain cases these would be e.g. integration, encouraging others to help, promotion of employment. Another goal would be building the positive image of people with disabilities in order for their active integration to take place. On the other hand, they play a profound information role: about the scale of problems, presence of the disabled in society and in local

communities, their needs and problems, possibilities of helping and support. This is an important added value, alongside the persuasive layer of social advertising. In this case we talk about the informative functions, what is particularly important in our reality, in the context of stereotypization and very poor social awareness about disability (*Postawy wobec niepełnosprawności*, 2007).

Classic approach and definitions of social marketing (which involves both, social advertising and other forms of influence) - to put it short - point out to the aspects of its functioning in the social space, the relationships with the traditional marketing and its tools, the role, the meaning and principles of designing useful tools such as marketing, communication and media concepts and strategies (Goldberg, 1997; Weinreich, 2000). Alan Andreasen and Philip Kotler define social marketing in the categories of inducing effective changes in the attitudes and systems of values, of influencing the target groups. They point primarily to its coincidence with commercial marketing, adaptations of the research techniques and tools, planning, implementing and programs evaluation (Kotler, 2002; Kotler, 2008). The basic factor that separates these areas are the goals: in social marketing it is to induce socially desirable changes, promotion of ideas, attitudes, opinions that serve the common good - not products nor services; to evoke positive changes in behaviors, attitudes and opinions - not in consumers' habits.

Social advertisement, being one of the primary tools of professional social marketing, can be defined as process of persuasive communication that aims to invoke attitudes and behaviors socially considered as right, that is encouraging to change of convictions (e.g. regarding intolerance), encouraging to take stop certain behaviors (e.g. violence) or taking actions (e.g. support of the employment of the disabled).

For this perspective the most representative are the

campaigns against smoking and awareness raising e.g. AIDS awareness, which use shock as a means of expression. As for the disabilities the examples may be the very suggestive creations of the campaign *Płytką wyobraźnia to kalectwo (Shallow imagination is mutilation)* (www.plytkawyobraznia.pl/) and based on the surprise effect and highly shocking spots of the action *Naprawdę inni? (Really different?)* (Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Integracji, 2003) which, due to the controversial character of the images, was only partly published (www.kampaniespoleczne.pl).

It is worth to notice that the elements of social marketing are very often used also in information activities . Today, with the attention deficit and content overload, for information activities to be successful a proper planning is required as well as the use of various and adequate tools. The proper multi-channel information, like promotion, is a very important element accompanying the actions for the benefit of people with disabilities. Among the most typical information and promotion tools are (Flis, 2007: s. 62):

- Traditional media channels: radio, television, press, both in local, regional and wider range,
- printing and distribution of leaflets, bulettings, folders, posters, information and promotion materials,
- web page that includes information and multimedia,
- publishing and dispatch of electronic information materials
- using social media,
- trainings, awareness raising meetings, study visits,
- organization of events (e.g. presentations, exhibitions),
- information centers (printed materials, info-line, e-mail),
- other activities, also unconventional ones.

Modern information activities combine various but coherent activities while preserving the common goals. The range of available means is very wide. As a result of “information processes”, regular interactions between

institutions and their environment, an information bond is formed. It accompanies other bonds of people with institutions, it is also the condition for integration and harmonization of common existence. It is also worth noticing that complementary information activities undertaken in the public trust space become one of the fundamental dimensions of public relations. Within the concept described as rational public relations information takes the central place: objective information provided for various environments and groups of recipients on different levels (direct, media communication) and presented in different ways (Knecht, 2006: s. 4), which often requires using such tools as e.g. social advertising.

Recently in Poland we witness significant changes taking place in social marketing in the aspects of popularizing: its tools became available, in the organizational aspect: marketing ceased to be the domain of big professionalized institutions, and in the areas of communication strategies: choosing media type, means and techniques of expression.

Social marketing is even more often connected with other activities from the areas of public relations, informational campaigns and activities, animation, integration, family support and help, complementing them, supporting or promoting (Baranowska, 2005). Examples can be taken mainly from numerous events, information campaigns, social projects and project prepared and undertaken locally, not by specialized agencies but by NGOs or care, education or cultural institutions. The tendency to shift organizations' initiatives from external agencies to settled in the local communities individuals corresponds in a large degree with the principle of subsidiarity and the ideas of civil society and is nowadays strongly supported by EU funds.

Looking at *loci communes* of many social campaigns and projects, we can put forward the thesis of convergence,

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pluralization and “decentralization” of activities and of mutual adaptation: the elements of social marketing, non-profit marketing, social, educational and information projects are combined, and coordination and cooperation of different subjects dealing with the same problem becomes one of the key issues (Lipska, 2010).

The definitions and possibilities for using and combining the social marketing tools (including social advertisement) and other activities from this area are presented in the table below (author’s own compilation).

Activity type	Characteristic	Time of realization	Example
Event, action, activity, single project or program	Single activity realized for the specific, clearly defined goal e.g. promotion or resolving a problem. Interesting and original event that draws attention, raises interest.	One-time event, with certain time-frames and in certain space.	Conference, open days, study visit, contest regarding the topic of disability, film festival with films addressing the issue of social integration
Information	It is limited to a single information activity.	Short-term activity, single and not complex. Activity with a certain goal, concentrated around one issue, problem.	Poster, notice, flyer, information material in tv/radio/press, delivering information to people’s mailboxes
Advertisement	It is limited to a single message with the dominating persuasive layer.		Rented media space e.g. sponsored article
Campaign, complex project or program	The cycle of repeated various but coherent and coordinated activities addressed to certain groups, organized in time and space, linked by one superior goal.	The activities exceeding one single message (advertising, information, social), coordinated and bound by the coherent objectives. They include a complex program, support activities, cooperation of organizations and legislative support.	Social campaigns, image promotion campaigns, information campaigns, advertising campaigns, Social projects and programs Educational projects and programs

Campaigns and programs regarding the problem of disability very well depict the trends in esthetic evolution of social advertisements. For several years a change of accents is being observed: on one hand it is “smoothing” the aesthetic and means of expression: controversial messages are replaced by the pleasant ones, causing reflection but often also humorous, the latter till recently being really rare. The observation suggests that the most recognizable and effective (both in the aspect of generating social changes and awareness raising) are those actions which are unconventional and require active participation. The example may be the different variants of “parking actions” (The activities that are to change the behavior of drivers who use the disabled parking spaces without permission. For example: „Parkujesz – zdrapujesz” (You park - you scratch), see www.aktywniezycie.org/index.php), social and charity actions that use multimedia technologies and social media or other forms of interactions - not only via media but also through direct contacts. As it has already been stressed, local actions, campaigns realized with smaller budgets, without PR and promotion agencies are of a great significance, these are actions in communities and for communities. As examples we can recall the activities of numerous associations, local activity centers, organizations gathering people with disabilities, their carers and occupational therapists. It is a significant change as within the traditional understanding social marketing was professionalized, functions in the area of public communication, is usually ordered by a government agency, public institution or other social organization and a campaign is realized also by a social institution e.g. civic one serving local communities (including the ones supporting disabled people).

Today, the techniques and means of professionalized social marketing thanks to, among others, the Internet, open communication channels and various forms of promotion of

good practices (see for example www.kampaniespoleczne.pl; www.ngo.pl; www.telewizjaobywatelska.org.pl) became available, and first of all, do not require huge budgets nor specialist knowledge. Therefore, they are useful for smaller organizations, especially those that operate for the benefit of local environments. Social marketing, due to its specific, that is acting for the common good, combines information, advertising, promotion tools and thus provides the wide range of instruments. Therefore, it is even often used as a support for the third sector and social economy for the purpose of active social integration and inclusion.