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### MYTH-MAKING AND SOCIAL SUGGESTION IN MODERN ADVERTISING: WORLDVIEW-COMMUNICATIVE ASPECT

**M. A. Kozlovets,\* O. I. Androsovyc,\*\* L. V. Horokhova,\*\*\* M. O. Oksytovych\*\*\*\***

*The article examines viral advertising as a modern socio-cultural life phenomenon. Virality is analyzed as a special social and communicative process based on the inner motivation (to share the received emotion, comment, criticize, upload and distribute certain content). It is noted that the viral advertising phenomenon expresses the assertion of trust, because it contains the expectation that the recipient of the advertising message will express the same emotions as the sender. As well as focus on the recipient as a carrier of "tablet consciousness" and "clip thinking". The possibility of determining the rational grounds for the virality of the advertising message in modern social communication is denied. The specifics of the viral advertising phenomenon manifestation in "information noise" of the daily life of contemporaries are revealed. The peculiarity of viral advertising is that the recipient perceives it not as an advertising message, (although it retains its content and focus on motivation – to buy goods, order a service, vote for a candidate, support the idea, empathize with the value), but as any emotionally colored informational message. Viral advertising is a modern myth that appeals to the ease and simplicity of achieving results. An important aspect of the viral advertising manifestation is its emphasis on the inner, psycho-emotional functional component of human life in a situation of limited direct communication, which is observed, for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

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**Key words:** Mythmaking, Mythologizing, Communication, Advertising, Symbolic Exchange and Production, New Media, Simulacrum, Media Reality.

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\* Doctor of Sciences (Philosophy), Professor, Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Political Science (Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine)

E-mail: mykola.kozlovets@ukr.net ,

ORCID : 000-0002-5242-912X

\*\* PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor of the Department of Journalism, Advertising and PR (Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine)

E-mail: sv.olena15@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1689-4024>

\*\*\* PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor (Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine)

\_glv@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5114-523X>

\*\*\*\* Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, Head of the Department of Psychology and Social Welfare (Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Ukraine)

oksiutovych.maryna@ztu.edu.ua

ORCID : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8574-4268>

## МІФОТВОРЧІСТЬ І СОЦІАЛЬНЕ НАВІЮВАННЯ В СУЧАСНІЙ РЕКЛАМІ: СВІТОГЛЯДНО-КОМУНІКАТИВНИЙ АСПЕКТ

М. А. Козловець, О. І. Андросович, Л. В. Горохова, М. О. Оксютович

У статті досліджується вірусна реклама як феномен сучасного соціокультурного життя. Вірусність аналізується як особливий соціально-комунікативний процес, заснований на внутрішній мотивації (ділитися отриманими емоціями, коментувати, критикувати, завантажувати та поширювати певний контент). Зазначається, що феномен вірусної реклами виражає твердження про довіру, оскільки містить очікування, що одержувач рекламного повідомлення висловить ті ж емоції, що й відправник. А також орієнтація на реципієнта як носія "планшетної свідомості" та "кліпового мислення". Заперечується можливість визначення раціональних підстав вірусності рекламного повідомлення в сучасній соціальній комунікації. Розкрито специфіку прояву вірусної реклами в "інформаційному шумі" повсякденного життя сучасників. Особливістю вірусної реклами є те, що одержувач сприймає її не як рекламне повідомлення (хоча вона зберігає зміст і спрямованість на мотивацію – купити товар, замовити послугу, проголосувати за кандидата, підтримати ідею, співпереживати цінності), а як будь-яке емоційно забарвлене інформаційне повідомлення. Вірусна реклама – це сучасний міф, який закликає до легкості та простоти досягнення результату. Важливим аспектом прояву вірусної реклами є акцент на її внутрішній, психоемоційній функціональній складовій людського життя в ситуації обмеженої прямої комунікації, яка спостерігалася, наприклад, під час пандемії COVID-19 та російсько-української війни.

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**Ключові слова:** міфотворчість, міфологізація, комунікація, реклама, символічний обмін та виробництво, нові медіа, симулякр, медіареальність.

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**Introduction of the issue.** Modern globalization processes, the establishment of multi-channel dissemination of information, increasing its flows, the technological revolution (Industry 4.0) and digitalization have revealed the ineffectiveness of various forms of advertising content (e.g., advertising in print media, flyers). In the socio-humanitarian sciences, a discussion has begun about the "death of advertising", i.e. a significant reduction in advertising space in the quantitative and qualitative expression of traditional forms of advertising and their replacement by new ones. At the same time, there is a tendency to expand the advertising space in the local dimension (especially in the urban socio-cultural space), the totalization of the advertising substrate in the virtual space. Globalization processes, which significantly affect economic interaction between countries, intensify the competition that takes place not only between national and regional companies, but also with the involvement of similar

companies from other countries and multinational corporations.

**The outline of unresolved issues brought up in the article.** In such circumstances, advertising plays an increasingly significant role as a means to promote products in the market of goods and services. However, the current stage of social development, marked by the advancement of information technology and the emergence of information and network societies, is also characterized by the overwhelming prevalence of information noise in the information space. The latter fixes the availability of a significant amount of information, which makes it impossible to adequately select the necessary for the requests of recipients. This is especially true of advertising messages. There is a dichotomy: increasing the volume of advertising messages in the information space leads to simplification of its production and, consequently, reduction of resources spent, availability of technology by non-professionals (deprofessionalization), and the growing

need for high-quality advertising content, the emergence of new services in this area (professionalization). At the same time, both of these tendencies are not so much in conflict with each other as in a state of dialectical struggle, as a result of which new forms appear, while maintaining the essential characteristics of advertising.

**Analysis of recent research and publication from which the solution to this problem was initiated.** The phenomenon of virality in the advertising and information space was meaningfully described in the 90s of the twentieth century in the works of Douglas Rushkoff [1], Jonah Berge [2], to date, it has not acquired systematic research, moreover, scientific studies were limited primarily to a specific subject field of individual sciences. The need for its analysis in the philosophical plane, as well as in the interdisciplinary plane in accordance with the requirements of post-classical science actualizes due to the total spread of this phenomenon in social life. In recent years, Jesús Segarra-Saavedra and Tatiana Hidalgo-Mari have conducted quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis of interactions and visualizations to study the involvement and scale of online audiovisual advertising, content analysis to identify compositional and narrative elements which contribute to its virality, based on advertising messages in the Spanish-speaking segment of YouTube [3]. Łukasz P. Wojciechowski and Zdenko Mago found out the specifics of the connection between viral advertising as a component of guerrilla marketing and digital games at the intersection of the real world [4]. Jeff Hemsley conducted research examining the correlation between the proliferation of social networks and the information circulating within them. By analyzing viral information events signatures, which depict the fluctuating rate of sharing a particular message over time, Hemsley explored the dynamics between social networks' growth and the dissemination of information within them [5], and Shu-Chuan Chu investigated potential link

between Facebook group participation and responses to viral advertising [6]. Itai Himelboim and Guy J. Golan analyzed viral advertising from the network paradigm [7]. Phenomenological approach to the analysis of this socio-cultural phenomenon hasn't been applied.

**The aim of the study** is to determine the main features of viral advertising manifestation as a socio-cultural phenomenon and a component of modern information space.

**Discussion and results.** Modern scientific discourse discusses the question of whether modern types and forms of advertising meet the content of this definition. The problem is the presence of a certain set of this concept, the narrowing of its content in the subject field of certain sciences, the emphasis on certain aspects (e.g., commercial or cultural) and ignoring others. An attempt to make a definition based on the analysis of attempts to interpret it in the scientific and educational literature of the late twentieth century was made by J. Richards and K. Curran. In particular, they interpret this concept as paid impersonal communication from a specific sponsor, which uses the media to persuade or influence the audience [8:64]. But the dynamic change of advertising content leads to a rethinking of some of its statements. In our study, we will use the following interpretation: "Advertising" is a communicative activity of an incentive nature, which aims to draw attention to the object of advertising for mutual exchange.

The use of social networks as a means of mass communication has reached a global scale (according to the Digital 2021 Global Statshot Report, which regularly publishes "datareportal", the number of active social media users was 4.55 billion in October 2021, and 400 million a year, or more than 1 million daily) [9]. This, firstly, contributed to the mass acquisition of targeted advertising, and, secondly, to increase opportunities for viral advertising. Today, many companies use social media accounts alongside

websites to establish contact with consumers on the one hand, and to run viral campaigns on the other. Viral advertising is understood as a type of advertising that is distributed primarily by the recipients themselves, to which it was originally directed. Viral advertising appears both as a component of commercial activity and as a phenomenon of socio-cultural life. We focus on the second. Indeed, viral advertising has been introduced as a marketing tool aimed at finding effective distribution of an advertising product by interested consumers. But we agree with J. Segarra-Saavedra and T. Hidalgo-Mari, over the years we have found that virality has overcome barriers to marketing and commercial communication and has become a key trend that recognizes the audiovisual content of the network [3:52]. Jeff Hemsley also points out that virality is a social process [5]. Viral advertising contains images that, firstly, establish emotional contact with the recipient, and secondly, encourages him to act - to share the emotion, comment, criticize, upload and distribute this content. At the time of Douglas Rushkoff's first description of the phenomenon of virality in the information space, there was no mass introduction of social networking technologies as a delocalized means of communication, and therefore forms of mass distribution were only considered as one of the prospects.

Viral advertising differs from other types in that it is distributed by the recipients themselves, the recipients of information. The latter are the bearers of "tablet consciousness" and clip thinking, which in their lives are focused not on acquiring knowledge, but on the permanent consumption of information, which for them loses relevance in the short term [10:155]. There are other sources of assertion of the totality of the spread of viral advertising as a social phenomenon. In particular, attention is focused on the content of such advertising messages, which affects the psycho-emotional component of the recipient, causing emotions of compassion, joy and

curiosity due to its scandal, provocative content, etc. At the same time, we pay attention to the nature of such communication between its subjects. A significant increase in the number of communicative connections, the ineffectiveness of traditional criteria for assessing the veracity of information, the spread of fakes actualizes in humanity the search for existential foundations of interpersonal interaction.

The phenomenon of viral advertising expresses the assertion of trust, because it contains the expectation that the recipient of the advertising message will express the same emotions as the sender. "Other" in this situation is assessed as trusting "Friend", which is an antinomy of "Foe". And given that one viral advertising message can reach an audience of more than a million people, a virtual mega-social network of trusting "Friend" is being created. The phenomenal manifestation of viral advertising is the recipient's willingness to accept the message, because he trusts the source of its receipt and enters into a communication relationship with it at the most convenient time (for example, browsing stories on social networks, checking e-mail).

Another notable trend is the shift away from the impersonal nature of advertising messages that appeal to a mass of anonymous potential consumers based on a uniform approach. Such advertising messages are typically short-term, with their temporal dimension limited to a single purchase. While personalized address has always existed in the history of advertising, the increasing number of advertising messages in the information space emphasizes the importance for advertisers to employ methods that assume the message will be received by the intended recipient, who will then respond to it. This encourages advertisers to establish one-on-one relationships characterized by long-term prospects and trust, with a focus on truly understanding the client. Companies need to comprehend the needs and preferences of

those who have purchased or are likely to purchase their goods and/or services [11].

Viral advertising is much cheaper by reducing the cost of resources for distribution, but there is not enough rational reason to determine whether a particular advertising product will be "viral" [12]. This is due to the fact that the main factor in the acquisition of virality are emotions (laughter, empathy, concern, fear, etc.). The network society, i.e. the society characterized by network forms of social structure, became the basis for the formation of favorable media reality for this purpose. It allows all types of communication exchanges. This became possible primarily with the advent of digital forms of information. One of the tools for establishing a network society has become the technology of social networks, which allows, first, to unite in interest groups in a global perspective, as well as publicly discuss specific facts, events, disseminate relevant content. It is this technology that has led to the establishment of a qualitatively new trend in advertising - dialogue. If until recently this possibility was technologically limited, and therefore resource-intensive and inefficient (for example, to conduct a telephone survey or advertise a mailing address and hire staff to process correspondence), then a significant increase in Internet users and almost the same scale of social networks significantly cheaper. Consumers themselves initiate the discussion, conduct it, entrusting the customer with advertising mainly the function of moderation.

The most successful advertising messages, which are characterized by virality, are, firstly, funny and hilarious (jokes, antics), and secondly, those that contain shock, horror, fear. Let's agree with Ł. P. Wojciechowski and Z. Mago that the negative aspect of viral marketing is the loss of control after the publication of the message, so the advertiser cannot prevent the message against him in the form of negative advertising [4:441]. On the one hand, such advertising achieves

its goal - mass distribution among potential consumers, and on the other - emphasis on form, the emotional component can lead to either ignoring the motivational component present in each advertising message, turning it into information, or anti-advertising (advertising message, which has the opposite incentive effect - to refuse to buy, order, vote, etc.). This points to the irrational nature of viral advertising as a social phenomenon, which can be destructive, but traditional means of social control are ineffective.

Today's mass media and advertising are becoming a powerful source of influence on people's ideas, views on well-known and described events, phenomena, well-known public or political figures, and so on. Under such conditions, advertising becomes a tool of myth-making. Unlike the archaic myth, which arose due to the lack of awareness of ancient people about the world, the latest myth serves another: it often becomes a means of entertainment. This myth uses the human desire for novelty, as if inviting to play and distort knowledge, cultural values. In other words, such artistic myths (mythologems) give rise to "simulacra" and "simulation" (J. Baudrillard).

Myth does not contain only irrational constructs, fictions, random images and plots, it forms its own reality, in which the life of the individual is intertwined with a complex of his experiences, fears, expectations, hopes and, of course, interest. It is important that the myth forms a reality in which its dimensions, such as simple and time ineffective, are abstract.

Based on our previous research, we have demonstrated that we perceive the myth in advertising as a simulacrum, representing a phenomenon of "life simulation." In a lifestyle saturated with numerous information streams, individuals are often unable to genuinely experience emotions, feelings, and authentic encounters. As a result, the deficiency of these real experiences is

compensated through an abundance of imaginative and fictional elements, akin to a riot of fantasy. In other words, we are faced with the imitation of life, rather than the very process of active, eventful life and this becomes a problem, a challenge of modern life [13:81-82]. As for viral advertising, it itself is the latest myth. It is an illusory impression that it is enough for an advertiser to shoot an interesting video or create a bright page on a website, post on social networks and ready-made content will influence the consumer, encouraging him to share information with his friends, acquaintances and relatives. Currently, scientists are trying to develop analytical tools to measure the effect of virality in advertising, which gives rational grounds for success or failure of its dissemination, in particular Jonah Berge identified a number of principles of virality, including social capital, triggers, emotions, society, practical value and history [2]. However, a universal system has yet to be discovered, as the same triggers employed in different advertising campaigns can yield contrasting outcomes. As emphasized by Shu-Chuan Chu, the effectiveness of viral advertising cannot be solely determined by the intention to share it; additional factors such as the level of engagement with viral advertising and the nature of discussions surrounding it (positive or negative) also play significant roles. [6, p. 40]. It depends not only on the socio-cultural environment in a particular historical society, but also on the state of mass consciousness, its mental features, i.e. the ability to provoke a similar reaction to various incentives. It is also associated with a large number of factors (national, cultural, mental, etc.).

Therefore, advertising messages that are distributed in electronic media and offer the consumer to master the technology of viral advertising, is an advertising myth. This is due to the fact that the latest myth of "viral advertising" explains: anyone can easily, following the proposed rules to develop advertising and it will go viral. This myth appeals to the

ease and simplicity of achieving the result, to the individual as a carrier of "tablet consciousness". The cult of lightness encompasses one of the fundamental aspects of life, emphasizing the promotion of the ideal of "complete relief." Its essence lies in the focus on minimizing effort and maximizing enjoyment, physical pleasure, and convenience. This ideology shapes the primary directions of scientific and technological advancements, their commercialization, and the cultivation of a sense of accessibility. Within the realm of "tablet consciousness," a characteristic feature of the cult of lightness is the perception of information as easily accessible and the ability to swiftly establish communicative connections. In this context, a consumer-oriented attitude towards information predominates, leading to the consumption of advertising content for the sake of information itself. This creates a dependency characterized by the constant, unfiltered, non-selective reception of information, primarily for entertainment purposes [10:154].

The tool of socio-cultural impact of viral advertising on the recipient is a surprise. As noted, every day the recipient is in the space of information noise, receiving thousands of advertising messages. The growing role of social networks in receiving informational messages, many of which are not the media but other users, has led to a reduction in the time spent reading the content of one message. In this way, much of the message is perceived unconsciously or not at all. In this situation, advertisers seek to move away from traditional forms of advertising or broadcasting methods [14]. The effect of surprise in viral advertising is realized as a combination of incompatible, which causes a certain emotional effect, its function is not so much to attract attention as to stimulate the sharing of messages. This functional purpose allows us to consider viral advertising not so much as marketing communication, but

as a social phenomenon, focusing primarily on its socio-cultural component, and then only on commercial.

An important aspect of the manifestation of viral advertising is the emphasis on its psycho-emotional functional component in a situation of limited direct communication, which is observed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The peculiarity of viral advertising is the perception of its recipient not as an advertising message (although it retains its content and focus on motivation - to buy goods, order a service, vote for a candidate, support the idea, empathize with the value), but as any information, only emotionally colored. Positive emotions stimulate the desire to share this message.

Thus, viral advertising is a phenomenon that manifests itself, on the one hand, as catharsis, or rather cleansing from the significant impact of information on the individual recipient (often destructive - criminal news, disasters, discussions of socio-economic issues, etc.). On the other hand, there is a way to create a network of permanent communication with a group of people important to the recipient, as an alternative to information noise. A feature of such networks is the active role of each participant in the search for information. People find content they want to share with others, and the latter express a desire to share with others. In this process, content can reach new people who may find it interesting or attractive enough to create a new link on the web that will connect them to the source of information [5]. Simultaneously, it is rare for social media content to be confined to a single platform, as it often attains viral status through integration and distribution across various platforms. Individuals actively share content by disseminating links through multiple channels, contributing to its widespread reach and popularity [7]. Reducing the ability to communicate directly during a pandemic required replacing this form with others, some of which did not fully

reflect the communication process. The very spread of viral advertising involves the emotional message transmission, which establishes, not long, but through the regular repetition of such actions relatively stable communicative relationships.

**Conclusions and prospects of research.** The use of social networks as a medium for mass communication has attained global significance, thereby expanding the possibilities for viral advertising. This global reach has opened up new avenues for advertisers to leverage the power of social networks in spreading their advertising messages rapidly and extensively. The latter is interpreted as a type of advertising, which is distributed primarily by the recipients themselves, to which it was originally directed, and becomes a phenomenon of socio-cultural life. Virality is also a current trend in the dissemination of information, which is established as a special social process based on the internal motivation to share the emotion, comment, criticize, upload and distribute certain content. Such recipients are carriers of "tablet consciousness" and clip thinking, who in their lives are focused not on acquiring knowledge, but on the permanent consumption of information that loses relevance for them in the short term. The phenomenon of viral advertising expresses the trust orientation assertion, as it contains the expectation that recipient of the advertising message will express the same emotions as the addressee, "Other" in this situation is assessed as trusting "Friend". The phenomenon of viral advertising is characterized by a departure from the impersonality of the advertising messages transmission to "one-on-one" relationship establishment. Network society, reloading the recipient with advertising messages and the creation of information noise have become basic for the formation of favorable for approval media reality, in which there is a totalization of viral advertising. Viral advertising also emerges as a modern myth that appeals

to the ease and simplicity of achieving results. There is not enough rational reason to determine whether a particular advertising message will go viral. The

importance of viral advertising during Covid-19 pandemic is being significantly updated in the context of limiting traditional forms of communication.

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