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Holiday Advertising in the Borderland: The Specificity of Perception in Latgale Region (Latvia) and Pskov Region (Russia)

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Abstract. Holiday advertising is a rather topical object of research that nowadays attracts attention of specialists in various branches opening new perspectives of investigating this phenomenon. One of them is the analysis of the specificity of functioning and perception of holiday advertising in various European and world countries including a comparative perspective of the border zone. The present paper reveals the specificity of the perception of holiday advertising by the example of the south-eastern region of Latvia – Latgale (the major object of the research) and Pskov region that is a part of the north-western federal province of Russia (the minor object of the research) on the basis of interviews carried out in 2018 with the participation of 906 residents of this border area. During the survey, respondents had an opportunity to express their opinion on holiday advertising in general as well as note the positive and negative impacts on a common present-day consumer. Processing of the survey data leads to the conclusion that the notion of holiday advertising in Latgale has been generally crystallized as it is rather often used in daily life, including for the selection of gifts for festive occasions, whereas in Pskov region there is no unified opinion on the essence and significance of holiday advertising yet as, in the respondents' opinion, its potential is not used to a full extent.

Keywords. Holiday advertising, borderland, perception, survey, Latgale region, Pskov region.

Introduction

Modern scientific literature has crystallized an opinion on advertising that “forms an autonomous sphere within the culture framework with characteristic aesthetic, moral, and economic principles and norms of action” and actively “participates in the formation of the value system of the society affecting human psychology and ideology” (Trushina, 2009, p. 23). At the same time, there is a lack of studies that would provide information on the history of the origin of holiday advertising and reveal its development regularities in various European and world countries as well as border areas.

According to scientists, nowadays the commercial sector actively uses consumers' readiness to spend large sums of money during holiday time that is not characteristic of other, non-

festive time periods (Popelková, 2017, p. 183). This process is greatly affected by advertisements matching the festive holiday topics that function in mass media in text, video, and audio format or in combined versions of these formats.

It is noteworthy that the majority of research of this kind at present is dedicated to TV holiday advertising. Scholars from various countries address its: a) content – Christmas and New Year advertising being most widespread (Kurochkina, 2015, p. 90; Çetin, 2019), followed by Halloween that ranks second in popularity (Santino, 2005, p. 47); b) symbolical and attributive code with different interpretations of Santa Claus and other famous characters (Kurochkina, 2015, p. 90); c) techniques of impacting – the main emphasis being placed on the political discourse (Huxtable, Mihelj, Bardan et al., 2017) and children product trade (Buijzen, Valkenburg, 2000; Pine, Nash, 2002; Pine, Wilson, Nash, 2007; Holiday, Norman, Commins et al., 2018).

Holiday advertising available in social networks is analyzed much more rarely. These publications state that it is used in tourist industry (motivating to select locations for ideal festive holidays (Fotis, Buhalis, Rossides, 2012)), offers of gifts and products for children (Fernández-Gómez, Díaz-Campo, 2015), as well as in the activity of holiday organizers (used for designing profile campaign websites and further efficient activity (Nikolaeva, Sohranova, 2018)).

Very little treatment is given to the options of using holiday advertising in press periodicals (Popp, 2012), sales networks (Shamilov, 2011; Batrinca, Hesse, Treleaven, 2018), as well as to other equally topical research aspects of the object under analysis.

Recently holiday advertising has been studied by Latvian scientists as well. Stašāne, Zitmane (2014) regard it as the medium reflecting the consumption development indicators and identity. The present research provides the analysis of the Soviet period when holiday advertising in Latvia was used for liquidating the accumulated product stocks (p. 237) and festive holidays had not been consumerized yet (p. 238); the post-Soviet period when “advertising becomes an essential factor of media profit gaining” and forms the notion of “the desirable good life” (p. 239), and finally – the present-day period when “brand names are not only actively related to festivals, celebration, and festive mood, but address consumers’ identity” (p. 240) – not only Latvian, but also the European one (p. 241). Research work by Murinska-Gaile (2016) is dedicated to the semantic and discourse analysis of holiday advertising, placing special emphasis on colour, symbolism, and verbal code. The article by Zitmane, Kalniņa, Stašāne (2016) provides the analysis of publications (including advertising articles) related to Christmas topics in popular news portals of Latvia.

Hence, it must be concluded that, by analogy to foreign authors, Latvian scientific discourse registers the growing significance of holiday advertising and its rather strong impact on common consumers, while Christmas is characterized as the brightest example of consumerist festivals in contemporary Latvian culture and social space.

Methodology and course of the research

In January-October of 2018, Latgale and Pskov region residents of various ages and social groups were invited to fill in the questionnaire dedicated to the topic of festivities and its contemporary transformations. The survey was conducted anonymously within the framework of the project “Transformations of Festive Culture in the Borderland: the Case of Latgale and Pskov Regions” financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The planned sample design according to the selection type is combined, according to the method – not repeated, according to the selection procedure – stratified by the main lines of the research. Questionnaires were distributed both in paper and electronic forms.

Requirements for the statistically representative sample mean that according to the selected parameters it should approach the corresponding proportions in the overall total.

During the processing of the Latgale's database in the SPSS program, the survey data were weighed according to the main lines of stratification: gender, age, ethnic origin, place of residence; deviation of the sample parameters from the parameters of the overall total after correction did not exceed $\pm 5\%$, the interval of distribution assurance/significance is at the level of 0.03-0.1. The survey involved 467 respondents, 49% of which comprise women, and 51% – men; 45.7% comprise Latvians, 35.9% – Russians, 5% – Poles, 3.5% – Belarusians, 2.6% – Ukrainians, 0.3% – Lithuanians, 7% – other; 80% of respondents are in the working age from 15 years of age and 20% – above the working age (retired people); 11.6% obtained basic education, 46.1% – secondary education and 42.3% – higher education; 40.5% of respondents are urban residents and 59.5% – rural residents.

During the processing of the Pskov Region's database in the SPSS program, the survey data were weighed according to the main lines of stratification: gender, age, ethnic origin, place of residence; deviation of the sample parameters from the parameters of the overall total after correction did not exceed $\pm 5\%$, the interval of distribution assurance/significance is at the level of 0.2-4.4. The survey involved 343 respondents, 40.8% of which comprise women, and 59.2% – men; 82.2% comprise Russians, 3.1% – Ukrainians, 0.7% – Belarusians, 14% – other; 76.8% of respondents are in the working age from 15 years of age and 23.2% – above the working age (retired people); 0.4% obtained basic education, 42.3% – secondary education and 57.3% – higher education; 69.4% of respondents are urban residents and 30.6% – rural residents.

The article summarizes information related to following questions in the questionnaire: 1) "To what extent, in your opinion, festive culture nowadays is being threatened by such risks..." – response option "Influence of advertising industry" (possible answer options – "fully threatened", "partly threatened", "not threatened"); 2) "What is your attitude towards advertising related to festivities subject matter?" (possible answer options – "positive", "neutral", "negative"); 3) "To what extent is your gift purchase determined by commercials?" (possible answer options – "fully determined", "partly determined", "not determined").

During the data processing, seven demographic indicators were selected that to a greater extent determine the respondents' beliefs: gender, age, ethnic origin, education, marital status, number of children under age and place of residence. In order to prove this fact, p-value in accordance with the Mann-Whitney U-test (further in the text – MWUT), and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ (Spearman), further in the text – SRCC) were provided in the analytical part.

For deeper characteristics of holiday advertising perception in both statistical regions, the present paper also summarizes the information obtained in the course of interviews (73 records of Latgale respondents' interviews and 23 records of Pskov region).

Attitude of residents towards holiday advertising

Summarizing of the survey data leads to the conclusion that, in the regions under analysis, the attitude towards holiday advertising is rather different. In Latgale, the number of residents expressing a positive attitude dominates, whereas the majority of the surveyed Pskov region residents identify their position concerning this issue as neutral (results shown in Chart 1):

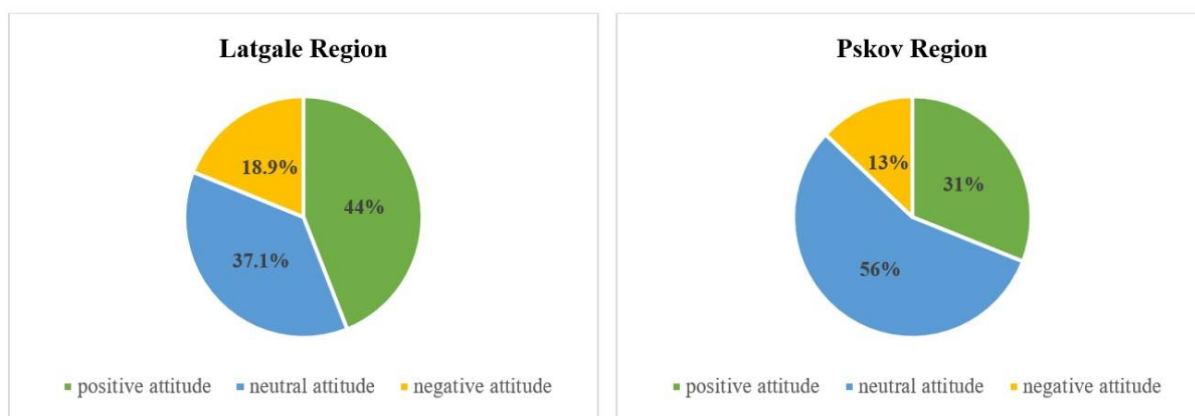


Chart 1. Peculiarities of holiday advertising perception in the statistical regions under study

This difference may be accounted for by the fact that respondents from Latgale in their daily life much more often encounter the phenomenon under analysis because festive culture in Latvia is commercialized to a considerable degree. Sooner or later they accept the terms of consumerist society life and grow accustomed to using the benefits of holiday advertising (learning about the upcoming events, familiarizing with new product offers, comparing and assessing their quality and prices). However, respondents from Pskov region do not always have a clear notion what kind of advertising is meant and express their attitude towards TV advertising in general, not differentiating it as to content and aims:

I, too paid attention to this question in the questionnaire but, probably, I do not pay too much attention to advertising, first of all I have not watched television recently [...]. (female, 20, Russian, Pytalovo region, Pytalovo/Pskov)

[...] well, I don't really like advertising. Well, in fact, because advertising is very seldom not boring, not abusive, you see? Not boring. (female, 84, Russian, Pskov)

After repeatedly specifying the question (the question is precisely about *holiday* advertising), many respondents give a second thought and conclude that it is not characteristic of their region. After a longer pause, some of them still recall having seen/heard information about New Year offers that they found acceptable/not acceptable:

Well, in fact, there is nothing special advertised here exactly for holidays, well, for New Year, yes, but otherwise [...]. Here I don't know, anyway, just for the New Year, yes, for that exactly. (female, 41, Russian, Pytalovo region, Pytalovo)

We don't have it, though... (female, 50, Lithuanian, Pskov)

We don't have something like it, sometimes on television, of course, but, say, when those for New Year start, they irritate me, of course. (female, 67, Russian, Pskov)

In very rare cases, respondents from Pskov region provide comprehensive and justified answers. This is exemplified by an interview with a female resident of Pskov region who

states that holiday advertising is more demanded in the western world where Christmas products are offered in this way, while in her country this is not yet an accepted practice:

[...] Christmas abroad, yes, we know the western environment, they have those Christmas sales, discounts and so on, but we don't have it. (female, 66, Russian, Pskov region, Zagoritsi)

As concerns the issue under study, one of the respondents from Pskov region suggests an interesting strategy of the development of holiday advertising that during the interview was addressed by him to passive, in his opinion, organizers of festive events in the region:

I think we don't have that advertising at all, because... In fact I think so, if a festival organizer is interested in masses, he must use all forms of advertising, for instance, take this example: elections – in our mailboxes beyond elections they may not put, apart from some receipts, anything, well, maybe private businessman would push something in there, but the official, so to say, governmental – will put nothing, but during elections it is sealed – everything that counts and does not count. Therefore, if an organizer of the festival is interested in masses, he must get it to everybody, I don't know, by a small vignette, label, I don't know, dropping something from the sky, from a helicopter... Well, do it somehow! Because the radio – now there is no radio coverage like it used to be, yes, it was there all the time, television – the same, can't watch it, but somebody is arguing, somebody – no, sorry, the papers – I know that not everybody buys them, they are expensive for the folk. Then where do you get that advertising? Yes, there, on Oktyabrskiy boulevard, somewhere there, hung, maybe, somebody good-looking, on four corners there's something, a banner or something will be hung, a huge one, but that's it, and that's not enough. (male, 81, Russian, Pskov)

Notwithstanding the cited examples, taking into consideration the results of both stages of the survey (questionnaire and interviewing), it must be stated that the notion of holiday advertising in Pskov region on the whole has not been fully formed until now; residents of Russia more seldom than those of Latvia are aware of the impact of this phenomenon on the development of contemporary festive culture on the whole (detailed information is provided in Chart 2):

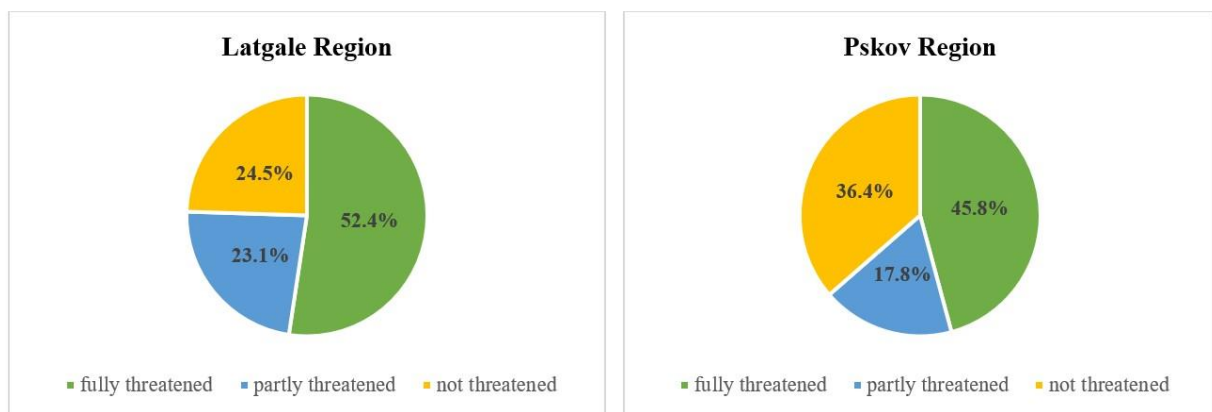


Chart 2. Results of the answer position “Impact of the advertising industry” to the questionnaire question “To what extent, in your opinion, festive culture nowadays is endangered by the following risks...”

The difference between both statistical regions in the perception of holiday advertising is demonstrated also by the comparison of the data provided in questionnaires, relating them to the demographical indicators of the surveyed residents. Central indicators in this case are the age of respondents, their education level, and marital status.

1. The process of the formation of the position of the respondents from Latgale is expressly revealed by their differentiation into 12 age groups¹, that against the background of the respondents from the Pskov region appears to be a real trend. To wit, junior and middle generation people in Latgale most often give a positive evaluation of holiday advertising, while respondents older than 55 tend to be neutrally disposed, whereas in the age group “70+” a negative assessment of the phenomenon dominates. In Pskov region the number of neutrally tended respondents starts dominating at an earlier age – above 30 years of age – and remains until the end of life, whereas negative assessment is not dominant in any of the respondent age groups² (data are summarized in Table 1):

age group	LATGALE			PSKOV REGION		
	positive attitude	neutral attitude	negative attitude	positive attitude	neutral attitude	negative attitude
15-19	59.09%	27.27%	13.64%	60%	40%	0%
20-24	55.56%	38.89%	5.56%	42.11%	31.58%	26.32%
25-29	53.57%	35.71%	10.71%	62.50%	29.17%	8.33%
30-34	57.89%	34.21%	7.89%	25%	<u>67.50%</u>	7.50%
35-39	52.17%	34.78%	13.04%	38.89%	<u>52.78%</u>	8.33%
40-44	40.48%	<u>50%</u>	9.52%	20.83%	<u>62.50%</u>	16.67%
45-49	62.22%	25.56%	12.22%	28.57%	<u>53.57%</u>	17.86%
50-54	50%	42.86%	7.14%	36%	<u>60%</u>	4%
55-59	29.17%	<u>41.67%</u>	29.17%	<u>41.18%</u>	<u>41.18%</u>	17.65%
60-64	27.78%	<u>55.56%</u>	16.67%	32.35%	<u>44.12%</u>	23.53%
65-69	16.39%	<u>49.18%</u>	34.43%	12%	<u>88%</u>	0%
70+	31.25%	15.63%	<u>53.13%</u>	12.28%	<u>71.93%</u>	15.79%

Table 1. Attitude of residents from Latgale and Pskov regions towards holiday advertising depending on their age

The data obtained within the questionnaire are fully ascertained by the materials of interviews of respondents from Latgale where gradual shift of opinions becomes obvious in close relation to the age of respondents:

(1)

[...] I am not such a great partisan of advertising, if I see it, I am glad that my town is active. (female, **16**, Latvian, Daugavpils)

I support it, because in this way everybody gets to know that there will be this festival: when, where. (male, **16**, Latvian, Līvāni)

(2)

Positively (evaluate advertising). (male, **36**, Russian, Daugavpils region, Skrudaliena rural municipality, Skaras)

I don't have negative attitude towards holiday advertising. My attitude towards advertising is good. (female, **47**, Russian, Aglona region, Grāveri rural municipality)

Ordinary (attitude towards advertising). (male, **47**, Jew, Daugavpils)

(3)

No, no, this advertising – no. Advertising – only poor quality, just bad, no need to advertise what is good. (female, **68**, Latvian, Baltinava region, Baltinava)

(4)

[...] as they get going, 15 minutes are yours: you can switch it off, or else. Well, it's enough to say once, why it must be repeated ten times. [...]. They make living on it. They profit by it, by advertising. These advertisements, they are everywhere. (female, **84**, Russian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Zabolotje)

2. The attitude of respondents from Latgale towards holiday advertising is determined by their education level³. Holiday advertising in the region is mostly supported by people having secondary education (48.6%), while respondents with higher education more often than others reflect on the essence of the process of commercialization and as a result develop a critical attitude towards holiday advertising. This trend is demonstrated by the material of interviews:

My attitude towards holiday advertising is positive. Advertising helps selecting gifts, for instance, you don't need to make a gift yourself nowadays, a lot of time is needed for that, but in advertisement you see ready made gifts, you just select and buy them. (female, 42, Russian, **secondary specialized education**, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Borisovka)

Pre-holiday advertising is too imposing, festivals are being presented to us. I think we may do without all this. (female, 49, Russian, **higher education**, Aglona region, Grāveri rural municipality)

In Pskov region, respondents with secondary education stand out against the background of other surveyed people with high indicators of neutral attitude (68.42%), no connection between this demographical indicator and respondents' opinion has been registered⁴.

3. Differences in the perception of holiday advertising are approved also by the respondent differentiation according to their marital status. In Latgale⁵ divorced respondents grossly stand out against other groups as they react towards holiday advertising most sharply (positive attitude – 28.57%, neutral attitude – 34.29%, negative attitude – 37.14%):

No, I don't like it. Because it is basically, I think, it is a lie. They say those things but, let's say, you buy this thing and it's useless. (female, 55, Latvian, **divorced**, Daugavpils region, Ambelī rural municipality, Ozoliņi)

This kind of attitude is most probably accountable for by the traumatic family life experience or the present loneliness of these people.

In Pskov region, holiday advertising is mostly appreciated by people who have not had such an experience yet (single respondents: positive attitude – 51.06%, neutral

attitude – 36.17%, negative attitude – 12.77%), whereas in other groups, as mentioned before, neutral opinion dominates⁶.

It is noteworthy that the analysis of other demographical indicators (respondents' gender, nationality, number of underage children in family, place of residence) revealed similar tendencies for both regions that are characteristic also for the situation of the present-day society on the whole.

1. Among respondents from both Latgale and Pskov regions, female respondents have a more positive attitude towards holiday advertising (48.02% and 45.52%), not males (40.08% and 21.23% respectively), because they are those who much more often purchase the advertised goods, participate in festive events and their organizing⁷. This fact is approved by the information provided during interviews:

(1)

Advertising irritates me in any form. (**male**, 16, Latvian, Daugavpils)
[...] in my opinion, it is very good and positive, because it keeps people better informed, especially, for instance, retired people [...]. (**female**, 16, Latvian, Preiļi/Daugavpils)

(2)

My attitude is negative. (**male**, 51, Russian, Daugavpils region, Dubna rural municipality)
Easy (attitude towards advertising). (**female**, 56, Russian, Daugavpils region, Višķi rural municipality, Koroļevščina)

(3)

Actually, I do not really see it, this holiday advertising. Even when they send it to me on the Internet, now, Rimi is sending that at the moment they have some discounts, I rarely look into it. (**male**, 66, Russian, Daugavpils)

Positive (attitude). (**female**, 69, Russian, Rēzekne)

2. Both in Latgale⁸ and Pskov region⁹, the titular nation representatives are more cautious in their expressions concerning holiday advertising than people of other nationalities. This is accounted for by their concern about the transformations of national culture that are also facilitated by the flourishing commerce in the contemporary festival sphere.

The situation in Latgale is demonstrated by the comparison of argumentation provided by the representatives of Latvians (negative attitude – 23.47%) and Russians (negative attitude – 17.37%) living in the region:

(1)

[...] there are such ads, well, if it gets too imposing, then, of course, I'm trying to ignore it but it's annoying – everywhere in all places where you look, we are told you must do this and this, yes, this does get on your nerves, to tell you frankly. (male, 19, **Latvian**, Daugavpils)
Well, positive (attitude) [...]. I have nothing against it. (male, 17, **Russian**, Daugavpils)

(2)

If the advertising were only informative, then it would be more positive, because mentioning some festival just once in the ad, everything else is something else that is not about this festival at all [...]. (female, 40, **Latvian**, Riebiņi region, Galēni rural municipality, Galēni)

The attitude is good, somebody must need it probably. (female, 42, **Russian**, Daugavpils)

(3)

There must be information, it is both advertising and information about what will take place but it ought to be appropriate. (male, 53, **Latvian**, Daugavpils)

I have a very good attitude towards holiday advertising, if it is not imposing, I do like various competitions practiced in Latvia and shop windows, and snow sculptures, and this pre-holiday trade. It is also there, more or less active, but it is advertising. This is great because it somehow inspires you and adds a holiday drive. (female, 53, **Russian**, Daugavpils)

In Pskov region, based on the survey data, opinions expressed by local Russians (negative attitude – 48.81%) and Ukrainians (negative attitude – 0%) differ most of all.

3. In both statistical regions, holiday advertising is less appreciated by respondents who have three and more children under age (see Table 2 for data summary). This may be related to hard living conditions and dire financial situation that does not allow to participate in more events and activities, though in their gift choices, they often rely exactly on this kind of ads:

	LATGALE			PSKOV REGION			
	the number of children under age in family	positive attitude	neutral attitude	negative attitude	positive attitude	neutral attitude	negative attitude
none		44.78%	35.82%	19.40%	29.72%	56.22%	14.06%
1–2		43.22%	38.98%	17.80%	36.36%	52.53%	11.11%
3 and more		27.27%	<u>54.55%</u>	18.18%	10%	<u>80%</u>	10%

Table 2. Attitude of the population of Latgale and Pskov region towards holiday advertising according to the number of children under age in families¹⁰

Respondents of this group willingly explain their position also during the interview, for instance:

Advertising – this is for alluring customers, I do not really have a special attitude towards it. [...]. I use it rarely because, naturally, there is nothing really worthy and prices will be higher. Why do I need to buy a blanket for 100 euros

if you can buy an ordinary blanket for 50 euros. This is comparison but it is really like this. (female, 18, Russian, Daugavpils, **four underage children in family**)

4. In the perception of advertising in both statistical regions, there is no essential difference between opinions expressed by urban and rural residents¹¹, that is accounted for by wide accessibility to mass media in the present-day digital age.

The impact of holiday advertising on the choice of gifts

The specificity of the perception of holiday advertising as revealed in the previous section is closely related to the process of gift selection of residents in both statistical regions on the eve of festive holidays.

In Latgale, where holiday advertising is growing to be a common matter, respondents split into two large groups, i.e. there are quite a lot of people in the region who sometimes buy gifts and holiday attributes under the impact of advertising and people whose choices are not determined by holiday advertising.

Respondents who in their choice of gifts are induced by holiday advertising explain this by the fact that, firstly, commercials often are the only source of information about thematic assortment of goods, the time and place of their trade:

Affects the choice of gifts because advertising – you realize at once what is available, where, when it is available. Without advertising we would know nothing, see nothing, yes. (female, 69, Russian, Rēzekne)

Secondly, holiday advertising is useful in cases when a person is disoriented in the stream of offers and is lacking ideas what could be presented in the particular life situation:

Yes, I often don't know what to give somebody as a gift, and then advertising is handy. (male, 16, Latvian, Līvāni)

[...] If I keep thinking what to give somebody, and all of a sudden there appears something in ads that is definitely useful, then why not? (female, 35, Latvian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Kruķi)

Well, my attitude towards advertising is positive, you get ideas from it. (male, 46, Russian, Daugavpils region, Saliēna rural municipality, Saliēna)

Holiday advertising affects the choice of gifts because you watch what is advertised and try to find something that you like in ads. (female, 54, Polish, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Skudnovka)

Thirdly, holiday advertising is used by elder generation people for choosing toy gifts for their grandchildren because they cannot keep up with recent trends in this industry and mostly distinguish toys as being “nice” or “ugly”:

Well, yes, it affects. Let's say, toys – very beautiful ads. Yes. They show you what can be selected, for what age. (female, 60, Russian, Daugavpils region, Višķi rural municipality, Silaviški)

Fourthly, holiday advertising, like other kinds of advertising, informs of the upcoming sales that promise good prices, that is especially topical in the period of pre-holiday rush:

I don't know, no but, of course, if there, for instance, is shown that exactly in this or that shop there are sales, so and so, well so [...]. (female, 16, Latvian, Preiļi/Daugavpils)

Some respondents in this case distinguish between gifts meant for their family (mostly because price then is not the main criterion) and for their colleagues (the choice is more frugal, therefore often sales are used for this purpose), in the choice of which one cannot do without ads:

It depends for whom. If (the gift is) for someone close – you will rather be trying hard, thinking what present to make, you know the person, what the person likes, so you will search and speculate, and will give the person something more significant for him. But if it is for a colleague, or, say, a friend, well, in fact, yes, then it was just an advertised sale. [...]. Cheaper and good. But if it's for someone close, you choose individually. Ad or price make no difference then. (male, 32, Latvian, Daugavpils)

Fifthly, some of the respondents from Latgale are certain that it is exactly holiday advertising that creates a holiday mood and atmosphere:

My attitude towards holiday advertising is positive. Advertising gives an opportunity to feel festive. (female, 58, Russian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Kruķi)

It is noteworthy that respondents tended towards commercial ads are aware that they affect them on the unconscious level, yet, notwithstanding this fact, they submit to its impact:

Probably, my attitude to this is neutral. [...]. I think, yes, because we are not even aware of it, most probably, because advertising is so much, you can say, there is a whole science of marketing and so on. I think, it works even to affect the unconscious, and I think that all of us buy gifts and sometime we even don't know, what for, whether this is what we exactly need. Because it has a nice wrapping and so on. (female, 24, Latvian, Daugavpils)

My attitude towards advertising is ordinary, sometimes neutral. Sometimes advertising helps in selecting gifts, sometimes it allures, where you didn't need to buy anything, but advertising does its job. (female, 48, Russian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Kruķi)

Sceptics of holiday advertising, on the contrary, account for their position by too aggressive offer of the seen/heard that causes dislike and even disgust:

Advertising – it, of course, as always, spoils everything, i.e. it would not spoil if it were moderate, but when it's going from morning till night, so that people

start hating all that – the very word “holiday”. (female, 66, Russian, Daugavpils)

The goods suggested in advertisements are opposed by critically minded respondents by things they choose led by their feelings and emotions, which they consider useful in each individual case:

I think, no (advertising does not affect), I am, you may say, a very independent person, see, I’m trying to rely just on myself and I know that the person would like that gift, which I choose, then yes, but to rely on advertising, if there are sales, for instance, then in a way, each of us, so I’m trying to ignore it. (male, 19, Latvian, Daugavpils)

My choice of gifts is in no way affected by it, I buy gifts to my heart’s content and depending on the person. These are what my gifts depend on. (female, 60, Russian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Kruķi)

Advertising does not affect the choice of gifts because I know, I make a gift, I know my close people and if I make a present, I don’t look at advertising, but only what my soul and my heart are suggesting me. I think that, these advertised things, to give somebody this [...], they are not natural. (female, 87, Latvian, Daugavpils)

The surveyed respondents from Latgale express the view that holiday advertising would promote low quality goods that have been too long stored in warehouses or shop shelves:

No. I don’t take it. Because it has been lying there, too long, so shops would not sell it, that’s what advertising is for. I would buy in shops. Without advertising, without all. (female, 84, Russian, Rēzekne region, Silmala rural municipality, Zabolotje)

Contrary to Latgale, in Pskov region, as it was stated above, holiday advertising rather frequently is not differentiated from other aggressive kinds of advertising and for this reason respondents would often criticise it:

But I would say that it, well, for me, it does work, yes, it does. Once I read it – yes, I must go and I would go by all means. This is not so. (female, 50, Lithuanian, Pskov)

No, absolutely not (does not influence). [...]. Therefore I even, I don’t like to use the word as such [...]. (female, 84, Russian, Pskov)

Respondents from Pskov region more rely on the desires of the person to receive the gift, on their own imagination and financial means, instead of what is being advertised:

[...] we try to select not because they advertise some new, say, blender, but because the person in recent year has wished for it, like that... (female, 20, Russian, Pytalovo region, Pytalovo/Pskov)

I know my friends, so, my acquaintances, I sort of know their interests, I approximately know what they like or don't like, and I know the range of my pocketbook and therefore it is only this that matters for me. (male, 81, Russian, Pskov)

The totality of the conditions and arguments as stated above determines the dominant of negative answers not only in the oral replies given by respondents from Pskov region but also their filled in questionnaires (data summary available in Chart 3):

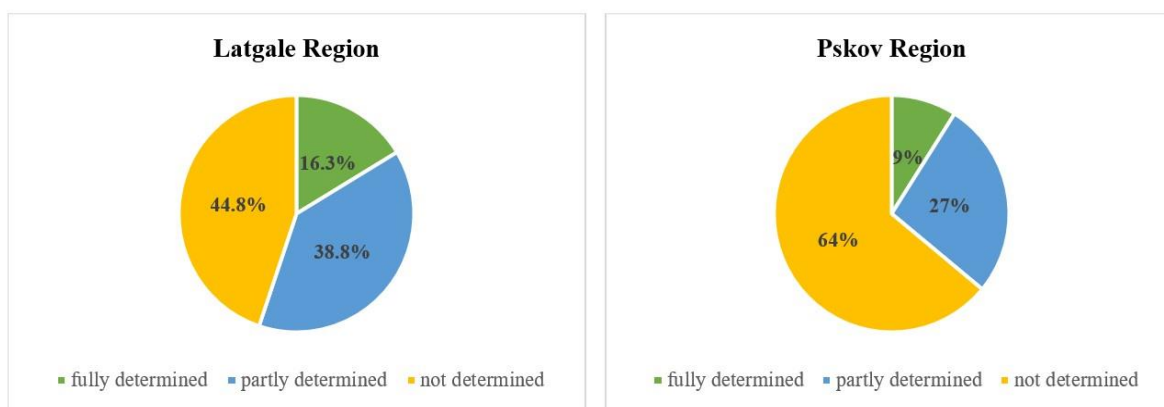


Chart 3. Dependence of the gift selection on holiday advertising in the statistical regions under study

It must be emphasized that differentiation of the surveyed respondents according to demographical indicators lead to a conclusion that, like in the situation with the perception of holiday advertising, also when purchasing gifts, males show more scepticism towards holiday advertising than females. In Latgale 49.58% of males and 40.09% of females never take in holiday advertising messages; in Pskov region – 68.87% males and 56.46% females. According to age, both regions show fluctuation of opinions that does not allow talking about a unified trend. The analysis of the respondents' replies in relation to their ethnicity made it possible to conclude that also in this case the representative of the titular nation have a more negative attitude towards holiday advertising and its impact. In Latgale these are Latvians who ignore holiday advertising at the time of selecting gifts in 55.66% of cases, whereas in Pskov region those are Russians who act so in 60.2% of cases. The level of education in the statistical regions under analysis affects respondents' opinion in an absolutely contrary way: in Latgale people with secondary education often give a positive evaluation of the impact of holiday advertising (38.6%), in Pskov region this category of respondents makes the most critically minded group of the surveyed population (79.61%). Another demographical indicator is significant for the assessment of the impact of holiday advertising, i.e. the number of under-age children in family. According to it, both in Latgale (27.27%) and Pskov region (30%) the advantages of holiday advertising are most actively used by the people who have at least three under-age children in family, that is explained by parents' wish to save money. The analysis of demographical indicators of marital status and place of residence did not yield noteworthy results.

Conclusion

According to the research conducted by scholars in various branches of science, holiday advertising nowadays appears as an autonomous and rapidly growing branch of advertising

industry. This process proceeds in line with the trend of holiday culture commercialization and is perceived as its intrinsic part.

The data obtained as a result of the survey conducted in 2018 lead to a conclusion that, in Latvian south-eastern region of Latgale, the opportunities and advantages of holiday advertising are used more broadly, it is noticed and efficiently functions in various forms (video, audio, and textual) in consumer society. In Latgale opinions of the role and significance of holiday advertising differ, yet, as revealed by the local resident survey, people with a positive attitude prevail in the region (44%); they rather often rely on advertising in choosing holiday gifts to buy (16.3%, sometimes – 38.8% of the total number of respondents do it constantly). Like in the western world, also in Latvia, including Latgale, holiday advertising is most demanded exactly in Christmas season.

Very different results were obtained by studying the situation in Pskov region that is a part of the north-western federal province of Russia. Holiday advertising here is less known (the only association occurring in interviews was New Year), people often confuse it with other types of advertising because, in their own words, techniques of attracting customers used by advertisers of goods and holiday organizers in their country are not sufficiently efficient and diverse. The attitude of respondents from Russia towards this phenomenon little known to them has not been formed (56% define their attitude as neutral), whereas its impact on the choice of the purchased gifts was negated by the survey participants (64% chose the answer option “not conditioned at all”).

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Notes

1. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = 0.293, p-value = 0.000; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
2. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = 0.136, p-value = 0.021; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
3. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = - 0.102, p-value = 0.039; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in two comparable positions from three.
4. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = - 0.048, p-value = 0.420; MWUT: p-value more than 0.05 in all comparable positions.
5. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = 0.091, p-value = 0.066; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
6. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = 0.204, p-value = 0.001; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
7. Survey data processing by MWUT and SRCC revealed no statistically significant difference and linear correspondence in this question between female and male respondents.

8. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = - 0.253, p-value = 0.000; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
9. SRCC: ρ (Spearman) = 0.023, p-value = 0.698; MWUT: p-value less than 0.05 in several comparable positions.
10. Survey data processing by MWUT and SRCC revealed no statistically significant difference and linear correspondence in this aspect.
11. Survey data processing by MWUT and SRCC revealed no statistically significant difference and linear correspondence between respondents' place of residence and their attitude towards holiday advertising.

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