National identities on display. The role of advertisements in the management of Polish national identity

Anna Lubecka

Abstract: The claim that advertisements are among important facets of the public discourse of post-modern societies is a commonplace statement today. This fact, however, does make the investigation of how they perform the role neither less attractive nor less challenging. It seems that their contribution to a national identity discourse represents an especially interesting research area for at least three different, often contradictory, reasons. Firstly, national identity belongs to “hot” topics widely discussed today, continually defined and redefined because its basic frame of reference – nation/state – does not constitute solid explanatory concepts any longer. Secondly, identity communication by means of advertisements tends to create many controversies – advertisements were born to meet consumption- and market-oriented needs of the producers and buyers of goods, and as such dealt mainly with materialistic values. Consequently they do not seem to be suitable to discuss traditional concepts of national identity, the core underlying values of which belong to the so-called higher order spiritual culture, which also demands a lofty form – its language. Thirdly, underlying socio-cultural changes (above all the homogenisation of culture together with the domination of pop-culture) demanded a change in both the conceptualisation of national identity and the choice of new efficient communication channels to reach young people.

The article discusses the role of advertisements in communicating Polish national identity by means of the socially engaged and social advertisements. The first ones do it within the Corporate Social Responsibility scheme but as they aim at enhancing the positive image of the company, identity becomes a peripheral and often instrumentally treated issue, e.g. as in the campaigns by Tyskie Ducal Breweries. Social advertisements are directly concerned with civic values which constitute the foundations of identity, e.g. the campaigns “The disabled – the abled in the workplace”. The campaign “We are a national team” by *Biedronka*, a chain of food supermarkets, has been chosen for a detailed examination to show how a modern version of patriotism is promoted by advertisements.

Keywords: national identity, advertisements, Polish culture, social responsibility, public diplomacy

Introduction

Post-modern identity is faced with many dilemmas and challenges as today it has moved from a peripheral to the central issue widely discussed by its holders (Giddens 2001; Misztal 2000: 143). Important changes can be observed in its conceptualisation (Bauman 1999: 43; Lubecka 2007), which corresponds to the socio-cultural and political context of the undergoing often contradictory changes. National identities seem to lose importance due to a decline of the institution of the state which so far constituted natural frames of reference for them (Gellner 1991). The growing role of supranational, global institutions exemplifies the issue, e.g. the European Union which promotes the concept of the Europe of regions rather than states and stresses the role of the European identity encompassing national identities of its member states. Moreover, identities have been recently strongly shaped by the idea of civic assimilationism (Gordon 1978) where civic values successfully compete with national values and national identifications.

It is also global culture that provides unified models for identity holders all over the world and, consequently, post-modern identity tends to be constructed by means of identical components constitutive of popular culture, e.g. consumption, entertainment, media, the role of all kinds of celebrities as global significant others – film stars, soap opera characters, sportsmen, participants of reality shows, objects of everyday life, etc. (Enderson 2002). Due to its globalisation, identity has become homogeneous and thus by definition uniformed in its nature for which mass culture and media as well as market constitute main conceptual frames (Lubecka 2006).

On the other hand, however, a tendency can be observed to compensate the loss of strong national identities with an emergence of various socio-cultural groups people belong to and strongly identify with. These groups are often marginal and function as socio-cultural niches but because of trends and fashions they have gained importance, e.g. groups defined by gender, sexual orientation, ecology, eating habits and food culture (fast food vs. slow food, see also Annuk 2013, this volume), types of TV programmes, attitude towards consumption (adbusters), etc. Consequently, postmodern identity has been challenged with pluralisation and atomisation of culture, which has resulted in its becoming a complex and multilayered construct (Bauman 1977; Grzybowski 2001: 40). It resembles an *opera aperta* whose creation is never completed. It also lacks stable and fixed points of reference, which makes it a palimpsestic structure.

Identity issues have become particularly important in the post-colonial and also post-dependent societies¹, e.g. the post-communist countries where people have to, firstly, positively deconstruct their identity and only then start its re/construction. They are faced with many difficulties in the process as, on the one hand, they should preserve their cultural roots, and, on the other, take the best of what post-modernity is to offer to them. To recognise the value of their own tradition and cultural heritage, often evaluated as outdated and unfashionable, they have to recognise them as their authentic roots. It is possible only if they become empowered, which means that they have regained their self-respect, self-confidence, self-worth and self-pride which the years of communism have deprived them of. In the process of building a participating democracy, they have to recognise, as their own human rights (which today also mean equality of and respect for the so-called new minorities as well as their social inclusion), a concern for ecology, market transparency, honesty, solidarity with the underprivileged, political engagement and responsibility also manifested by an active participation in national or regional elections, etc.

Considering the above, let me stress once more that post-modern identity has become a more encompassing concept than ever before. It has also been separated from people and attributed to organizations, products, geographic areas, etc., which has made it external to its holder and is subsequently often treated as a market product (Berger 1980). As such it has started its independent life, which means that it has become fluid and much easier to modify and change depending on the occasion, aim, participants, place and time of the interaction. Consequently, post-modern identity has gained its own market value and as such it depends much more on external factors, trends and fashions than on its owner. It tends to be treated instrumentally as a means to achieve some ends. It can be thus traded, negotiated, marketed, branded and managed to answer social expectations and assist its holder in becoming a success (Dziemidok 2003).

The above understanding of identity in the post-modern market-oriented reality and mass culture where the culture of consumption plays such an important role fully legitimises the research on the impact of advertisements on creating a modern national identity or rather on managing its socially expected and accepted image. Consequently, the objective of the present article is to study how the mass culture potential, especially as embodied in its prominent aspect of the culture of consumption, has been used by socially engaged and social advertisements to display Polish national identity and also to educate

¹ The concept of a post-dependent society seems to suit better the situation of the post-communist countries which have never been colonies in the proper sense of the term but which, after the fall of communism, have to reconstruct all aspects of their life (cf. the concept of the post-dependent society by Hanna Gosk (2010)).

in certain traditional values which need to be greened to become attractive to young people before they accept them and include them in their identity.

The basic research question is how we manage our identity, which is still deeply rooted in traditional national values but which searches for a totally different language to reach the young generation – the digital natives and active consumers. To illustrate the point, we will focus on how socially engaged and social advertisements deal with it, in particular with regard to patriotism, a traditionally vital value of Polish national identity. The choice results from patriotism, being an especially widely discussed and controversial component of national identities today, which, as already mentioned, are encouraged to focus on civic rather than national values (Sacks 1996).

Patriotism – a core value of Polish national identity

Patriotism has always been a vital constituent and a solid fundament of Polish national identity (Omelanduk 2007; Roztworowska 2011; Brook 1981; see also Lubecka 2013: 89, this volume). Due to its special role throughout centuries of Polish history it has become a nearly sacred construct which served to define the whole nation as well as its individual members. It also played a vital role in creating imagined communities (Anderson 1991) among Polish political and economic immigrants, symbolically and emotionally uniting them independently of their place of living. It has not stopped playing the role of a core value of Polish national identity even today when because of a progressive weakening of the concept of the state as a political entity, both of them, national identity and patriotism, have become controversial values, at least as far as their traditional concept is concerned (Billig 1995: 6). Patriotism is often discredited by all kinds of *-isms* and even accused of becoming a form of, for example, nationalism and chauvinism. Additionally, often opposed to global citizenship and civic assimilationism, it tends to be taken for conservative and archaic, unfashionable and *passé*.

Recently, its nature has undergone deep changes following the transformations in its socio-cultural, economic and political context. Its modern and to some extent globalised version includes, among others, some totally new manifestations such as, for example, market patriotism, which consists of buying and promoting national products, protecting national markets and national companies from being taken over (Clift & Woll 2012) as well as civic diplomacy (Leonard & Stead & Smewing 2002) concerned with creating a positive image of Poland for Poles themselves as well as for foreigners.

The economic aspect of national identity and its status as a product have become especially controversial for Poles whose identity has been traditionally constituted by national culture identified as high culture and its subsequent values of the highest order, e.g. unconditional love and patriotism as stated by the Polish national poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid. The Polish national identity traditionally implied militant patriotism because of long centuries of a turbulent Polish history when the fight for a free Poland was the main duty and concern of all Poles, with only short breaks in the interwar period and after the *caesura* of 1989. Its symbols were Polish national patriots, soldiers and artists alike, who fought for the freedom of their beloved country wherever and whenever there was a chance to defend the Polish cause. They also supported other nations in their fight for independence, cf. the presence of Poles in the American War of Independence, or their solidarity with the Eastern and Central European societies in their fight against the communist regime. The Polish militant patriotism used a romantic myth of Poland as “a Christ of the nations” thus assigning to Poles a special life-long mission of chosen people who suffer to redeem Poland and the whole world. It is marked with a kind of a dramatic necessity – to fight a chance to win. It is also slightly pessimistic, impractical, unrealistic, and past oriented, presenting the history as glorious and grandiose.

The concept of Polish patriotism used to be transmitted from generation to generation by means of cultural artefacts, mainly belonging to high culture, which has additionally enhanced a noble and sacred character of Polish national identity. Similarly, its communication script demanded a use of lofty language, both verbal and non-verbal such as national symbols, for example the Polish flag, the Polish manor house, the Polish patriotic jewellery, Polish national hymns such as *Mater Dei*, *Nie rzucim ziemi skąd nasz ród* (‘We will not give up our land’), the national epic “Pan Tadeusz” written by Adam Mickiewicz, etc. National poets, writers, painters and musicians were its bards and any attempt to make its language less formal and grandiose was seen as blasphemy.

Today the militant patriotism has lost its *raison d'être* but patriotism as a value is even more needed than before to build up Poland's position as a strong, economically independent and politically significant partner within the EU and other global institutions. The new Polish patriotism means a feeling of pride of being Polish and belonging to Poland, hard and honest work for its prosperity, solidarity and responsibility for and engagement in public affairs, etc. It is pragmatic rather than romantic. However, despite all the changes, the modern patriotism of Poles is still marked with many romantic undertones and still nurtures the romantic ethos of the past when it insisted that Poles carry a mission to save Poland and the world as mentioned before.

Accepting the thesis that the ideas of patriotism and national identity in post-modernity belong to mass culture and are a market product allows us to treat advertisements as their natural medium, the efficiency of which may even be bigger than that of traditional cultural approach. Advertisements reach a wider audience, especially after the Internet has become their proper environment, which makes them both communicate various aspects of identity to young people and also create certain models to be followed by them. This role of modern advertisements has become possible because their functions have been extended. Apart from their classical functions of informing, promoting and encouraging changes in the consumer's behaviour, they have been assigned a role of a legitimate actor in the public discourse with an aim to educate its participants and to provide them with models to adhere to in their private and public life.

It is not too much to say that many modern advertisements have assumed the role of "significant others", once reserved to important people, masters, and heroes whose set of values and moral conduct were exemplary and copied by a large public. Many expressions and slogans from advertisements have entered everyday language, affecting also popular ways of thinking, interpreting the world and behaving (see also Järv 2013: 117, this volume). The studies of advertisements, the ambiguous status of which involving simultaneously a product and a constitutive element of mass culture, point out their great educational potential in modern societies.

Identity and advertisements

It is interesting to observe that advertisements offer certain identity concepts (Bartholomew 2010) independently of their nature, be it purely commercial, socially engaged, social and even subversive, or performing an educational function. The difference merely lies in the treatment of identity issue either as central (social advertisements) or peripheral and instrumental (commercial advertisements, socially engaged advertisements, subvertisements).

In the first case, identity oriented values constitute the content of the advertisement and its main concern. The message is constructed in such a way as to communicate a certain socially important issue which is basic for managing civic identities. The roots of this can be traced back to the Greek tradition of *agora* where such civic virtues as responsibility, honesty, self-dignity, respect, self-worth and self-empowerment as well as respect for others, truth, public good – understood in its Roman meaning of *res publica* – were cherished and regarded as fundamental for every citizen. Also subvertisements, which because

of their objectives can be called anti-advertisements, deal with identity issues, especially in their consumption-oriented aspects. This is so because today most citizens have given up their strictly civic and political activities to become consumers. Thus the aim of subvertisements is twofold: apart from criticising non-reflexive hyper-consumption which results in reducing a buyer to a product itself and limiting their identity to a one-dimensional *homo economicus*, they also use the consumption-oriented activities as an area of semi-civic activities (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Beck & Giddens & Lash 1994), e.g. to stop socially harmful and unethical policy of global corporations (CSR or corporate social responsibility).

As far as the two other kinds of advertisements are concerned, identity-specific values are treated as a strategic choice of marketers, resulting in a value added effect which is to ennoble and even justify the main, purely commercial message consisting in advertising a given product or service. Typical commercials which focus merely on the product and its features could have been fully successful twenty years ago. Today, if an advertisement does not possess a distinctive character which would distinguish it from all kinds of other commercials, its chances to be noticed by potential customers are close to none. The point is that modern clients who are exposed to a continual mass attack by marketers have become less apt to their manipulations. This in turn has forced marketers to look for new resources and a new language better fitting post-modern value systems, social expectations and communication skills of their audience. They have also been exploring new ideas, previously classified within different areas, because in the era of post-modern transculturalism, a transgression of all borders can be observed, which results in an exchange of meanings and values among cultures (Welsch 1999).

Identity offers a new area in advertisements, interesting to potential customers because, as already mentioned, it raises many controversies and belongs among hot topics widely discussed in public discourse. Additionally, advertisements as a *genre* belong to mass culture and are competitive when compared to other genres, especially when identified with high culture, because they use an unsophisticated language short of intellectual references and are thus easily understood by mass public. Considering the features of the language of advertisements, we posit that its impact on identity management process is bigger than expected. Identity management is defined here as a series of activities planned, implemented, motivated and monitored either by an identity holder him-/herself or by a professional manager whose aim was to create, first of all, a positive image of a given identity and thus of its holder.

In the case of the so-called socially engaged advertisements, their primary objective is to create or strengthen a positive image of a product or a service and

then a positive image of its producer or provider by adding non-market values, e.g. specific components of national identity. However, it means that national identity or rather its individual aspects tend to be treated rather instrumentally as a strategic choice to enhance these images by enabling a producer or a service provider to act as a socially responsible company and also as a public diplomat. Thus, although identity issues are not primarily focused on, as already stated, they usually have a significant impact on the identity management process by communicating some dimensions of national identity to the wide public of typical consumers. In this way they contribute to an on-going discussion about identity in public discourse. The conveyed image of national identity is constituted around traditional values which have been greened mainly because of their use of language and their channel – the electronic media. In most cases it is an everyday language, even informal and conversational, the same as the language of an average Pole. Easy to understand and familiar, it results thus in their emotional identification with it and subsequently with the values it embodies.

Unlike the socially engaged advertisements, social advertisements focus solely on the issues important for the whole nation or its particular social groups. They play the role of a modern *agora*, which is to activate civic awareness and to encourage all kinds of activities aimed at generating the public good. Their aim is also educational as they sensitise people to certain values and model their subsequent behaviours.

Teaching Poles national pride, self-confidence and human rights through advertisements

The political divide of Europe before 1989, physically embodied in the Berlin Wall, resulted in an image of two Europes and two societies still existing today: Western and Central / Eastern European. The former one is economically affluent, the latter backward and economically underprivileged. To overcome their inferiority complex, the Central and Eastern Europeans from the former communist bloc need to feel empowered. They need to rebuild their self-confidence as well as find pride in themselves and their own country. Let me stress that a successful national branding works as a value added not only in its economic sense, but first of all, in its socio-cultural meaning, as it is a source of the intangibles and a way to empower people by enhancing their sense of a socio-cultural identity. One of its effects is a conscious citizenry.

The advertising campaign by Tyskie Ducal Breweries “Poles inspire the world” is a rather successful attempt to make Poles proud of being Polish. The

campaign started in September of 2010 to advertise the Polish brand beer *Tyskie* in newspapers, Internet and on billboards (outdoor advertisements). Its main idea was to promote beer by associating its name with famous Poles whose inventions or discoveries have contributed to the world progress and the development of the particular countries where they worked. Adopting the language of marketing, all of them already function as brand names and by using them within the context of beer, the brand name of the latter becomes even stronger. The message the campaign was sending was the following: if such great Poles as for example Ignacy Łukasiewicz (the inventor of the first oil lamp), Paweł Strzelecki (the discoverer of the mountain chain in Australia whose highest peak was named after him), Ernest Malinowski (the constructor of the trans-Andean railway in Peru for which he was recognised as a national hero) achieved so much in the past and have made the name of Poland known and respected in every corner of the world, contemporary Poles can also become a national and international success. They should be proud of their compatriots, whose example should inspire them to be as innovative, inventive, determined and courageous as their compatriots were. Being Polish is an honour and privilege, a distinction and a reason to feel proud. Polishness should be treated as a benefit, a kind of an order of merit which any Pole is entitled to if they are true to typical Polish values (see <http://www.internetowekonkursy.pl/894/tyskie-polacy-inspiruja-swiat/>).

The campaign explores the concept of patriotism which serves to generate public good and create a better life by contributing to an individual growth, social coherence and world development. This kind of patriotism is not militant, which makes it strongly different from the classical concept of Polish patriotism. It should be clearly stressed that purely human values and hard everyday work with beneficial effects for others, not only fellow citizens, constitute its core. The campaign not only promotes the concept of the modern version of patriotism but it also empowers Poles. It inspires them to continue the tradition of Polish world-wide success and it also teaches, although in an unconventional way, the Polish history, which was often created outside the borders of Poland. Many young people, the target customers of the Tyskie beer, were thus given a chance to learn how to build their own self-confidence and self-pride.

The same idea of pride and empowerment has been clearly expressed by national marketing campaigns such as the one from 2005, which used the slogan "Poland. The heart of Europe" (cf. website of Kampania Promocyjna PAliIZ S.A.) and another from 2008 titled "Eye on Poland. Country at the Crossroads" (cited in a news text by CNN). Their aim was to create a positive self-perception and perception of Poles and Poland by breaking the negative stereotypes of the country, most of which stem from its communist past (Poland as a vodka country

associated further with poverty, low life standards, cheap labour, intolerance, over-religiosity). The campaigns were directed mainly at non-Polish investors to encourage their economic interest in Poland.

The campaign “Poland. The heart of Europe” uses the metaphor of Poland being a geographic centre of Europe to give it a new sense. After the big historical *caesura* in 1989, the role of Poland in European economy, politics and culture has been constantly growing. It became a member of the NATO and in 2004 of the European Union. The Polish presidency in the EU in 2011 and the choice of Poland together with Ukraine to organise the Football Cup in 2012 are sound pieces of evidence supporting the previous statement. Moreover, it was the only “green island” in Europe left untouched by the European economical crises in 2008. The stock exchange in Warsaw is the most successful in Central Europe and attracts investors from all over the world. Thus, the location of Poland at the crossroads of Europe where the West meets the East (which was its weakness in the past, cf. the history of Poland) has been treated as its strength, its opportunity and its great potential upon which to build its success, national and international alike. Creativity, inventiveness, initiative, self-confidence, determination to become a success, future-orientation and optimism are necessary values to make Poland a pulsating heart of Europe. Still many Poles have to learn this new self-image and its subsequent values, especially about how to combine the Polish tradition and past (which have played such an important role in shaping Polish national identity) with an ability to look into the future and work efficiently to give it a definite shape. A white and red kite with the name of Poland on it flying high in the sky symbolically transmits the idea. The picture was chosen as an official logo of Poland in 2001.

As already mentioned, the modern version of self-pride and national pride is often market-oriented. This area also demands a redefinition today because of the heritage of communism that mostly produced very low quality commodities and services. The mistrust in the goods “made in Poland” can be seen even today although the situation is rapidly changing. The first successful attempt to counterbalance the attitude of Poles was the campaign to reward the best Polish companies with the logo *Teraz Polska!* (“Time for Poland!”) and thus to promote them both in Poland and abroad. It started in 2007 and since then it has become one of the most prestigious Polish business awards, highly appreciated by Polish businesses. The patronage of the president of Poland additionally enhances its prestige and value (see <http://www.terazpolska.pl/pl/konkurs-teraz-polska-promocja>).

A more recent example of similar campaigns is the campaign “Tyskie. From Poland” of the Tyskie Ducal Breweries (see <http://tyskie.pl/reklamy.html>). Its objective is to reconstruct the brand name of Polish products and thus to restore

confidence in Poles and also their self-pride and self-confidence. The campaign consists of many short stories with the beer Tyskie as their main protagonist. The stories happen in pubs and bars as well as during beer festivals or beer competitions in many different parts of the world, e.g. New York (Brooklyn), in the Czech Republic (Prague), Russia, and also in Iceland. Tyskie gains the highest appreciation of local beer lovers, kippers and connoisseurs all over the world. When they discover that it is a Polish beer they feel surprised as it tastes the same or even better than the best known brand beers such as Carlsberg, Heineken, Corona, Guinness, Sparks, etc. with which it can successfully compete on the market. The campaign not only encourages consuming Tyskie beer but it also reinforces the economic patriotism of Poles, which belongs to civic virtues.

Typically civic values, such as equality, tolerance, respect and social solidarity, constitute the bases of the policy of social coherence, which is the strength of the democratic society. Two examples of social campaigns “Stop domestic violence”, which started in 1997 and “The disabled – the abled in the workplace” (*Kampanie społeczne*) in 2005, illustrate the issue.

The first campaign was designed to sensitise Poles to a very important issue of domestic violence. Treated as shameful because of a strong social pressure and thus hardly ever brought into a public discourse by its victims, it made the perpetrators feel safe and continue their practices. The campaign which consisted of a few series of images showed in different periods of time dealt with various manifestations of domestic violence. The sub-campaign *Kolejna zupa była za słona* (‘Because the soup was too salty again’) from 2009 used a face of a woman, a mother and a wife that was bruised because she did not satisfy the culinary taste of the man. Another picture explained the blue marks with an unemotional statement “Because he had to get rid of stress”. The campaign was to bring to the public attention the daily dramas of thousands of Polish women who are beaten, maltreated, psychologically oppressed and sexually abused by their spouses, partners, fathers and brothers. Their social, economic and educational status is not important. All of them are victims not only of individual men but first of all of the society, whose silence is a kind of consent for the domestic violence to be continued. By breaking one of the social taboos, the campaign started a public discussion on this important issue. It also was an attempt to empower the victims and to make them regain their self-respect, self-dignity and self-worth by telling them that they are no longer alone and domestic violence is not their fault. The message sent to them was to support them in their fight for their human rights.

The second campaign also aimed at empowering the members of the minority whose human rights are not always respected. It was launched in 2005, on the European day of protest against the discrimination of the disabled (May 5,

<http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/12585>) to disapprove of a perception of the disabled exclusively through their disability and consequently of a reduction of their identity to this very aspect. Such an approach may justify their discrimination, social marginalisation and treatment as second class citizens, which becomes even reinforced because of a lack of proper infrastructure, social prejudice, lack of self-empowerment, economically difficult situation, etc. The slogan on the campaign billboards was to draw attention to an unjust and harmful stereotype concerning the disabled. Being different does not mean that the person is worse and should be discriminated in the workplace, for example, which is often the case. By bringing the issue of the disabled into the public discourse, the negative stereotypes will hopefully be broken and the people will live up to their full potential. The slogan was also to start a change in the identities of the non-disabled whose system of values needs a thorough redefinition.

“We are all a national team” – patriotism in the socially engaged advertising campaign of *Biedronka* (a chain of food markets)

Two types of patriotism – economic and romantic – have been recently used in the advertisement by *Biedronka* (‘Ladybird’), the biggest chain of Polish food supermarkets (which belongs to the Portuguese consortium Jerónimo Martin). In recent years, *Biedronka* has significantly improved its image, and following the proud statement of Paweł Tymiński, its spokesman, 80% Poles declare doing shopping in this supermarket chain. It means that more than 2,5 million Poles visit the market every day (<http://marketing-news.pl/message.php?art=29006>). Such a spectacular success of *Biedronka* has resulted not only from improving the quality of its products but also from stressing that *Biedronka*, despite its non-Polish origins, promotes Polish goods and supports Polish economy. 95% of all of its products are Polish, which significantly contributes to the development of Polish market and agricultural industry. Similarly, by building its reputation on quality, it creates confidence of Poles in their own products. It also has a positive share on the labour market as the chain employs over 30 thousand people in 1650 markets and 9 distribution centres all over Poland. Its Polish deliverers have reached the number of 500 (<http://marketing-news.pl/message.php?art=29006>). This points out economic patriotism that *Biedronka* boasts about: promoting national products and national market as well as protecting them against global economy. Thus on the official webpage of *Biedronka* we read that “Whatever is Polish has a special value for all of us – both employers

and customers of *Biedronka*. We support those who share the same values” (A.L.²; <http://www.biedronka.pl/>).

Biedronka has also become an official sponsor of the Polish National Football Team, which, considering the role of football in Polish mass culture (e.g. the match between Poland and Norway in February 2011 was watched by 3,476,000 fans), has become a very clever advertising strategy, positively contributing to its company image. At the same time referring to the whole Polish context of its management, *Biedronka* has used the campaign to introduce the topic of patriotism into the public discourse and to teach its new non-militant form against the post-modern culture, which is unpatriotic by definition.

The advertising campaign started in March 2011, using the slogan “We are all a national team”. It consisted of a series of short TV spots whose protagonists are Franciszek Smuda, the coach of Polish national football team for the Football Cup in 2012, and average Poles, football fans and *Biedronka* clients as well as *Biedronka* staff together with its stakeholders – deliverers, producers, business partners, etc. In one of the scenes, all of them wear white and red costumes with the Polish national emblem – the white eagle with a gold crown – and wait to be called on by the coach to train under his supervision. In another one, a taxi driver hears on the radio his name read by Smuda, who has chosen him to be a part of the national team. The list of the names is very long, it is read in an alphabetical order and it contains all the names of Poles. All of them have become the national team supporting Polish footballers. It does not matter who they are, what their actual job is, where they live and how old they are. The whole nation is on Smuda’s list and all Poles are responsible for Polish success or failure. The aim of the campaign is “to encourage all Polish football fans to support the national team so that the players become confident in their victory. We are one team and we have to support each other. We should remember that we play together ... in the same team” (A.L.; see <http://www.biedronka.pl/>).

The advertisements play with emotions – being a part of Polish national Football Team is an honour and a privilege but at the same time a challenge and responsibility. Representing Poland against an international background raises an average Pole to the status of a national hero and makes them share the burden of duty with such great Poles as Kościuszko and Pułaski, Piłsudski, and other heroes from the history of Poland. It is also a very efficient way to create national solidarity, pride and unity, which seems to be a relatively easy task because a situation fostering patriotism – there is a real enemy, the other team – has been constructed. In this way the romantic tradition has been revived

² The text with the initials A.L. have been translated by the author of the present article.

and each Pole has become chosen to fulfil a special mission: to make Poland invincible on the stadiums of the Football Cup 2012. The Polish individualism has been given a new value as all of us, special and unique as we are, are to play in one team – the national team.

The emotional bonding has become particularly strong because the love of football has not always been reciprocated. Poland does not have a successful national team but Polish football fans have not lost hope and still support Polish footballers, especially now when Poland was recently the organiser of the Football Cup. Franciszek Smuda has become a symbol of this hope and a pivotal figure for football fans.

The campaign aims at making us forget about our inferiority complexes and uniting us to become strong and determined to win. Our victory is not impossible, because, Adamiakowa, an average Pole, is quite a good player and so are the others. What we need is solidarity and determination. We have to become one national team united by the same goal of winning. In this way the advertising spots seem to break the stereotypes about Poles and to create their new image. Poles keep together not only when their national existence has been threatened by enemies and they need themselves to defend their independence. They also form a united community when they play together, have fun, work for a success, and then celebrate it. This is the new patriotism based on a community spirit and resulting in a strong imagined community among people who do not know each other but share common values and goals. It is also the patriotism which can be practiced by everybody and is communicated by an easy language of mass culture.

Sport, especially football (as a very democratic discipline), has become the field where patriotic feelings are manifested with a great strength. Waving national flags, singing the national anthem, wearing national colours and shouting slogans which easily identify the nationality of the fans can be seen only on football stadiums today. Solidarity and unity, pride of belonging to the national team, self-esteem and self-empowerment, self-value, self-worth, and self-recognition are directly communicated mainly during football matches and other sport events. Similarly, a victory or a defeat of a national team can make the whole nation celebrate or mourn it. Sport in general and football in particular belong to the social events which encourage an open manifestation of patriotism, making it an important value and civic virtue.

Conclusions

The examples used in our analysis concerning the role of advertisements in communicating national identities make us claim that they have become one of the most important and active factors contributing to the identity creation process. It is so because they deal with non-economic values even if their first objective is to promote products and services. The evolution of the advertisements as a *genre* – from purely commercial to socially engaged and social advertisements – has allowed them to treat issues other than those which are strictly economic and market-oriented. Their language, simple and colloquial, understood by average people, as well as their use of electronic media have made them important actors in public discourse where national identity is discussed.

Advertisements are a typical product of mass-culture and post-modernity, and as such they offer an image of cultural identity which corresponds better to the expectations of the identity holders in the 21st century than if it were conveyed by high culture and its language. This image also fits their needs and understanding of the world. Moreover, identity values are not exposed in an explicit way as abstract concepts, intellectually difficult to understand. Neither are they directly taught or, even worse, imposed on people. They are merely manifested as certain behaviours, given a tangible form and a down-to-earth and practical interpretation. Fun, entertainment, celebration, spectacle – the elements of contemporary advertisements and of mass culture – facilitate communication in a friendly way. The recipient is free either to follow and identify with it or reject it. Still, because advertisements use such communication strategies and psychological manipulations which enhance the information efficiency, the message always reaches the audience.

These are the strengths of advertisements which have been tailored to meet the abilities and needs of their public. Still, there are as many proponents as opponents of advertisements as a proper medium for the national identity discourse today. The controversy arises mainly because of the generation gap in understanding identity and its expression. Modern national identities can be banal and they do not need the lofty metaphors of waving flags (Billig 1995: 6) to be authentic and strong. The patriotism they use is not overexhibited either, but is still manifested in everyday events, ordinary, commonplace and even boring. Concluding, let me stress that considering the need to adjust the identity language and its medium to the intellectual abilities of identity holders as well as to their socio-cultural needs and habits generated by post-modernity, it seems that advertisements are able to fulfil this function with success.

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