What Makes Russian Advertisements Russian? 
Contemporary Russian Advertising as a Sociocultural Phenomenon

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Introduction
It is common knowledge that advertisements reflect society. They play an important role in the formation of stereotypes and impose a certain way of life and a certain system of values. By analyzing both the foreground and the background of advertisements as texts, it is possible to reveal not only their primary sales messages but also the embedded social and cultural ones (Frith 1997, 3).

Sociocultural, anthropological, and psychological aspects of Russian advertising and various forms of its impact on public consciousness, morality, and public taste require special attention and research, especially now that advertising has become an integral part of contemporary life in Russian society. Unfortunately, in literature on Russian advertising, there is a limited number of scholarly publications in which advertisements are viewed not only as a part of marketing activities but also in a broader context—as a cultural, anthropological, and socio psychological phenomenon with a certain influence on public consciousness (Trushina 2001, 170; Larionov 2014, 4).

Advertisements present not only information about products and services, enticing customers to obtain them, but they also contain a certain kind of an ideological code with a system of symbolic values: social, moral, political, and familial (Turkina 2000, 78). This article attempts a brief analysis of how these values are mirrored in contemporary Russian advertising discourse and will outline the main cultural and linguistic features that make it culturally unique.

A retrospective look at advertising in Russia in different time periods will serve as a helpful introduction.
1. Pre-Soviet and Soviet advertising

Although post-Soviet advertising as a new sociocultural phenomenon began to develop in Russia in the early 1990s, it would be a mistake to deny that advertising did not exist in Russia earlier. In prerevolutionary late tsarist Russia, cities were rife with advertising. Buildings along major streets were covered with shop signs, and brand names could be seen on the sides of buses and trams, shop windows, streetlights, and even on decorated theater curtains (West 2011, 3). The advertisements of that time spoke the language of both tradition and modernism. Advertising did not end with the Bolshevik Revolution. In the 1920s under the New Economic Policy (NEP), advertising was back. Constructivist advertising with its social and political aims—the representative of which was the famous Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky—was innovative and memorable, but newspaper ads of private enterprises were modest and more extensive. Even after Stalin put an end to the mixed economy of the NEP, advertising did not entirely disappear. Throughout the rest of the Soviet period, advertising “served the governing ideology rather than the market” (West 2011, 3).

We cannot compare the texts of advertisements from the Soviet times with contemporary ones. In Soviet times, there was no market economy or competition, and a limited variety of products, hence, there was not much need to advertise products or companies. The main advertising agencies in those days were Vneshtorgreklama (a Russian abbreviation for “foreign trade advertising”), an institution under the Ministry of Foreign Trade, which produced ads in foreign languages for foreign-trade organizations, and Soyuztorgreklama, which opened in 1965.

There was little literature on advertising, and contacts with Western advertising companies were very limited. In the Soviet Union, advertising played the role of a provider of information about the products with a mostly referential function. Many advertisements of that time had an imperative tone; their language sounded like orders, often with a surprising indifference about the advertised product or the consumer:

«Летайте самолетами “Аэрофлота”!» “Fly Aeroflot Planes” (as if there were other airline companies?)
“Keep Money in Savings Bank” (as if there were other banks?)

“Drink Natural Juice” (Figure 1)

Some of them had health implications:

“A Bottle of Milk Neutralizes the Poison of Three Cigarettes” (Figure 2)

Very common were Soviet propaganda posters with slogans like:

“People and the Party are United!”; “Forward to the Victory of Communism!”; or “We Support the Party Policy!”

The texts of such advertisements contained propaganda slogans or citations from the speeches of party leaders or Communist Party documents. Very often posters of this type contained famous quotations, such as the one from Vladimir Mayakovsky’s poem: “Ленин жил, Ленин жив, Ленин будет жить!” “Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will always live!”
2. Post-Soviet advertising

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, political, economic, and cultural changes occurred in Russia. In the mid-1990s, as the Russian market economy was beginning to develop, the advertising market also was in the early stages of development. The situation changed in the 2000s. Advertising became one of the main factors that now affects and forms the nature of post-Soviet media.

The Russian advertising industry has become competitive in the worldwide advertising market. The volume of advertising in 2004 and in 2005 allowed Russia to take first place in Eastern Europe. According to the *The AdEx Benchmark* report, it is among the first four largest advertising markets in the world today («Россия занимает 4 место в мире по объёмам рекламного рынка» (http://www.astera.ru/news/?id=119835).

Although the advertising market in Russia is relatively young, it is well developed and demonstrates global and national features. Nowadays, in the time of globalization, advertising all over the world acquires certain common features (e.g., the ads should be persuasive, short, catchy, funny, and appealing to the audience). Advertisements in many countries are now under the influence of global advertising discourse, the English language, and, quite often, American values. This is true for Russian advertising as well.

As a result of the growing market economy, globalization, and the influx of many western European and American chain stores and companies into the Russian market, commercial signage and advertisements in Russia became overloaded with foreign loans. The influx of foreign names reached its peak in the early nineties, particularly in Moscow, the capital and the center of Russian business. Foreign names are still widely seen on the city streets. Interestingly, some commercial names are spelled as in the original language, with Latin characters, some are transliterated into Cyrillic, and in some signs, English and Russian are intertwined. The orthographic presentation of English words in Cyrillic is often observed in the names of stores, supermarkets, and restaurants. Examples of this kind include Бэби бум, Ол! Гуд (names of stores), Вест Тревел (a chain of travel agencies), Мюзик Таун (a bar), Ай лав кеик, Кофе Хауз (cafés), and О’Кей (a supermarket). In some cases, a combination of words from two different languages is blended in one name: Das Колбас (a café in Saratov), Воокafe (a café in Moscow), Пар
House (a sauna in Saratov, utilizing пар “steam”), and ГрибоедовHill (a restaurant in St. Petersburg). In advertising slogans, sometimes individual letters of the English alphabet can be found in Russian words: ВыRozzi се́бя (a boutique of fur products “Rozzi”), Сотовый салон “Мобелизация,” (cellular phone salon) Запчасти КамаZ - Заглавная буква Вашего би́знеса (an advertisement of KAMAZ automobile parts).

Language mixing is also apparent in Russian TV commercials, where English often serves as a marker of Westernization, modernization, innovation, and prestige (Ustinova and Bhatia 2005).

Globalization has increased dramatically in the twenty-first century. As a result, many advertising companies worldwide employ an international approach to advertising, since many products have truly universal use and message context. Global standardization in marketing (standard brands, packaging, distribution in global market) leads to standardization in advertising. The opposite strategy to standardization is localization. A much-discussed topic in global marketing and in advertising is the choice between global and local, whether to take advantage of the economic benefits of standardized production or to accommodate local consumer needs and habits for better effectiveness (de Mooij 2014, 5). In accordance with the localization strategies, to achieve success in local markets, it is necessary to design specific advertising programs, taking into consideration cultural differences, making the advertised product linguistically and culturally appropriate to the local consumer (Hite and Fraser 1990; Cavusgil et al. 1993; Kanso and Nelson 2002).

Russian advertising differs in many ways from European or American advertising, and these differences are determined by sociocultural factors. The post-Soviet period has inevitably accelerated Western influences on Russian society. However, some typically Russian paradoxical tendencies are apparent. “Western ideas seem to penetrate Russian society very quickly, yet at the same time ancient Russian traditions and patriotic thinking are experiencing a renaissance” (Alapuro et al. 2012, xiii). Foreign advertising in Russia is tapping into Russian cultural values. “Not only do borrowing and assimilation, interaction between the Own and the Alien, constitute a venerable tradition in Russian culture; the Russians also have a peculiar way of building from this the Third, something in between” (Alapuro et al. 2012, xiii).
Michael Gorham, discussing opinions about the Russian language in the post-Soviet period, observed that after a time of language changes, starting from PERESTROIKA, the momentum shifted toward a more purist view (Gorham 2001, 614–29). Purism, which became more apparent in marketing within the last decade, is explicit in the tendency to use more extensively the resources of the Russian language and culture in commercial discourse. Gorham says that “the purist voice was somewhat restricted in scope in the early post-Soviet years, given the lack of attention it received from the state and the mass media” (2006, 21), whereas in recent theoretical writings on language and national identity “the ‘constructed’ nature of this kind of purist discourse has become almost axiomatic” (2006, 23). He points out that “the ambiguity of the Russian purists claimed ‘authenticity’ is perhaps nowhere more exposed than in the world of post-Soviet marketing, where the traditional language and culture are invoked.” (2006, 24).

When foreign ads first appeared on Russian television, their foreignness was a part of their attraction; advertised foreign products were popular because they were a novelty. Soon after, advertising agencies began to realize that the Russian market required its own strategic approach. Western ads did not have the same attractive power and were not a guarantee of success. It became apparent that Russians place much greater emphasis on cultural references in their advertising than their Western counterparts do.

In 1996, and especially in 1997, “restructuring,” “reorganization,” “emphasis on creativity,” and “finding the way” became new mottos in Russian advertising circles as “the country’s leading agencies were gripped in a fever of renewed competition” (Tretyak 2001, 194). This reaction stemmed from the period when many international advertising agencies were working in the Russian market. To get positive reactions from consumers and to make new Russian brands popular, a new kind of attractive and memorable style and wording in advertising had to be developed, sometimes without even a real connection to a particular brand or name of a producer. Finding words and linguistic constructions that could become popular among consumers in their everyday language has become a new and successful method in the Russian advertising industry. The national factor plays a significant role in the creation of Russian advertising. The use of elements of national culture, folklore, and
national traditions always has the desired impact on the audience and contributes to a positive perception of the advertised goods and services.

3. Russian folklore in advertising
A distinguishing feature of Russian advertising is the use of quotations and citations, such as Russian proverbs, folklore, and fairy tales in which Russian products are advertised with a specific explication of “Russianness.” Russian proverbs can be used in their original way, such as «В родном доме и каша гуще» “In your own home even porridge tastes better” (Figure 3) and «Научилась щи варить, можно замуж выходить» “Now that you’ve learned how to cook cabbage soup, you can get married” (Figure 4).

Often proverbs and famous Russian sayings are paraphrased in texts of advertisements, as in the following examples:
“It is not the gift that counts, but your logo placement on it” (a paraphrased saying; “Дорог не подарок, дорого внимание” “It’s the thought that counts, not the gift”) (Figure 5); «Не имей сто рублей, а имей годовое обслуживание» “Don’t have one hundred rubles, have a one year service” (an advertisement of an insurance company; a paraphrased proverb «Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей» “Don’t have one hundred rubles, but have one hundred friends”); «Одна голова хорошо, а две креативно» “Two heads are more creative than one” (a slogan of an advertising company emphasizing its creativity; a paraphrased proverb «Одна голова хорошо, а две лучше» “Two heads are better than one.”)

The use of proverbs adds a specific expressiveness to the text. It makes the text recognizable, stylistically colored, and culturally unique. The transformation of the proverbs and the replacement of words allow emphasis of a word or a phrase in the text that is more important for pragmatic purposes.

Fairy tales are especially suitable for creating a perfect world of desire and wish fulfillment in the minds of consumers. To assure a desired
communication with their readers and viewers, Russian advertisers use commonly known and recognizable fairy tales and fairy tale characters. For example, in the TV commercial for a Russian store Берёзка, in which they sell gold jewelry, viewers can see the three characters Илья Муромец, Добрыня Никитич, and Алиосha Попович, who are at a crossroads deciding which way to go (just as in the image of the famous Russian painter Vasnetsov) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZ0tIZLK6k).

Some more examples include the following: «Налево пойдёшь, к бусурманам попадёшь» “If you go left you’ll find enemies,” «Направо пойдёшь, денег не хватит” “If you go right, you will not have enough money to purchase anything,” and «Прямо пойдёшь, и золото Русское найдёшь!» “If you go straight ahead, you’ll find gold, Russian gold!” (the third knight especially emphasized “Russian”). The citation from a Russian fairy tale (transformed for the commercial), the characters’ costumes, Russian folk music, a snowy Russian winter—all of these make the advertisement Russian, highlighting, on the one hand, the Russian product (of which the consumers need to be proud), and, on the other hand, Russian folklore itself. The ad promotes a national product and evokes the feeling of national pride and self-esteem (“We are Russian! We have our own Russian gold of which we can be proud.”).

Fairy tales often used in commercials are based on a plot in which a hero finds himself in a difficult situation, and a magical creature or device (which is the advertised product or service) helps to overcome the difficulties. Fairy-tale characters, such as Baba Yaga, Ivan Tsarevich, and Vasilisa the Beautiful, are used to advertise various products and services, sometimes even banks that can offer mortgage loans (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMVv5VM1pEs). The popularity of fairy tales in Russian commercials can be related to the features of the Russian national character and mentality—the belief of the Russian people in the miracle that positive changes in life may happen by themselves without any effort, and that vital problems in life can be resolved quickly (Kasiyanova 1994, 167). Watching such commercials can help people distance themselves from everyday problems and immerse themselves in a fairy tale fantasy where good always triumphs over evil.
4. References to Russian history in advertising

Of special interest are advertisements with a reference to Russian history and its imperial past in which tsars and national heroes of prerevolutionary Russia are represented.

Representation of the past is an excellent source for Russian advertising for several reasons. First of all, history is attractive to many people. Secondly, the plot based on a historic event is recognizable, with no need for extra explanations; sometimes it is enough to use just one word or one name. Thirdly, the status of the historic material contributes to the advertisement credibility. Finally, mentioning history helps to evoke sentiments of patriotism and pride about the glorified Russian past. A good example of such an advertisement, especially popular in the 1990s, is a series of commercials promoting the Russian bank “Imperial.” In one of them, Peter the Great is presented as a strong leader who manages to guide the country the right way and develop the marine industry in Russia. In overcoming many difficulties, he turns Russia into a powerful empire (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFev9EsbziY)

The commercial is accompanied by the following text:

Россия! Конец 17-го века. Нет промышленности, нет торговли, нет выхода к морю. Осенью года 1692 царь ехал к озеру Переяславскому. Там, вдали от моря строился флот. Через месяц первые корабли по суше волоком доставлены были на Белое море. Неожиданно для всей Европы Россия стала морской державой. Пётр Первый. Всемирная история. Банк «Империал»!

Russia! The end of the 17th century. No trade, no access to the sea. In the fall of 1692, the tsar was on his way to Pereiaslavskoe Lake. There, far from the sea, Russian ships were being built. In a month the first ships with great difficulty were delivered over the land to the White Sea. Unexpectedly for all of Europe, Russia became a marine state. Peter the First. World History. Bank “Imperial”!

The message of the advertisement is most likely to trust the bank “Imperial” as people trusted the leader of the Great Empire. It also inspires the audience with the feeling that Russia will become strong and powerful again no matter the odds. The reference to the past, glorifying prerevolutionary times when Russia was a powerful empire, is aimed
here not so much at the promotion of the advertised product but toward inspiring the audience with a sense of patriotism and pride that they belong to a great country. The ad helps the audience reevaluate the past, understand the present, feel hope for a better future. While analyzing Russian TV commercials with reference to Russian history, Kratasiuk writes:

«История в российской рекламе отражает не только проблему видения себя во времени, но и попытки создать перспективу, единый образ нации и поэтому прошлое в рекламе идеологизировано и гротескно одновременно » (Кратасюк 2006, 218)

History in Russian advertising reflects not only the problem of seeing itself in time, but also the attempts to create a perspective, a single image of the nation and therefore the past in advertising is ideologized and grotesque at the same time.

History is more often presented in TV commercials, usually in the form of a series, such as in video clips advertising the Russian beers Сибирская корона (Siberian Crown), Балтика (Baltika), Три богатыря (Three Heroes), ПИТ (PIT), and advertisements of the lottery Честная игра (An Honest Game). Images of Russian national heroes Три Богатыря (Three Heroes; Figure 6), Александр Невский (Alexander Nevsky; Figure 7), and Князь Новгородский (Prince of Novgorod) can be seen in logos and labels symbolizing respect for traditional Russian products, their high quality, and authenticity. They are also used in political advertisements (Figure 7, the logo of the party «Защитники Отечества» (Defenders of Motherland).

Not only do advertisements of national products present the pre-Soviet past in a positive light, representation of the Soviet past is also used with positive connotations. For example, in a TV commercial for a Russian juice with the brand name «Моя семья» (My Family), we see a happy Russian family in an apartment furnished in the style of the Soviet period as in Soviet films of the 1960s–1970s (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2ULa9LXNI). The atmosphere created in the ad may evoke sentimental feelings of nostalgia for the stability of Soviet times. The quotations that the viewers hear in some
commercials remind them of famous Soviet films (e.g., “После сорока жизнь только начинается!” “It is after 40 that your life begins!” — a quote from the film “Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears” and “Думайте сами, решайте сами.” “It is up to you to decide what to do.” — a phrase from a famous song in the Soviet film “The Irony of Fate” used in the advertisement of a bus tour around Europe).

At the same time, we see the use of images, ads, and slogans from the Soviet era presented in contemporary ads in a humorous way. Parody, humor, and sarcasm about the ads of the Soviet past help to achieve the desired effect—to make the ad funny and to catch the consumer’s attention. Political slogans from the past have been reused in modern-day advertisements to add humor. For example, «Ленин жив» (“Lenin lives”), «У Ильича» (“at Ilyich’s”; Ilyich is Lenin’s patronymic name), СССР (“USSR”) and Революция (“Revolution”) can now be seen as names for pubs and restaurants. Images of Lenin and Stalin are used in ads in an amusing way (see Figure 8 and Figure 9).
Figure 8. “Don’t stand with your arm outstretched, reserve a taxi to get home!”
https://twitter.com/LyudaLa/status/570556445130919936 (accessed September 28, 2017)


5. The use of quotations from Russian literature
The use of poetry and quotations from literature is another interesting phenomenon that makes Russian advertising culturally unique. Using classical literature to appeal to consumers, advertisers try to relate
products to the reliability proven by generations. For example, the famous poem of Alexander Blok «Ночь, улица, фонарь, аптека . . .» “Night, street, street-light, drugstore” (written in 1912) was skillfully used in the advertisement for the Russian MTC cell phone company (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QON2GZuZRNo). This TV commercial has a plot in the form of a story: A student is taking an exam and wants to cite the poem by Alexander Blok in his essay, but he cannot remember all the lines. He calls his friend, who dictates the poem to him on his cell phone. The words of the poem fly through the air and reach the student, and he successfully finishes his essay. The advertisement ends with the words: «Мы делаем всё, чтобы ни одно слово не потерялось!” (“We do all we can so that not a single word will be lost!”)

The devaluation of the ruble as a result of the economic crisis in Russia and the current EU-US imposed economic sanctions propelled a rapid switch from imports to home-produced products. The Russian advertising industry began to promote Russian products, but unlike other countries, which have their share of “buy homegrown” advertising, Russian products “have become increasingly associated with propositions about Russian national identity in its broadest sense” (Morris 2005, 643). A good example of such advertisements is a series of TV commercials for the Russian tea «Майский чай» in which classical Russian music and literature are artfully combined. The commercials were released in 2014, which was announced as the Year of Culture in Russia. In one of the commercials, we see Russian poet Alexander Pushkin with his family in their home drinking tea. Their nice cozy room is lit with candles on a quiet evening, and we can hear the music to famous Aram Khachaturian’s ballet “Masquerade.” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mdLIUhMXTI)

The advertisement is accompanied by text from Pushkin’s “Eugene Onegin”:

Смеркалось, на столе блистя,
Шипел вечерний самовар,
Китайский чайник нагревая;
Над ним клубился легкий пар.
Разлитый Ольгиной рукою,
По чашкам темною струею
Уже душистый чай бежал,
И сливки мальчик подавал.

It grew quite dark. On the table gleaming
There hissed the evening samovar,
The Chinese tea-pot on top was steaming.
Above it a billowing cloud rose far.
'Neath Olga’s hand, the ritual knowing,
Into each cup dark tea went flowing,
The fragrant brew poured on in a stream,
And a serving foot-boy added the cream.

The beautiful music and poetry accompanying tea-drinking people creates an image of a warm home atmosphere in which Pushkin’s family is happy. The advertisement ends with the words: «Александр Пушкин. Российская классика. Майский чай. Нам есть чем гордиться, нам есть что любить!» (“Alexander Pushkin. Russian classical literature. Maiskii chai. We have much to be proud of and love!”).
«Вкуснее чая не видал!» (“I haven’t seen a tastier tea!”) — the boy in the advertisement exclaims.

Figure 10. We have much to be proud of and love!” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqRH31Sgvn0 (accessed September 28, 2017)

The words русский (“Russian”), Россия (“Russia”), Русский характер (“Russian character”), своё (“our own”), наше (“our”), русское (“Russian”), and Вместе мы сила (“Together we are strong”) are more often used in Russian advertising discourse now than in any previous
time. These words, the utilized images, and emotive slogans are used to promote not only the advertised products, but also Russian identity, Russian culture, and the literature of which Russian people should be proud.

6. Everything Russian

Russian iconicity is also apparent in advertisements for products and services that are not even native. For example, in a commercial for McDonalds restaurants in Russia, emphasis is placed on the fact that 85% of the products supplied to these restaurants is grown in Russia. The text of the commercial states:

В каждом из Вас живет путешественник, первооткрыватель, на худой конец, турист. Шум поезда звучит для вас как музыка. Вас тянет в дальние края, Вы хотите заглянуть за горизонт, всматриваетесь в звездное небо, и мечтаете побывать и там. Но когда речь заходит о еде, Вы выбираете близкое, родное. Вот почему мы закупаем 85% продукции у российских поставщиков, потому что Вам это важно. Макдональдс.

In each of you a traveler, a pioneer, at worst, a tourist lives. The noise of the train sounds like music to you. You are drawn to faraway places, you want to see what is beyond the horizon, peer into the starry sky, and even dream of visiting there. But when it comes to eating, you choose what is familiar and dear to you. That is why we purchase 85% of our products from Russian suppliers, because it is important for you. McDonalds. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub-iysviriY).

The pride and admiration for homegrown agricultural products is also observed in a TV commercial for Lay’s chips. In it, viewers see a farmer driving a tractor in a potato field while eating Lay’s chips saying: «Вкусно-то как! Узнаю свою картошечку!» (“It tastes so good! I recognize my potatoes!”). His words are followed by the comment: “Чипсы Лейс готовятся только из российской картошки, потому они такие по-родному вкусные. Каждый день вкуснее с Lay’s!” (“Lay's chips are made only from Russian potatoes and that is why they are so natively delicious. Every day is tastier (happier) with Lay’s!”).
Russian iconicity in advertising national products may sometimes even intertwine with an animosity toward foreign products. We can see this, for example, in the commercials and posters of Russian Квас Никола (Kvass Nikola). (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50hAPtqiFs)

![Figure 12. “Kvass is not Cola, Drink Nikola!”](https://www.yaplakal.com/forum2/st/50/topic807217.html) (accessed September 28, 2017)


The main idea of the Kvass Nikola commercials and posters is to warn consumers that the imported Western “synthetic” soft drinks like Pepsi and Coca-Cola products, which flooded the Russian market, are harmful to consumers’ health and that their excessive supply in the Russian market leads, in fact, to a “colonization” of Russia by American culture. As a healthy alternative, the naturally fermented Russian grain beverage Kvass is proposed in the advertisements. The use of the Russian flag in the poster and the word play in the text («колонизация» or “colonization”), both in the TV commercials and in the posters, are expected to evoke patriotic emotions, but they provoke a feeling of animosity. Fortunately, the Russian Federal Antimonopoly Service (Федеральная антимонопольная служба, ФАС) banned the commercials on the grounds that they violated the federal law “On Advertising” due to their incorrect comparison of the advertised product with the products of other manufacturers and the use of negative images in the commercials (http://www.newsru.com/russia/17aug2007/nikola.html).
Soft drinks like Coca-Cola and Pepsi products produced in Russia did not lose their popularity. They are widely advertised in Russian commercials enticing the audience to consume (e.g., Сос а Cola! «Вливайся в Олимпийские игры» “Coca Cola! Join the Olympic games!”, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itlVpdjWE40); «Спрайт! Живи жаждой! “Sprite! Live Your Thirst!”, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqXAU46iexU).

Interestingly, in these types of commercials, we more often see young Russian people advertising the products. The commercials are usually short and often accompanied by Russian rap. This is most likely because younger consumers are more attuned to changes in lifestyle.

7. Social advertising
Social advertising is another type of Russian advertising in which marketing techniques are effectively applied to the promotion of social objectives, such as concern about the future of the country, the future of the Russian language, concern about Russian national identity, and the promotion of brotherhood, family planning, safe driving, etc.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when totalitarian concepts and ideas were increasingly questioned and criticized, social advertising, which was appealing to human values such as people’s honesty, brotherhood, love and respect of family, etc., became especially welcomed and important. These types of advertisements were used to fill in the gaps formed as a result of communist deideologization. They take great importance in the life of contemporary Russian society, and social advertising campaigns find positive reaction among addressees, encouraging them to review their attitude toward life. In this context, quotations play a special role. Being recognized and stylistically emphatic, quotations can easily be memorized and can effectively serve the purpose of attracting attention.

Among important issues that Russian society is concerned about is the future of the Russian language, which has undergone the infusion of foreignisms. In his speech to the Presidential Council on Inter-ethnic Relations on February 19, 2013, Russian president Vladimir Putin declared that the Russian language is “the fundamental basis of the unity of the country” (“фундаментальной основой единства страны является русский язык”). It should be noted that a federal proclamation “The
Russian Language for 2011–2015” was issued by the government of the Russian Federation with a view of strengthening the status of the Russian language in the country and worldwide (http://www.odnako.org/blogs/putin-o-rossiyskoy-identichnosti-i-russkom-yazike/).

Figure 14 is an example of a social advertisement that reminds Russian citizens about the greatness of the Russian language and the importance of taking care of it.

Figure 14. “And we will preserve you, Russian speech...”

And we will preserve you, Russian speech,
The great Russian word.
We will keep you free and pure,
And pass you on to our grandchildren,
free from bondage forever!
—Anna Akhmatova

Among other concerns most often addressed in Russian social advertising are the following: (1) a positive attitude toward family (parent-child relations): «Они выросли и забыли своих родителей. А вы помните? Позвоните родителям.» (“They grew up and forgot their parents. Do you remember? Call your parents.”); (2) a positive attitude
toward children in the family: «Чтобы вырастить цветок, нужно много сил. Дети не цветы, подарите им больше любви.» (“To grow a flower, you need much effort. Children are not flowers, give them more love.”); (3) a positive attitude toward life: «Это пчелы. За них все решила жизнь. Мы же строим свою жизнь сами. Не бойтесь перемен.» (“These are bees. They don’t have to take decisions in life. We build our own life ourselves. Do not be afraid of changes.”); (4) the effects of alcoholism; (5) the need for safe driving, and (6) the reasons for paying taxes (Shershukova 2011, 160–63).

Conclusions
Russian advertising discourse is an inseparable part of contemporary Russian society and presents not only information about products and services, encouraging customers to obtain them, but it also contains a certain kind of ideological code and constructs a social and cultural world where high self-esteem, success, and the feeling of Russianness are the most important values.

The reference in advertising to Russian history, in particular to the times of imperial Russia, which was especially common in the 1990s when Russia was in the initial stages of the development of a market economy, can be viewed as an attempt to remind the addressees that Russia is a powerful empire with a great potential for a better future.

The current economic situation in Russia, and the sanctions imposed by the EU and the US, have motivated a rapid switch in the Russian economy from imports to home-produced products, which are advertised with special pride by using slogans that reference Russian national identity and cultural uniqueness.

A high volume of citations, play on words, irony, and sarcasm about the Soviet past are skillfully used in the texts of Russian advertisements to make them funny, attention-catching, and original. The use of citations from Russian folklore, literature, and pop art presents a specific transfer of one type of discourse to another, creating a certain form of intertextuality that lends a stylistic coloring, expressiveness, and trustworthiness in the text message.

The choice of quotations, the wording and textual creativity in Russian advertisements, combined with the visual representation of the
message are aimed at stimulating associations and enhancing their memorability and originality. A sociolinguistic analysis of Russian advertising discourse presents an interesting and fascinating area of research. As this article demonstrates, a multifaceted study of Russian advertising reveals embedded social, cultural, and political implications.

References


