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RHETORIC AND PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISING – A CASE STUDY ON THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

Abstract:

RETORYKA I REKLAMA SPOŁECZNA

– NA PRZYKŁADZIE DZIAŁAŃ KAMPANII PRZECIWIW HOMOFOBII

Autor niniejszego artykułu, analizując wybrane aspekty akcji społecznych organizowanych przez stowarzyszenie Kampania Przeciwko Homofobii odwołuje się do retorycznych aspektów reklamy. Mimo iż retoryka oferuje skuteczne narzędzia, co pokazuje przede wszystkim przykład badań prowadzonych w Stanach Zjednoczonych, to jednak – jak stwierdza m.in. prof. Jakub Z. Lichański, nadal brakuje prac dotyczących jej zastosowania w badaniach problemów komunikacji masowej w Polsce.

Reklamę i retorykę łączy bardzo wiele, przede wszystkim skuteczny komunikat reklamowy jest zbudowany wedle wskazań retoryki. Spełnia trzy cele: informacyjny, uwiarygodniający oraz przypominający. Badania nad reklamą mają charakter interdyscyplinarny, a teoria i praktyka retoryki może stanowić także obecnie istotne źródło odwołań.

Słowa kluczowe: reklama, reklama społeczna, marketing społeczny, retoryka, mass media, Kampania Przeciwko Homofobii, LGBT, gender, homofonia.

INTRODUCTION

Even an enormous budget which enables anything else like access to the mass media or opportunity to hire any dreamed-of specialist does not ensure that an informational campaign will reach a desired effect. Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson mention that failures of this kind of campaigns are quite common. The above-mentioned authors indicate Herbert Hyman and Paul Sheatsley's research. Already in 1947, they "[...] noticed that people get information concerning mainly the things they are interested in, while they avoid information inconsistent with their convictions. When one realizes that uninteresting and unpleasant information is tried to be delivered to him or her, the most frequent reaction is the distortion and interpretation of this infor-

mation, thereby disregard for its potential influence on the alteration of convictions and attitudes”¹ [Pratkanis, Aronson 2005: 245]. What should be taken into consideration in the first place, is a receiver’s tendency to select information, as well as to distort messages which do not meet his or her views. It is obvious that the messages based mainly on an informational function, regardless of the application of some important arguments, may turn out to be less effective. AIDS and other diseases or addictions leaflets, as well as political ads which contain a lot of information, can serve as examples. Probably, they do not maintain a recipient’s attention, thus causing his or her weariness. The means thanks to which a viewer will not change the channel is arousing his or her interest by providing entertainment, as it is frequently done by the present mass media. At this point, it should be added that the entertainment function has presently become the overriding function which any other functions are subjected to, including the informational one – infotainment is an expressive example here. However, this way of conduct has some flaws. Complex problems which require a lot of difficult and detailed information can be excessively simplified. A similar principle is also applied by the campaigns built on the shock effect, which, for instance, show vividly the consequences of smoking nicotine through naturalistic images, photos and movies. Anti-smoking campaigns can even produce the opposite effects. According to the research, which M. Lindstrom mentions, captions which talk about the harmfulness of smoking actually stimulate the brain’s pleasure center [Lindstrom 2009: 20]. The proper balance of numerous elements decides about an advertising campaign’s success, that is achieving the assumed objectives.

The author of the present article, by analyzing chosen social Polish actions organized by the organization called the Campaign Against Homophobia, refers to the rhetorical aspects of advertising. A reflection on the methodology of rhetoric not only proceeds in parallel with the development of the theory on social communication and mass media; also the aim of advertisement and rhetoric, i.e. effective persuasion, and the origin are common (with reference to the Aristotle model of persuasive communication). An essential element of the study is the difference between public service advertisements and commercial advertisements.

ADVERTISING AND RHETORIC

As Jakub Z. Lichański mentions “ [...] the advertisement has accompanied our civilization for a long time. It is a very complex phenomenon since it is connected with: marketing, processes of communication, propaganda, law (e.g. commercial,

¹ My translation from: „[...] zauważyli, że ludzie zdobywają informacje dotyczące głównie tych rzeczy, które ich ciekawią, natomiast unikają informacji, które są niezgodne z ich przekonaniami. Gdy ktoś zdaje sobie sprawę, że próbuje mu się przekazać nieinteresującą i przykrą informację, najczęstsza reakcja polega na zniekształceniu i zinterpretowaniu tej informacji, a tym samym na zignorowaniu jej potencjalnego wpływu na zmianę przekonań i postaw”.

intellectual property, unfair competition) [...]. It is also connected with psychology (social impact, satisfaction of needs, etc.), and at last, [...], the advertisement has strong connections with rhetoric” [Lichański 2007: 161-162]². It should be remembered that an advertising text constructed according to the rules of rhetoric ought to fulfill three functions: information, credibility and recalling. As a rhetoric message, most of all it should accomplish one overriding task, i.e. to teach (*docere*). The two remaining functions, which are *movere* (to move) and *delectare* (to entertain), ought to be subjected to the first mentioned function.

The public service advertisement differs from the commercial advertisement – the alteration of convictions and attitudes of a receiver is connected with social welfare or general public benefit. Broad principles of effectiveness are analogous to the principles conditioning effectiveness of commercial advertisements. Authors of public service advertisements frequently use the previously mentioned shock effect. These messages are constructed of some unpleasant elements which are supposed to shock a receiver. In this kind of messages, the *movere* function is a dominant one what is clearly determined by the rules of the rhetoric message structure. Also psychologists remind that people are not willing to refer messages with any negative content to themselves. It results in their denial. In turn, the excessive accumulation of negative consequences, which a recipient is reminded of, can cause the feeling of helplessness. Among other effects, the rejection of a message through joking about it can be mentioned. It is triggered by the need to reduce stress [Fedyczkowska, Garycka, Martyniuk 2010]. Therefore, the proper balance of elements is necessary while constructing this kind of message.

Michael Meyer reminds that the specificity of rhetoric consists in its examination according to the division into ethos- pathos- logos. The multiplicity of definitions of rhetoric is caused by the great experts in this field who have favored one of the elements simultaneously reducing to it the remaining two [Meyer, Carrilho, Timmermans 2010: 6]. Jacek Warchala explains it in the following way: “[...] rhetoric, as the theory of persuasion, deals with the objective source of ambiguity on the level of *logos*, with intentions on the level of *ethos*, and with the rhetoric of interaction on the plane of *pathos*. The first model of the mechanism of persuasion in the history of persuasive communication is based on these three pillars [...]. According to Aristotle, the task of rhetoric is to discover credible measures to convince a listener. After all, it is persuasion, not decription of the world, what be-

² My translation from: „[...] reklama towarzyszy naszej cywilizacji od dawna. Jest ona zjawiskiem złożonym, związana jest bowiem z: marketingiem, procesami komunikacji, propagandą, prawem (np. handlowym, ochroną własności intelektualnej, prawem o nieuczciwej konkurencji) [...]. Związana jest także z psychologią (oddziaływanie społeczne, zaspokajanie potrzeb itp.) wreszcie [...], reklama ma silne związki z retoryką.

comes the foundation of mass communication”³. According to the above directions, deliberations on the advertisement in the subsequent part of the article will be placed in the three-element model of rhetoric communication. Individual elements can be described as follows:

ETHOS – belongs to pragmatics (social language use); it is placed within a sender (e.g. institution, organization), which has to build its own credibility in order to be effective; it is connected with image consistency, expressive personality, ‘brand personality’ and its recognizability,

PATHOS – it belongs to pragmatics as well; it is the need to effect on a receiver; it is a part of *doxa* sphere (beliefs); it is connected with feelings, emotions, social ties, resentments; sponsorship benefits result from belonging to this realm,

LOGOS – principles of constructing the message itself, which, with reference to mass communication, becomes a global message: - it is no longer independent, -it is specific (directed to the target group), - it loses verbal dominance (a lot of cultural codes), -it loses individual cohesion (its fragments are communicated by various media; a dominant is different), it is dynamic- it reveals its sense during interaction with the target group [Warchala 2009: 280-286].

Materials being part of the campaign “Parents, dare to speak out” are the main focus of the article. It is the campaign carried out by the Campaign Against Homophobia- an all-Poland, non-governmental organization established in 2001. The social campaign “Parents, dare to speak out” has started on March 1st 2013. The posters representing parents of homosexual and bisexual persons with their grown-up children are the crucial element of the campaign. There is a slogan on each of the posters (“My daughter has taught me how to be brave”, “My daughter has taught us how to speak openly”, “My son has taught me how important it is to be yourself”) each of which has a common denominator – a simple message: our children have taught us many valuable features, attitudes and behaviors: we are proud of them! The posters have been hung in Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław, Poznań, and some cities of Silesian Voivodeship. One of the faces of the campaign is an actor, Władysław Kowalski and his son, Kuba. He and the other parents who have decided to take part in the poster campaign, support the action targeted at parents of homosexual and bisexual children (LGB believe that thanks to their boldness and determination they will help other parents to accept their children’s sexual orientation and to stop hiding from the world). Anna Grzelewska’s film is also a part of the campaign- three parents talk about their histories. Here, in turn, another Polish actor,

³ My translation from: „[...] retoryka jako teoria perswazji zajmuje się przedmiotowym źródłem wieloznaczności na poziomie *logos*, intencjami na poziomie *ethos* i retoryką oddziaływania na płaszczyźnie *pathos*. Na tych trzech filarach wspiera się pierwszy w historii komunikacji perswazyjnej model mechanizmu przekonywania [...]. Zadaniem retoryki jest, według Arystotelesa, odkrywanie wiarygodnych środków, aby przekonać słuchacza. Wszak przekonywanie a nie opisywanie świata staje się fundamentem komunikacji masowej”.

Mirosław Zbrojewicz, is the face of the campaign. A separate element is a webpage created for the purpose of the action which can be found at: www.odwazciesiemowic.pl. On the website the following aims of the project have been listed:

- encouraging parents who accept homosexual or bisexual orientation of their children to speak about it loudly as it is one of the elements of the reality;
- providing parents with some basic knowledge on homosexuality and bisexuality;
- building a sense of belonging to a huge social group of parents and families of LGB;
- raising public awareness of existence of bisexual and homosexual persons' parents and families;
- enriching the general image of LGB person with a picture of a person surrounded by parental love and having strong family bonds;
- unlocking latent potential of LGB persons' parents and families as the heterosexual defenders of the rights of their relatives.

ETHOS-PATHOS-LOGOS

The notion of ethos is particularly important for a campaign built around the idea of the so-called 'coming out of the closet', i.e. starting to publicly declare what so far has been open only in a private space and known to the closest friends. One of the purposes of the campaign is to build a sense of community. The Campaign Against Homophobia is an all-Poland public-benefit organization. Since 2001, it has been fighting for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT). The organization is engaged in: increasing tolerance, tackling prejudices and stereotypes towards bisexual and homosexual persons, forming a positive identity of bisexual and homosexual persons, education, research activity, social integration, activities on women issues and elimination of discrimination on the ground of sex. KPH specializes in organizing large educational and social actions showing homosexual persons in a positive light (e.g. the social campaign "Let Them See Us"). KPH also organizes the annual "Culture for Tolerance" Festival in Cracow or educational activities targeted at students, teachers and parents. So far, it has provided trainings sensitizing teachers, educators, social workers, students of humanistic studies, lawyers and policemen to the problems of gays and lesbians. It also offers legal and psychological help to victims of homophobia. KPH is engaged in lobbying for equal rights for gays and lesbians on the national level as well as internationally [<http://www.kph.org.pl/pl/kim-jestemy>].

Ethos, as previously indicated, is placed within a sender who, in the first place, has to build his or her credibility in order to be effective in persuasion. Barbara Warnick's clue, that ethos may be understood also through visuality and other signs instead of being based on the sender's materials, is essential as well [Tarasewicz-Gryt 2010: 49]. All the campaign's materials are signed by KPH logo which consist of two elements: a cha-

racteristic shape of Poland framed by a six colors ribbon. The colors form the rainbow flag- a symbol of LGBT pride and LGBT social movement designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker. It is worth adding that the draft of the flag was designed before Gay Freedom Day Parade in San Francisco. Originally, the flag consisted of eight colors- horizontal stripes of equal width. Since 1979, the flag has used six colors reflecting the diversity of the LGBT community (<http://comingout.ueuo.com/homo4.html>).

Even though the posters are the essential element of the campaign, many activities are conducted on the Internet, as nowadays it is almost impossible to imagine an efficient social action without the web. On the website www.odwazciesiemowic.pl, there are some basic information about the organizer, as well as about the institutions supporting the project where a link to the organizer's website can be found: <http://kph.org.pl>. It is also important that KPH has a Facebook profile where one can observe an increased interest, especially during ongoing actions. So far, the profile has been liked by about 4500 people; the profile's owner puts some new entries everyday and encourages to leave comments. Undoubtedly, it has aroused interest of many Facebook users. It is worth noting that Lech Wałęsa's words spoken on 1st March 2013 for TVN24 have provoked stormy reactions. Poland's former president said: "I do not want this minority, which I don't agree with, taking to the streets and confusing my children and grandchildren with some minorities." Next, he added: "Homosexuals should sit on the last bench in the plenary hall, or even behind the wall" (<http://www.tvn24.pl/raporty/ostre-slowa-walesy,622>). Below, there are some Facebook entries which appeared few days before launching the campaign and on its first day:

[mirka] Lech Wałęsa won't apologize and advices us not to show off. What do you think about that? (Monday, March 4th)

[slava] sunshine in warsaw, and Kasia Remin will appear on Radio TokFM in half an hour. Listen and comment here! (Saturday, March 3rd)

[slava] in 20 min, Kasia will appear on Polsat- the coordinator of the "Parents, dare to speak out" campaign, and Jasiek, a member of KPH board, at 10 p.m. on the same channel. (Friday, March 2nd)

[Ola] We're taking over TV! At 6.20 p.m., on TVN24, Ela Bajan and her daughter Mirka will talk about their participation in the "Parents, dare to speak out" campaign, and at 8.10 p.m., on Polsat News, you can watch Aneta Ostrowska. (Friday, March 2nd)

[chaber] Mrs MP, I'm begging you for yor restraint and reason, we don't keep up with coplaints! (Thursday, February 28th)⁴

⁴ This entry refers to some harsh words of Law and Justice's MP, Krystyna Pawłowicz: "If somebody accustomes me to something unnatural and pathological, for many people even disgusting, then I regard it as harassment." <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/pawlowicz-o-akcji-rodzice-odwazcie-sie-mowic-to-molestowanie-i-zgorszenie,308912.html>

As a matter of fact, the KPH profile serves as an invitation to discussion; however, it is intended mainly for its supporters- it is hard to find any polemical opinions. As Oliwia Tarasewicz-Gryt points out, social networking services enable to put together knowledge of many users among of which there are experts in different fields; they also mobilize for action and integrate experiences. At this point, association with the activity of fandom communities described by Jenkins is very apt. However, the community of convictions can lead to confirmation in the belief that one's view is the only correct one, and to susceptibility to emotional appeals [Tarasewicz-Gryt 2010: 51-52].

In the "Parents, dare to speak out" campaign's case, the posters representing parents with their grown-up children are the crucial element of the action. Władysław Kowalski, a famous Polish actor, is among them. The presence of noted figures is nothing unusual in this sort of messages; as J. Warchala reminds: "Famous figures, mass culture icons, authorities, pop culture idols are used frequently[...]. The value of the authority, who people believe in and who is admired (even though sometimes it is only a momentary admiration and vain faith), lies in a potential possibility to pass the authority on a brand (initiative or action.)" [Warchala, 2006: 283]⁵. Well-known persons can significantly contribute to the wider publicity of the raised issues. They may also constitute an additional argument for attitudes' alteration by the target group. However, an effective use of a celebrity is conditioned by the proper choice- if there is a connection between "a star" and a campaign's subject or if he or she influences a target group in accordance with our plan [http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/wiedza_faq]. Online films accompanying a campaign have a parallel construction.

Jakub Z. Lichański claims that an advertisement as an announcement built according to the rules of rhetoric, refers to a stereotype and that it is why it is so effective [Lichański 2007: 164]. The public service advertisement also refers to a stereotype, though its basic aim is different: it has to overturn or re-model the stereotype in order to alter convictions or attitudes. It is worth adding, that on the website <http://www.odwazciesiemowic.pl>, there is a special section where the subject of stereotypes and prejudices is accurately elaborated [<http://www.odwazciesiemowic.pl/warto-wiedziec/o-stereotypach-i-uprzedzeniach>].

The most visible element of the campaign are the posters representing parents of gays and lesbians with their grown-up children. One of the faces of the campaign is an actor, Władysław Kowalski and his son, Kuba. Parents learning from their children is the central theme. The meaning of all three slogans is easy to grasp- since they could change something in their lives, the other parents can as well. In this case, the example is set not from the top but from the bottom- from children to parents. *Docere-* to teach- is here the dominant function which any other functions are subjected to.

⁵ My translation from: „Często wykorzystuje się [...] znane postaci, ikony kultury masowej, autorytety, idoli kultury popularnej. [...] Wartość autorytetu, któremu się wierzy i który się podziwia (choć czasami jest to jedynie podziw chwilowy, a wiara jakże płonna), tkwi w potencjalnej możliwości przekazania autorytetu marce (inicjatywie czy akcji)”.

Three slogans are as follows:

“My son has taught me how important it is to be yourself. Władysław, father of a gay” (Phot.1).

“My daughter has taught me how to be brave. Elżbieta, mother of a lesbian” (Phot.2).

“My daughter has taught us how to speak openly. Aneta and Rafał, parents of a lesbian” (Phot.3).



Phot.1.

Source: <http://www.odwazciesiemowic.pl/>



Phot.2.

Source: <http://www.odwazciesiemowic.pl/>

Phot.3.

Source: <http://www.odwazciesiemowic.pl/>

Inviting Władysław Kowalski to participate in the action has been a very relevant choice. The famous actor not only attracts attention, he is also authenticated by his strong relation with the campaign's subject matter. Perhaps, it is worth emphasizing that we have to do with an actor, a person who plays various roles, builds different characters. After all, his job consists in creating illusion. Audience frequently identifies an actor with his or her roles to such an extent that fiction blends with reality. For some, Stanisław Mikulski will always remain Hans Kloss from *Stawka większa niż życie* (*Stake Larger Than Life*.) When an actor reveals some facts from his or her life, he or she simultaneously invites the audience behind the scenes. This kind of invitation has a symbolic significance. That is why, probably, many people are interested in actors' private lives. Returning to the previous indications, the main stereotype to which the message is referring is the common opinion that the greatest actors play their roles all the time, even off the stage. They pretend to be someone else, they rather create themselves than show their true face and always hide something. It is worth noting that the slogan "My son has taught me how important it is to be yourself", shows the importance of learning to appreciate the value of being oneself, and to endeavor to confront with the internal 'self.' Michał Warchala writes about authenticity as the obsession of modern epoch which, as Lionel Trilling previously obse-

erved, has dominated language as well- this notion has become a part of “moral slang,” and consequently has entered everyday language [M. Warchala, 2006: 5-7]. It may be said that it is a part of the language we speak to ourselves in our own minds. The notion of authenticity works well also in the language of advertising, e.g. “Be yourself, choose Pepsi.” This message contains an order which can be interpreted in different ways but still leading to one aim: buy this product- you will be authentic; authentic people buy this product. Obviously, a receiver understands that she or he will not be authentic unless he or she choose this product. As M. Warchala writes: “Longing for an authentic existence is accompanied by a constant fear of inauthenticity, dissimulation, artificiality and, consequently, manipulation. The enormous popularity and cult status of such movies as *The Matrix* perfectly illustrates these fears manifesting not only in the common consciousness, but also at the level of learned reflection. We are afraid that our existence and our reality is only an illusion, a show behind the scenes of which manipulating forces are lurking- a modern incarnation of the Cartesian evil demon” [Warchala 2006: 7]⁶.

Being oneself is not something obvious, the definition does not explain precisely what it means. The value of the pursuit of authenticity consists in continuous updating the defined goals. In this case, it is achieved thanks to relatives, i.e. significant others, in such a contact where frankness is the most important. The slogan on the poster is intensified by suggestiveness of the image finding the following interpretation: there he is, the actor – the Master – who learns the most important art of life from his son. The value has been enriched since it has returned from the one who was once teaching how to be a good man, thanks to the person who received this learning those days.

Just as being authentic updates its sense in comparison with its opposite – being inauthentic, so such a notion as boldness can be defined as opposed to timidity and cowardice. This motif belongs to the most important themes in literature constituting inseparable feature of heroic characters, frequently the tragic ones. It is connected with other themes like motif of a victim, choice, conflict, rebellion, happy or unfulfilled love, etc. The third stereotype which the advertising slogan refers to is learning braveness. A recipient is used to the fact that children learn braveness from adults. True braveness, authenticity and frankness gain their meaning thanks to contacts with people who are important to us. Credibility, boldness, frankness – this is the great triad.

⁶ My translation from: „Tęsknocie za autentycznym istnieniem towarzyszy stały lęk przed nieautentycznością, udawaniem, sztucznością i kojarzącą się z nimi manipulacją. Ogromna popularność i status kultowości przyznawany takim filmom jak *Matrix* doskonale obrazuje owe lęki, manifestujące się nie tylko w potocznej świadomości, ale i na poziomie uczonej refleksji. Boimy się, że nasza egzystencja i nasza rzeczywistość jest tylko pozorem, przedstawieniem, za którego kulisami czają się manipulujące siły, współczesne wcielenie Kartezjańskiego złego demona”.

CONCLUSION

As indicated in the introduction of the article, the achievement of objectives in the public service advertising is a difficult task which requires taking into consideration a number of elements: "Attitudes changed in public service advertising are generally characterized by high complexity as they are deeply embedded in the traditions and values of a given society. Within the framework of social campaigns promoted by public service advertising, there is an aspiration for maximally permanent change of attitude or behavior and for maintaining its stable form for a long time. It is difficult as the society is frequently induced to radically different behaviors and opinions" [Fedyczkowska, Garycka, Martyniuk 2010]⁷.

The messages analyzed by the author differ significantly from those widespread ones, based on the exposure of unpleasant content, subjected to the *movere* function. The messages built in the campaign "Parents, dare to speak out" implement the teaching function in the first place. An aspiration to elicit emotion is of course present, as well as using the element of fun and looking behind the scenes. It may be said that the balance of the various elements is model in this case.

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⁷ My translation from: „Zmieniane w reklamie społecznej postawy charakteryzują się na ogół dużą złożonością, ponieważ są mocno zakorzenione w tradycji i wartościach danego społeczeństwa. W ramach kampanii społecznych promowanych przez reklamy społeczne dąży się do maksymalnie trwałej zmiany postawy czy zachowania, i utrzymania jej stabilnej formy przez długi czas. Jest to trudne, ponieważ często nakłania się społeczeństwo do diametralnie różnych od dotychczasowych zachowań czy poglądów”.

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