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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE EYES OF THEIR RECEIVERS, ON CAMPAIGNS PROMOTING SAFE DRIVING EXAMPLE

Abstract

Social campaigns embrace communication activities targeted at certain communities, and their aim is to increase public knowledge or change its behavior. A major differences between commercial and social campaigns are both the subject and the arguments (symbols) used in a message. The purpose of this paper is to show the specificity of social campaigns, as well as to present subjective opinions about discussed campaign attractiveness and their impact on behavior.

Key words: alcohol, communication, effectiveness, social problems

Introduction

Social campaigns are activities planned for a given time, directed to a specific target group. Their goal is to increase knowledge, change the way of thinking, attitude or behavior associated with a particular social issue. The basic premise of this type of actions is to inform people about problems that occur in their milieu, but more often there are also campaigns discussing global issues. This is a relatively new phenomenon, although actions supporting societies affected by natural disasters in various parts of the world have been present for years. A kind of a novelty, however, are campaigns showing people's everyday live, such as domestic violence and pro-environmental behavior. Among these relatively new problems one can find road safety issues. Therefore the aim of this paper is to show the specificity of social campaigns tackling safe behavior on the road, as well as the presentation of subjective opinions of major recipients (drivers) about attractiveness of messages and their impact on motorists' behavior. Theoretical considerations are supported by statistics about road traffic and road accidents in

Poland in 2009–2011, and by authors' own study results (data collected by direct and online survey among 160 respondents).

Methods and material

As mentioned above, in order to show an opinion of campaigns' recipients, 160 people were surveyed (both young and experienced drivers, driving duly and having penalty points). Having analyzed the age of the surveyed respondents, it can be said that most responses were received from individuals up to 40 years of age (approximately 82% of all respondents), 25 respondents were aged between 41 and 60 years, and 4 people were over 60.

Drivers were presented with posters associated with eight campaigns related to road traffic and were asked to assess a number of criteria (rated posters and slogans of the campaigns can be found at the end of the article). Respondents were asked about: (1) a way in which campaigns reach them, (2) remembered slogans, (3) the attractiveness of campaigns with the participation of famous people, (4) opinions if campaigns really influence the behavior of drivers, (5) feelings when viewing messages (to which extent the picture seems to be scary, funny, eye-catching, thought-provoking, understandable, needed, etc.).

Methods that we have used in this article are a questionnaire survey and content analysis as well as an analysis of the official statistical data.

All discussed campaigns can be found on: <http://www.kampaniepoleczne.pl/> (access: 2.11.2012).

The essence and objectives of social campaigns

Social campaigns are defined as intensive communication activities addressed to a specific target group, which goal – as mentioned – is to increase public knowledge, or persuade to changes in thinking or behavior. Most often, they discuss important social problems, so they talk about divergences between the ideal behavior set by social norms and the reality [Kowalik, Sęk, 1999]. Therefore, campaigns often deal with such problems as disease and addictions, juvenile delinquency, violence, prostitution, suicide, unemployment and poverty. In addition to these threats today, we should add issues related to civilization development of societies. One should include environmental hazards, as well as healthy lifestyle into such problems. In this group, there is a problem of a lack of safety on the roads.

Social campaigns promote desirable social norms of behavior, acceptable models, induce to a change of thinking [Bogunia-Borowska, 2004], and their intensity indicates that the behavior of people today is quite far away from the ideal. Such messages often inform about facts and issues that are difficult to publicize, as in the case of the campaign “Bad touch” and “Do you really want to be in our

place.” Promotional campaigns may also inform about the possibility of financial and material support for various organizations, which are the creators of the campaign and different help programs – then their main goal is to show the audience difficulties they have to deal with, and how they can help the needy. This is to evoke emotions in the target group, which will help to decide how to support the organization. An example would be the campaign of SOS Children’s Villages under the slogan “Back to School” (the association raises funds for school and extracurricular activities and layettes for abandoned and orphaned children).

Campaigns can, of course, encourage healthy lifestyle, such as the operation “Fish is good for everything,” performed in 2008 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Campaigns can also promote certain events, for example fundraising conducted by the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. In addition to this campaign, the “Clean Up the World” or the “Cleaning the Baltic Sea”, organized under the aegis of Our Earth Foundation, are worth mentioning. A major difference between commercial and social campaigns are both the subject and the arguments/symbols that have been used. The commercial messages typically talk about benefits for the consumer, while social messages refer to an opportunity to do good and help the others. Also broadcasters are different – they are not commercial operators, but usually public or private non-profit organizations. Finally, the target groups are also dissimilar – in case of public campaigns it can be a problematic group, which will be much smaller than generally understood consumers, and it may also be a group of defenseless people in need of help, for the support for which a broadcaster will appeal. So the campaigns, as well as their receivers, are different from those in the commercial market. The above issues will be discussed later in this article.

Design and implementation of the campaign

The process of planning and implementing a social campaign is usually divided into six stages. The first and most important is to define the social problem, which means describing the given phenomenon. Subsequently, it is essential to identify social groups that may relate to this problem (i.e. group directly and indirectly involved; risk groups, groups whose behavior is a direct cause of the problem, as well as a group whose behavior influence the problem indirectly). Depending on the chosen group, one has to determine motives of the behavior and the consequences that may arise if it does not change [Wasilewski, 2007].

The second stage includes a recognition of the market, which should be named the research phase. At this level one should carry out research on cognition and describe all the participants of the campaign and the environment in which a social problem is present. The effectiveness of communication can depend on the accurate selection of recipients of the message. During this phase of the campaign, planning creators should benefit from the experience of experts, listen carefully to the market and analyze the statistics. Gathering and analyzing all the

possible and available information will allow to realize the campaign in an appropriate way [Maliszewski, 2007].

Next, one should specify the entire marketing strategy, starting with appointing the campaign objectives and ending with the methods of evaluation. Although social campaigns are carried out by non-profit organizations, the planning stage should also include budgeting and contacting with commercial services suppliers that contribute to the implementation of the campaign. At this stage it is also important to establish relevant arguments (rational and emotional) that one will use to convince the audience to change their behavior, and then specify channels to reach the market. In return for sacrifices that the “client” of social campaigns will have to make, the broadcaster should show them benefits that they will reach adjusting their behavior to proposed standards; or to show the consequences they will have to face if they still will do what they do now. The success and effectiveness of all actions rely on this element.

In the next, fourth stage, one should plan specific actions. At that time a campaign execution team should be built and tasks should be assigned. The most important aspect at that moment is to provide necessary information on the responsibilities and scope of work of individual people. Of course, the whole team should be familiar with the mission, should know the budget, schedule and goals of the campaign.

The fifth stage covers planning of monitoring and evaluation. In practice, this step should be accompanied by the campaign creators from the very beginning because one can monitor various stages of preparation, and not just the final results. Measuring the effectiveness is needed to verify if all activities follow the right and desired direction. At this stage the complete data which will be needed for efficient monitoring, should be gathered. Also the ways of analyzing and interpretation should be determined. The last, sixth step, embraces the implementation of the whole program in which all previous activities overlap. The planned steps are starting to be realized, an aspect of monitoring and evaluation begins, and – most likely – the element of modifying plans according to the changing situation appears. The final step will be a summary, discussion and drawing conclusions that are needed for future campaigns planning.

Social advertising vs. commercial

Social campaigns are often seen as non-profit messages that – if they are present in the mass media – can be equated with ads (though the term of campaign is, of course, a broader category). Social advertising now is recognized as a fundamental instrument of social campaigns promotion. Advertising itself covers many disciplines, starting with the advertising of goods and services (commercial ads), through promoting people and ideas (political ads), and ending with discussing social advertising, which focuses on non-commercial aspects of a given society’s life [Wiszniowski, 1999]. According to N. Maliszewski and D. Maison, social advertising is a process of communication that uses persuasion to achieve a goal

that is to change behavior [Maison, Maliszewski, 2002]. So it can be concluded that social advertising is a form of social communication whose aim is to draw attention to the unsolved problems, referring to even quite marginal communities. From the above examples flows a conclusion that social advertising refers to the universal human values often irrelevant to customers guided by pragmatism and – in case of commercial advertisements – expecting useful information about the offer [Ostrowicki, 2002].

Commercial and social advertising can equally reach the audience by mass channels of communication that have several advantages: information can be built by a lot of components such as color, sound or testimonial, and in a short time it can reach many customers (thanks to simplified message that is understood by all).

But the shortcomings of such messages must be also remembered: long preparation time, high costs, low customers selectivity, and impersonality affecting the credibility of the information.

Social advertising can be analyzed from three major points of view [Kozłowska, 2006]:

- cognitive, relating to the provision to society an adequate resource of news on important social topics. It is designed to build knowledge and indicate the consequences (both positive and negative) being a result of situations in the environment;
- behavioral, referring to persuasion of the public to adopt the accepted social behavior (e.g. assistance to victims of natural disasters); the second aspect of this area refers to the omission of undesirable activities (such as reckless driving);
- emotional, related to the awakening of positive and negative emotions, which strongly influence the decisions and changes in behavior [Nowacki, 2005: 37–39].

It is worth mentioning that the efficiency of information increases when there are unexpected elements, causing stronger reactions associated with the topic. So far, social ads very often use negative emotions because such campaigns are faster to notice and more memorable [Doliński, 2003]. But it is also connected with an excitation of guilt, embarrassment or shame, which adversely affects the behavior of receivers. In addition, frequent exposure to ads showing fear, disease, misery and pain makes people want to forget about the bad emotions and not want to believe that this issue can affect their personal life, so they run a defense mechanism which allows them to forget the message, which, of course, reduces the effectiveness of such advertising [Doliński, 2003]. The effectiveness can be determined only when targets of actions have been defined. Thus, the campaign can be called “successful” if it leads to a goal, and besides, one should remember that the campaign is the more effective, the higher result of planned actions are seen [Wrzosek, 2005]. In case of social campaigns one of the goals can be: fewer injuries, a certain amount of money needed to be collected to enable activities of the organization; a number of products purchased; or conducted events.

Since social campaigns deal with issues of contemporary human life and their goal is to get attention or commitment, in these cases the effectiveness can be de-

terminated on the basis of four parameters: (1) awareness of the problem, (2) level of sympathy for the problem, or level of interest, (3) the involvement of the recipient, and (4) a subjective assessment of the attractiveness of a message [Blythe, 2002]. The last of these parameters will be the subject of comment in this paper.

It is worth emphasizing that the efficacy is not the only determination of the total value of the program but it is also a judgment on the effectiveness (an assessment of whether expenditures incurred for the project are adequate for the obtained results). Moreover, the value of the program can be assessed as well by adequacy, i.e. congruence of objectives of a project to the real needs and priorities, as well as from the utility, which verifies whether the results of the campaign are in line with expectations, and how they impact on their fulfillment. Finally, the value of the campaign can be assessed in terms of durability, i.e. on the stability of campaign effects in the future.

Broadcasters of social campaigns

Social campaigns, although they often talk about money, have non-commercial purposes and are created by specific organizations, called non-profit entities. Non-profit organizations can be divided into two basic groups: public and non-governmental (NGOs). Both groups serve mostly social interest, although the first ones are formed by public authorities (government, self-government), the second – thanks to individual initiatives. Public nonprofits usually include: healthcare institutions, cultural organizations, welfare units, universities, as well as state and local government entities. Amongst nongovernmental organizations there are associations and their cooperatives, and foundations, in which one can find organizations taking care of the poor and the needy, *ad hoc* committees associated with the specified action, self-help organizations, hobby and recreation organizations, organizations engaged in cultivating of tradition, etc. [Huczek, 2003]. Social campaigns are initiated both by public and private organizations, although the latter seems to be more frequent.

However, in the case of road traffic campaigns are organized by the National Council for Road Safety (NCRS) – an auxiliary and advisory body in matters of road traffic safety which directs and coordinates the government activities in the issue a road safety (established on 1 January 2002). NCRS includes such members as: the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways, the General Inspectorate of Road Transport, Police Headquarter, Headquarter of the State Fire Service. In addition to these organizations there is also the National Centre for Road Safety, which also promotes safe driving [www.krbrd.gov.pl, access: 2.11.2012]. NCRS and its partners have held several widely known campaigns connected with the safety on the road, under the general theme “Switch Thinking on”: *Last Jump* (conducted in 2005), *Been drinking? Do not drive!* (2008), *Make-believe tragedy* (2008), *Safely to your destination by a bicycle*

(2009), *Have you been drinking? Do not drive!, Speed kills!* (2011). The purpose of all these actions is to reduce the number of road accidents and the number of the dead and injured. For example, the strategic objective of the program *Make-believe tragedy* is to reduce by 2013 the number of victims on the roads by 75% [<http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/>, access: 2.11.2012].

The longest campaign is *Last Jump* – preventive-information campaign, focused on issues related to traffic safety, especially with fastening seat belts. The main recipients of the campaign are primarily young people between 18–24 years old, who often oppose any rules and restrictions, and feel independent and confident. Ads talking about seat belts are supported by the National Police Headquarter activities (increased controls on the roads), by regional centers for traffic operations (especially instructors like to remind about the belt), by an involvement of the national motorists priest (a pastoral letter about the campaign announced, which was read in 10 000 parishes in Poland, and posters were hung). These activities are supported by drivers associated in many taxi-corporations support (drivers inform passengers about the need to use a seat belt, in taxis there are also leaflets and car fresheners with the campaign slogan “Always use a seat belt”). Additionally, during the campaign in the Warsaw roundabouts hostesses distributing flyers and promotional materials (leashes and car fragrances with campaign logo) accompany the police [www.krbrd.gov.pl, access: 2.11.2012]. So the aim of the campaign is to reach the drivers and passengers not only by advertising, but also by using many other activities. Apart from government agencies dealing with road safety – as already mentioned – some private non-profit organizations also take care of this issue, such as:

- Foundation “DTS” Road Accidents Dąbrowa Górnicza (founded in 2003),
- Transition – The Association of Victims of Car Accidents and Crime from Radłowo,
- AMBER – Foundation for Victims of Road Accidents operating in Łódź,
- The Foundation for Enhancing Children and Youth Safety on Roads – “I am visible – I am safe” operating in Wieluń from 2012.

According to the database of NGOs, in Poland there are over 240 organizations involved in road safety [http://bazy.ngo.pl, access: 2.11.2012].

Safety on the Roads

TNS Pentor Report [Pentor, 2011] shows that in Poland most respectable for road regulations are: women, people over 40 years of age (especially those aged 60 years and over) and experienced drivers (driving cars at least 16 years) [TNS Pentor, www.krbrd.gov.pl, access: 2.11.2012].

But only 28% of drivers always respect the provisions of law, and this means that more than 70% motorists sometimes (or often) do not comply with the rules. This report also states that in the opinion of drivers exceeding speed limitations restricted by the signs is not the major factor posing the biggest threat on the

road. Fast driving in adverse weather conditions and fast driving combined with bravado, according to the respondents, are at the forefront of the risks of safety. The most dangerous factor was identified as driving after consuming alcohol.

Road safety is a function of three key factors that are interconnected: a man – a vehicle – a road [Wicher, 2002: 30]. The first factor that contributes to road safety is a participant in the road traffic, i.e. walking person or any other person who is in or on a vehicle. Statistics show that the mistakes made by people are the most common cause of collisions (resulting in property damage only), and accidents (property damage and at least one person who suffered injury).

Car drivers must meet the basic requirements for the vehicle's psychological profiles, which include: thinking, memory, perception and attention. When driving, they often encounter new situations for which there is no clearly developed approach, and they must use their skill of correct conclusion based on the acquired knowledge.

Safe driving behavior is affected by individual risk assessment, personality, temperament and lifestyle of a driver. Other road users; behavior also plays a significant role [Kurczyński, 2009], which is related to, for example, the number of moving vehicles – comparing data from 2000 and year 2011, it can be seen that the total number of vehicles has almost doubled (from about 14 million to 24 million) [<http://dlakierowcow.policja.pl>, access: 2.11.2012]. The largest group of registered vehicles are passenger cars, which in 2011 totaled 17 million (70% of all vehicles). About 65% of road accidents are caused by unconsidered human activity, while accidents caused by technical defects of vehicles caused around 2%, and road imperfections caused 3% of all collisions [Gaca, Suchorzewski, 2009]. Thus it is understandable that campaigns about safe movements on the road emphasize the importance of the behavior of drivers and other road users. And still this behavior leaves a lot to be desired because every year several thousand people are killed on Polish roads (in 2011 it was almost 4,200), while tens of thousands are injured (Fig. 1). And although in the last few years periodic decrease in the number of killed and injured people has been reported, in 2011 we can see an increase in number of incidents compared to the previous year.

Drivers bear the biggest blame for traffic incidents; they make up 80% of all accidents. Most common delinquency committed by them is inappropriate speed for the road conditions, which was the cause of 30% of all accidents. Bearing in mind the above data it can be stated that campaigns sensitizing on safety road behavior are still needed.

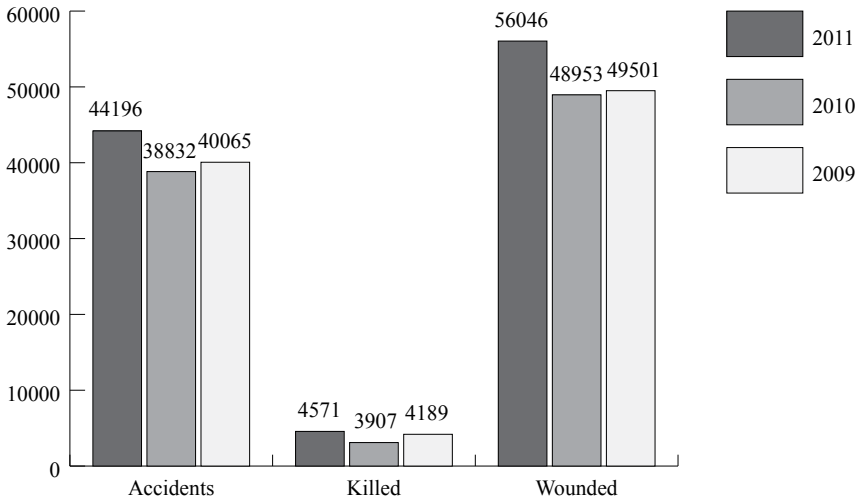


Fig. 1. Road accidents and their consequences [between 2009–2011]

Source: own study based on: http://dlakierowcow.policja.pl/porta/dk/807/47493/Wypadki_drogowe__raporty_roczne.html [access: 28.09.2012].

Campaigns promoting safe behavior on the roads – study results

As it was mentioned, drivers were presented with posters associated with eight campaigns related to road traffic and were asked to evaluate a number of criteria. Respondents were asked about their contact with a given campaign, slogans and leitmotifs they remember, testimonial of famous people and their influence on drivers' behavior, and finally feelings when viewing messages.

Respondents most frequently stated that campaigns reach them through television – as many as 127 people (80%) indicated this channel. In second place were media such as the Internet and billboards, 85 indications each (53%). Despite generally accepted view that the campaigns are noticed by drivers, 122 people could not remember a slogan of any campaign, and only 38 respondents (24%) reported the correct answer. Mostly respondents indicated that they remember the motto – *Been drinking? Do not drive!* (13 people). The second in the order of the most frequently indicated campaigns is focused on motorcycles; 7 people (18%) reported a slogan *Look in the mirror, motorcycles are everywhere*, 4 people (11%) remembered a slogan promoting safety at railroad crossings, and 3 persons (8%) remembered a social campaign that relates to the speed limit – *STOP! To madmen on roads*.

It can be added that respondents positively evaluated slogans with a double meaning, as *The last jump* (*jump* in Polish means a freak, and quickly leave from

a place). Fig. 2 relates to this issue, showing that the most thought-provoking campaigns are about stopping at crossings despite the fact that the respondents rarely remember guiding catchwords.

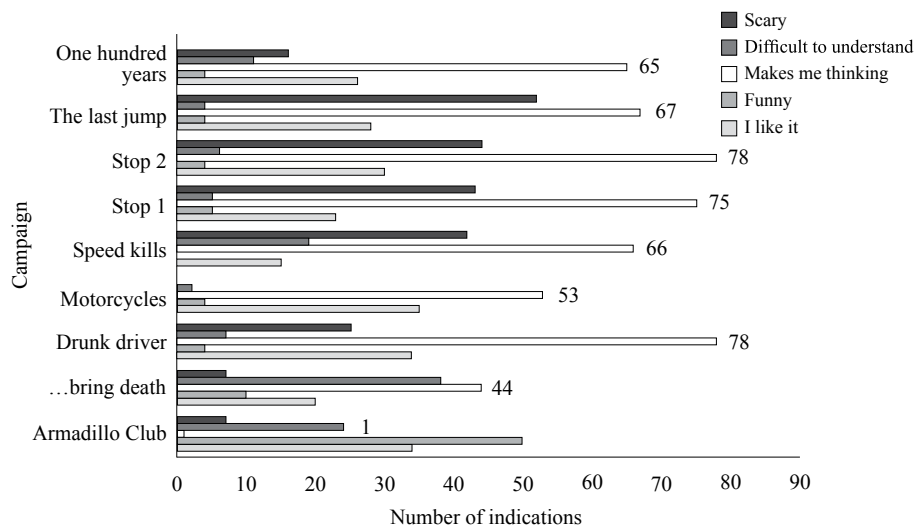


Fig. 2. Evaluation of campaigns' messages ($N = 160$)

Source: own study.

It turns out that the biggest number of campaigns was identified by experienced drivers – 32% reported the correct slogan, while among young drivers specific slogan was memorized by 28%. It seems the key messages are often overlooked, while celebrities attract more attention. E.g. Krzysztof Hołowczyc, Tomasz Stockinger, Tomasz Karolak, Katarzyna Dowbor and Tomasz Kot appeared in social campaigns. The majority of respondents (55%) answered that celebrities attract attention and make the events more likely accepted. Some of the respondents (17%) stated, however, that the presence of popular people is unnecessary, because topics of the campaigns are seen as really important anyhow. What's more, the presence of celebrities may be problematic when the main character does not comply with the same rules they proclaim and, for example, drive under the influence of alcohol, or for other reasons is negatively assessed.

Regardless of numerous messages amplifying the problem of safe driving, respondents did not agree with the thesis that there are too many social campaigns. The majority thinks that campaigns have a positive impact on the improvement of the situation on roads, because they force to pay attention to the consequences that may result from unsafe behavior. At the same time respondents marked that the greater effectiveness of campaigns can help other actions, such as higher fines for violations of traffic regulations, and more frequent police patrols. They also

emphasized that their own experience affects their driving behavior, so that, for example, people who once survived an accident look at safety issues different.

According to the respondents, messages talking about safe driving should not be humorous, unless they are addressed to children, and their goal is to teach safe behavior. In case of campaigns targeted at adults, the most effective are realistic, literal images showing effects of accidents. Another element clearly speaking to adults are statistics, put on the tables titled “black spot on the road” where numbers of dead and wounded are given. Although most believe that campaigns are producing positive results, 7.5% of the respondents said that nothing is able to change their habits behind the wheel and they are not interested in any campaigns.

One factor that may influence knowledge and perception of social campaigns on road safety can be the number of people in an immediate family. This is an important criterion in terms of safety while driving because if a driver has family to take care of, they should especially increase caution on a road, think rationally and pay attention to all the messages, talking about problems of safety while driving. The obtained data indicate that among respondents 96 people (60%) have a full family. Besides 20% declared that they live alone, and another 20% lives with one family member (a child or a single parent). This means that a large group of drivers do not feel responsible for others, which can affect the perception of campaigns and their own reactions.

The bulk of respondents is familiar with campaigns promoting safe driving. Straight, black-and-white images, or – as mentioned – real images showing the effects of accidents speak to them the strongest. Some drivers, however, do not pay attention to any messages, which may be due to the fact that campaigns highlight only the drivers’ blame, and say little or nothing about the specific of a product (alcohol) and guilt of producers. Thus, the responsibility is put on one side only, and this can cause resistance [Wolburg, 2005]. Many of the messages suggest that drinking alcohol is permitted as long as the driver does not sit behind the wheel, which makes drinking itself seem harmless. As a result, the content of messages does not fully meet the preventive role.

In addition, the effectiveness of the campaign is also affected by other factors, such as 24-hour stores with alcohol, or too rare police controls [Fogarty, 2009]. Finally, it should be added that demarketing in case of alcohol consumption is initiated only by nonprofit organizations (government or private), while producers do not do anything, which also shapes the behavior of alcohol consumers and road users [Hastings, Angus, 2011].

Conclusions

Social campaigns are broadcasted primarily by nonprofit organizations (governmental and nongovernmental), and their goal is to change the thinking or behavior. Because campaigns usually refer to negative behavior (such as addiction, violence), their effectiveness is difficult to determine and establish. If one assu-

mes that the goal of the campaign on safe behavior is to reduce the number of accidents and the number of victims, it must be said that campaigns are effective to some extent. It can be seen in the statistics: in 2009 44196 accidents were recorded, while in 2011 – 40065 (10.3% change); in the same period respectively 4571 and 4189 people lost their lives in accidents (change of 9.1%). Slightly better results can be indicated in the number of injured people – in 2009 it was 56046, in 2011 – 49501 (13.2% change). Thus the data show a downward trend. However, to achieve the goal of reducing the number of casualties by 75%, is far away. The intensity and repetition of campaigns influence public awareness of the problem and the level of interest, but affect personal involvement to a lesser extent, because most people believe that it is not their concern.

Respondents asked about effectiveness of campaigns stressed that good communication is not enough. The need for effective law and more intensive actions of the police were underlined. Respondents mostly hear about campaigns through television, and believe that:

- campaigns have a positive effect on drivers' behavior (although 7.5% think that their behavior will not change);
- the most effective are real images showing the effects of accidents; slogans and catchwords are not remembered by drivers;
- celebrities involved in campaigns draw attention to messages and problems, but it has a positive effect on effectiveness of communication only when they are acclaimed and respected.

The specificity of social campaigns is build both by the nature of communication (promotion of ideas instead of offers), as well as by the audience, which is often problematic (people with addictions, having trouble with the law), and are reluctant to undergo the appeals. It seems that an effectiveness of the campaign talking about safe behavior will be reduced when the recipient is a person without family responsibilities (in the survey: 60% of respondents). Young drivers who cause the most accidents belong to this group. Thus, the effectiveness of the campaign is not only the question of intelligent message, slogans and laws, but is also connected with demographic changes and modifications in people's lifestyle.

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