

Critical Analysis of Advertising Media Texts as a Way of the Development of Media Literacy of Adolescents

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Abstract

Today it is extremely important to prepare citizens especially the new generation for the perception of diverse information to teach them how to conceive the media information and to understand the effects of media influence on the psyche as well. Every child must acquire the mechanism of critical perception of the information, the ability to interpret, analyze and evaluate the media texts, to understand their essence, purpose, and reveal the hidden meaning and attempts for the mind manipulation. While educational institutions in Western countries (USA, GB, France, Australia, Canada, etc.) introduced educational subjects aimed at forming the basics of media literacy in the 1960's and the 20 century, this work really started only within the last years in Ukraine. The theoretical aspects of the use of advertising as a way for developing the media literacy of adolescents are considered in the paper. A model for the development of media literacy through a critical analysis of media texts is proposed. The model consists of three stages: ad analysis, ad evaluation, creating for personal ad product. The model implies for developing the appropriate skills of critical thinking for each of the above mentioned stages. The author has carried out the pedagogical experiment for the purpose to approbate the model. 147 students (age is 12-17 years old) have taken a part in the experiment. The experimental group consists of 79 teenagers while the control group consists of 68 teenagers. The experimental group of approaches for the critical ad analysis was organized. As result of the experiment, teenagers have learnt how to define the ad language, how to analyze the ad influence on crowd, how to state the conclusions with regard to their own opinion of ad, how to make the examples with regard to the thinking manipulations by ad messages. The diagnostic cuts conducted again after the implementation of the proposed model of media literacy development, has demonstrated the following results: 65.8% of students with a developed level of cognitive component of media literacy were recorded in Experimental Group, which is 50.6% higher in comparison with data at the beginning of the experiment. This indicator has been increased by only 17.6% in Control Group. 29.1% of the students in Control Group with an average level were recorded. At the basic level of the formation of a critical understanding of the advertising media text after the experiment left 5.1% of adolescents of Experimental Group and 16.2% of adolescents of Control Group. The obtained results can be used in implementing the media education in other educational institutions.

Keywords: media literacy, media education, critical analysis, advertising.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 21 century, the final reorientation of the youth audience to the audiovisual media took place. On the one hand, the achievement of scientific and technological progress, the development of mass media in society led to an increase in free time of a person, which he spends primarily on interaction with media (watching TV programs, movies, social networking, searching for the information on the Internet, etc.). On the other hand, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has created a strong foundation for the spread of manipulative influence on people (Cherepovskaya, 2010).

Advertising is an effective source of influence on a consumer. Wherever we are, we see and hear advertisements that tell us not only about new products or services, but at the same time they form an idea of men and women's social roles in modern society, impose certain stereotypes of behavior (Bakka, 2016).

Teenagers are the most vulnerable to manipulations, advertising media texts ambiguously influence on the consciousness of a young person, on the formation of his system of values, the world outlook, and the unpreparedness of this audience for critical perception of information represents an actual problem. That's why, nowadays, the need for education of a competent media user with a developed media literacy, namely, with cognitive interests, adequate perception of the information, critical thinking and creative abilities due to media and media material, is becoming especially important (Naidenova, 2015). The practical media education, which is being introduced in the general educational institutions of Ukraine, is directed specially on it.

Studying the scientific literature on the problem of the development of the media literacy, we turned to the consideration of questions in the works of such scientists and teachers as L. Masterman (1985), E. Hart (1991), A. Maslow (2001), E. Pometun (2010), N. Cherepovskaya (2010), A. Fedorov (2012), L. Naidenova (2015) and others. J. Baudrillard (1998), T. Lukyanets (2002), N. Karpchuk (2009), S. Kondratyuk (2015) and some other scientists considered the advertising in their works as a weighty phenomenon of a social life, means of manipulating the mass consciousness. Such Ukrainian scientists as V. Ivanov, O. Voloshenyuk (2012), T. Bakka

(2016) and others studied the use of the advertising media texts as the media educational technology.

In the Law of Ukraine «About Advertising» it is written that advertising is the information about a person or goods distributed in any form and in any way and is intended to form or support the consumers' awareness of advertising and their interest concerning this person or goods (1996).

Media carriers can be: press; printed advertising; electronic advertising in mass media; film advertising (trailers); external advertising; the Internet advertising; postal advertising; advertising media texts on vehicles; social activities; non-traditional types of advertising (Konratyuk, 2015).

Depending on the purpose, the advertising can be commercial (economic), social and political (in particular, pre-election). There are also specific types of advertising, such as a counter-advertising (the refutation of the dishonest advertising); an anti-advertising (the information designed not to increase but to lessen the interest, or to discredit goods, companies, trademarks) (Ivanov, Voloshenyuk, 2012).

Based on the analysis of the scientific sources, it can be said that advertising is a type of mass media; it has an interesting presentation of thoughts, conciseness and laconicism, entertainment and uniqueness in details and the main thing is the attractiveness, when the plot and the style of advertising are convenient for perception and memorization. All this is the base for manipulation of human consciousness, in particular of adolescents.

2. The problem statement

The variety of species, carriers, as well as forms of presenting the information about the advertised object makes it possible to apply a huge number of ways to influence on the consumer. The modern television and the Internet advertising of children's goods deserve a special attention. The target audience of such advertising is children who, after viewing the video, try to influence on their parents with the demand to purchase the presented novelty. Especially if it concerns the latest gadgets, stylish clothes and so on (Pometun, Pylypchatina, Suschenko, Baranova, 2010). The development of students' media literacy is a key task for media education and is essential in adolescence. However, today, the use of advertising as a way for developing the students' media literacy has not been studied sufficiently.

The feasibility of usage of the advertising for its own critical analysis is based on the peculiarities of the creation of media texts and the manipulative techniques inherent in it only.

The analysis of scientific and psychological-pedagogical sources (Lukyanets, 2002; Ivanov, Voloshenyuk, 2012; Naidenova, 2015; Bakka et al., 2016) allowed to determine the current state of the introduction of media education in Ukrainian general educational institutions.

According to the above-mentioned facts, we set the following tasks for solving the outlined problems:

- 1) to identify in advertising the most common methods of manipulating of adolescents' minds;
- 2) to develop a model for the development of media literacy through a critical analysis of media texts;
- 3) to experimentally check how the analysis of advertising media texts promoted influenced on the level of development of the cognitive component of media literacy in adolescents.

3. Related Studies

Indeed, advertising can be defined as art, in terms of a psychological approach, because the directed influence on people is carried out in order to stimulate the sale of goods (services) and make a profit. The word «manipulation» originates in the Latin language from the word «manipulare» and its primitive meaning is «to manage» in a positive sense. The manipulation in modern literature is given as an art to control people's behavior and thinking with the help of influence on public consciousness of the target audience (Lukyanets, 2002). Researching the formation of consumer's needs, most advertising professionals use A. Maslow's motivational theory (Maslow, 2001). The model of this theory, which is constructed in the form of a so-called pyramid of needs, where human needs are placed in order of hierarchical significance (from the most to the least significant). Therefore, by working on an advertising media text, the specialists understand that a person can't react with the equal intensity to all the irritations that happen in everyday life. He «filters» the information according to the needs that he currently has.

First of all needs are determined by the economic position of a person in the society. A hungry person reacts sharply to all visual images of food. That's why while watching harmful food advertisements, the adolescents are often guided by their basic food needs, without taking into account the harm that, for example, chips, appetizing fast food, etc. will cause.

Speaking of advertising, Jean Baudrillard touches on the theme of the body cult and sexual freedom. For example, the body cult can be seen in the constant advertising of cosmetics and body care products, in a mania of the health, which is accompanied by unheard-of use of medicines and medical services. A person is invited to take care of his body, because his beauty, harmony and grooming are a sign of prestige, a weapon in the status struggle. Also, Baudrillard considers the question of imposing of a sexual theme, when the endless female body exploitation in advertising and films proves that the real woman is pushed into the background; she is forgotten, replaced by mass media profanity of the female body as a sign of sexuality, and this identification of a woman

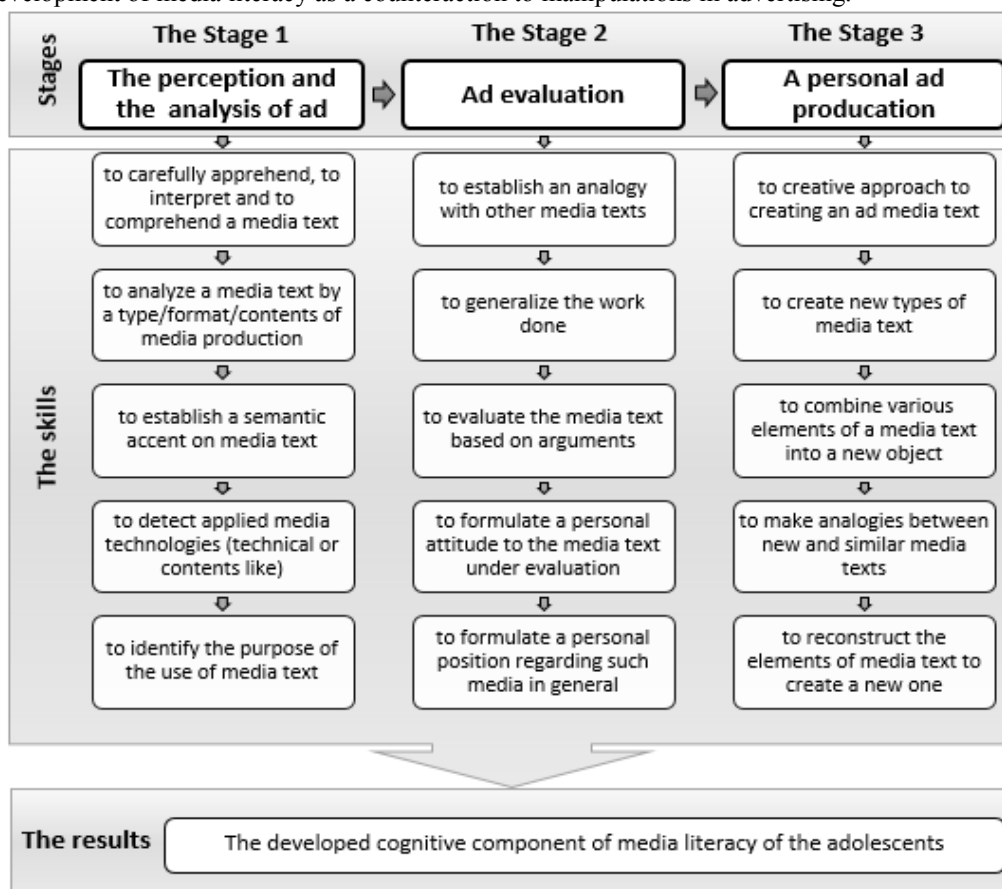
and sex is an indicator of her enslavement (Baudrillard, 1998). Looking at such advertising, girls in adolescence can choose the erroneous life priorities for themselves, and a beauty body cult can replace real spiritual and family values for them.

Advertising media texts also use a so-called reception of «bluffing», that is, hyperbolization of one's own capabilities. For example, the prices are «incredibly low», the saving or the feeling of chocolate is «incredible», the aroma of coffee is «amazing», «super-price», «super discounts», etc. (Karpchuk, 2009). Adolescents can be influenced by such techniques due to age-specific features, namely the lack of understanding that advertising obsessively tries to convince them that they «save» by buying these «unique» products. Television as a powerful mean of manipulation applies a repetition of the information. The experts estimated that in 30 minutes after viewing the content the audience remembers only 60% of the information, at the end of the day – 40%, and a week later – 10%. It means that the advertising message, if not repeated, actually «disappears by itself». The advertising message repetition has a more convincing effect, and the slogan is designed in such an easy way to remember, that is, based on the word game or has a poetic form (Zhytaryuk, 2015). It is difficult to say how many specific types of manipulation there may be. It depends on the age of the consumer of promotional products, his gender, nationality, religion, physical development and so on.

Therefore, depending on the age-specific features of the perception of the surrounding world by a person, the level of his general culture, vital needs, the advertisers choose the appropriate method of manipulation, but we will outline the main:

- to press on man's desires;
- to create a problem and to offer its solution;
- to intimidate the buyer;
- to appeal to authorities or famous people;
- to create the illusion of permissiveness;
- humor and irony.

Thus, we have identified the features of advertisement creation and researched the most common methods of human consciousness manipulation. The most vulnerable audience in this sense are teenagers, so there is a need for the development of media literacy as a counteraction to manipulations in advertising.



We fully agree with N. Cherepovskaya that The media literacy is a set of motives, knowledge, skills, abilities and opportunities to facilitate for selecting, using, critical analyzing the media information, the «reading» subtexts, and their interpretation. The media literacy is the result of media education, which involves

the ability to determine the possible impact of the information media on a person (Cherepovskaya, 2010). Thus, based on the scientific approaches of scientists (Cherepovskaya, 2010; Fedorov, 2012; Kondratyuk, 2015; Bakka et al., 2016; Naidenova, 2015) to the development of the personality media literacy, we created a model for the development of the cognitive component of the media literacy of adolescents as consumers of promotional products (Figure 1):

Figure 1. The model for developing the cognitive component of adolescent media literacy at each stage of the advertisement processing

L. Najdonova proposed the following components for determining the level of media literacy in her own book «Media Psychology: The Basis of Reflexive Approach» (2015):

- 1) *a routine one* (the custom abilities) is with regard to the use of media; it focuses on the relationship between a person and various media (press, radio, television, Internet);
- 2) *a cognitive one* (a critical understanding) is with regard to the critical awareness and the evaluation of media content. This component focuses on the relationship between a person and the content of the information;
- 3) *a communicative one* (an ability to communicate) focuses on the relationships being built by a person and others through the media content creation.

Being based on the peculiarities of adolescents' media perception, we presented the task to identify what exactly this influences on the development of the media literacy of adolescents is in.

4. Approaches and Procedures

Len Masterman claims that the effectiveness of media education can be assessed by the ability of students to apply their critical thinking in new life situation (Masterman, 1985).

Critical thinking or critical analysis is a set of conscious actions and skills thanks to which we can evaluate someone's or our information about whether it is reliable or manipulative (Bakka et al., 2016). The study used several methods of critical analysis of commercial and social advertising.

1. *Method for studying six basic concepts* (by Cary Bazalgette and Andrew Hart, 1991):

- «media agencies» (the analysis of the functioning, goals, sources of the information that create and disseminate media texts);
- «media categories» (the analysis of the types of media texts – by types, genres and so on);
- «media technologies» (the analysis of the technological process of creating media texts);
- «media languages» (the audiovisual means of expression, codes and signs, style and so on);
- «media audience» (the typology of audiences, the differences in perception of media texts);
- «media representations» (the analysis of a specific presentation by authors / information sources / media agencies in media texts).

2. *The method of the key* (by Faith Rogow & Cyndy Scheibe, 2007) issues listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Key Questions to Ask when analyzing media messages

Authors & Audiences	Authorship	Who made this?
	Purposes	Why was this made? What does this want me to do? Who is the target audience? Who are they talking to? or Who is this for?
	Economics	Who paid for this?
	Effects	Who might benefit from this message? Who might be harmed by it? Is this message good for me or people like me? What does the storyteller want me to remember?
	Responses	What actions might I take in response to this message? How does this make me feel and how do my emotions influence my interpretation of this?
Messages & Meanings	Content	What does this want me to think (or think about)? What ideas, values, information, or points of view are overt/implied? What is left out that might be important to know?
	Techniques	What techniques are used and why? How do the techniques communicate the message?
	Interpretations	How might different people understand this message differently? What is my interpretation and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?
Representations & Reality	Context	When was this made? Where or how was it shared with the public?
	Credibility	Is this fact, opinion, or something else? How credible is this (and how do you know)? What are the sources of the information, ideas, or assertions? Can I trust this source to tell me the truth about this topic?

For the critical analysis of social advertising, the methods proposed by N. Cherepovskaya (2010) and T. Bakka

(2016) were applied:

- the comparison of advertising media texts;
- a method of content analysis of images, videos, films;
- the reception of "stop-frame";
- a method of reasoned assessment carried out on the basis of a system of evidence in supporting a certain point of view, the selection of arguments for and against;
- the methods of "brainstorming" and "working in pairs";
- disputes (as a way for forming skills to put forward a thesis, to select its rationale, to prove the truth).

In order to test the influence of the critical analysis of advertising on the level of development of the media literacy, the practical lessons were conducted in the group of adolescents:

The lesson «Critical Analysis of Commercial Advertising of the hair care product Pantene». Students in the groups (3-4 people) have made a critical analysis of advertising on the key issues listed in Table 1. While watching the commercial advertising «Pantene» by the students, the «stop-frame» reception was used, dividing the video into two parts: the first one had a social character, and the second one was directly commercial. Looking through the first part of the commercial, the students noticed the idealization of the images (the grandmother's support of the talented granddaughter's beginnings) and the manipulation of emotions (touching moments that evoked sad feelings). Before the appearance of the commercial part at the end of the advertising, we asked the students what was the main purpose of this advertisement in their opinion. In response, they wrote that the advertisement was social, and it was aimed at the delivering of an important message: «Never give up!». After watching the second part of the video, the students clearly saw the commercial side of the advertised hair care products of the famous brand «Pantene». Only at the end of the entire video the students remembered that in advertising there were constant hints of caring for the hair (girls well-groomed hair, its constant correction, the emphasis on the hair band). The students also determined that its goal was to draw the attention of the audience to the touching story for the sake of reviewing the video, where the main object of the advertising was hidden, till the end. From this lesson it can be concluded that the methods of «manipulation of emotions», «idealized images» were the most influential on the adolescents, as for the end of the advertising, the children clearly revealed the manipulation with the help of brand mark.

The next lesson «The national stereotypes in social advertising» using the social video «Strangers» as an example. A stereotype is a simplified schematic image or representation of a particular object or social phenomenon that is characterized by emotional color and stamina. Before watching the video, the students were divided into three groups. Each group had to describe the film, which it had watched, according to the following plan: 1) What is the role of the music in the development of the plot? 2) Retell the plot of the film, paying a special attention to the turning points of the plot. 3) Retell the plot of the film, linking it with the certain historical events, conflicts? 4) What values does this film promote? 5) Are national stereotypes applying? Which ones? (Bakka et al., 2016).

Doing the exercise, the children used different types of media text analysis, the first group was following the acoustic (musical series), the second one was analyzing the course of the plot, the third one was looking for the connections with the specific historical events. At the end, the students presented their analysis results, they noticed that the media uses stereotypes, since it is the fastest way to reach the communication with the audience, and this way is always based on emotions. However, our ideas are only the result of the influence of the stereotypes which we form, in particular and with the help of media, and we can also listen to the personal experience of relatives and friends. But neither one nor the other can be generalized and transferred to the image of the whole nations or religious communities. As a result of the lesson, the students learned to determine the language of advertising, analyze the impact of advertising on the audience and its manipulative capabilities (perception stereotypes), formulate the conclusions about their own attitude to advertising, and give examples of manipulation of consciousness in advertising messages.

During the formative stage of the experiment, there were also conducted classes on such topics as «Images of men and women who use advertising media as the mean of manipulating the audience» (gender stereotypes were considered), «Psychological manipulations in external advertising» and others. Although the modern role of a woman is constantly changing, she appears as a housewife, a caring mother and wife, a beauty, a sexual object, a victim in advertising. A man – for the most part is a macho, a sportsman, an expert, a traveler, and a leader. Thus, advertising fixes social roles and encourages the further distribution of the world to «male» and «female».

According to our model for developing the media literacy of adolescents, the students created their own advertising product of a social nature, using the acquired knowledge about the features of advertising, various means of its influence on the consumer audience at the last lessons. Pupils were offered such topics: 1. The protection of the environment. 2. The attitudes towards people with disabilities. 3. Mom is not just a word! 4. Tolerance. 5. Fighting against smoking, using drugs and alcohol. 6. The protection of animals. The opportunity to choose your own theme was also given. The practical work on creating an advertising media text helped the

students to determine what kind of advertising they had (visual, verbal or mixed), to prepare its project, to create a slogan for social advertising, to draw analogies between new and similar media texts.

Being the creator of media text, using specific methods of manipulation in the preparation of advertising, at the end the students presented ready-made projects. As a result, we came to the conclusion that using social advertising can affect the deviant behavior of individual members of society and change their behavior to acceptable for the public.

4. The audience under research

Since the experiment on the introduction of media education started in the specialized boarding school «Giftedness» in September 2016, this made it possible to apply a set of methods and techniques for the critical analysis of advertising media texts within the educational process.

The study involved 147 students (Age is 12-17 years old). The experimental group (EG) included 79 pupils of the 8-11th grades. The control group (CG) included 68 pupils of the 8-11th grades.

5. The analysis of the research results

At the ascertaining stage of the experiment (September-October 2016), we received the initial data on the being studied audience of the adolescents. It helped us to determine the choice of the methods and techniques aimed at the forming the media culture of pupils of a specialized educational institution. To the question «How do you usually spend your free time?» each of the students chose not more than 3 variants from the given answers. The results of the survey can be seen in Figure 2:

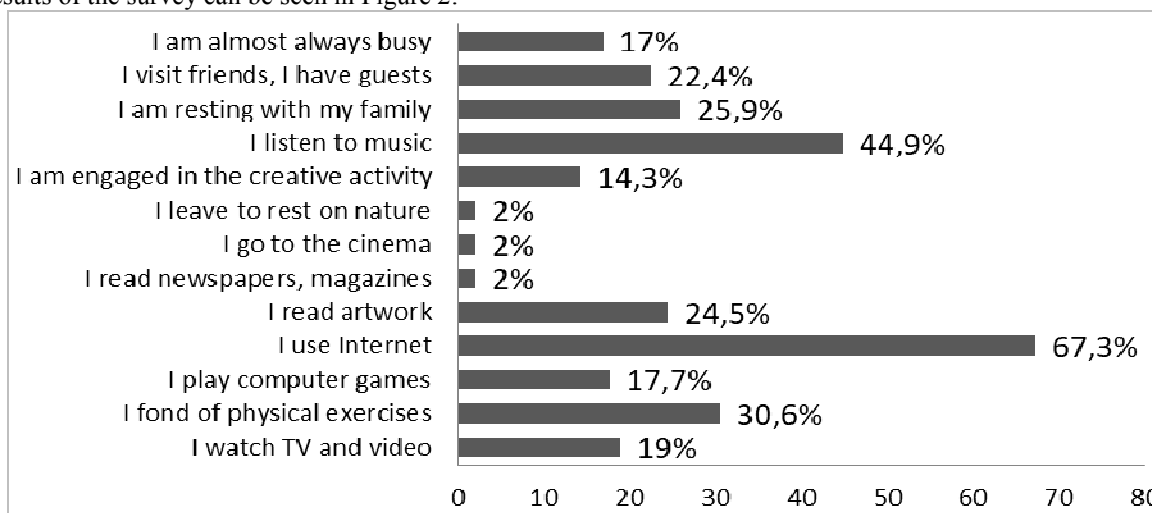


Figure 2. The distribution of free time by the students (n=147)

Using the received information, it was determined that the pupils of the specialized boarding school «Giftedness» spent more time surfing the Internet, they were influenced by the Internet advertising, and later the examples of such advertisements were used.

Teenagers consider that the main goal of using the Internet is supporting friendly relations and communication (71,4 %). «To find the information for study» – this answer was chosen by 70,1 % of respondents, 51% of students use the Internet to get pleasure, improve their mood (each student could choose not more than 5 of the suggested answers). In Figure 3 you can see the main motives for teenagers to use the Internet:

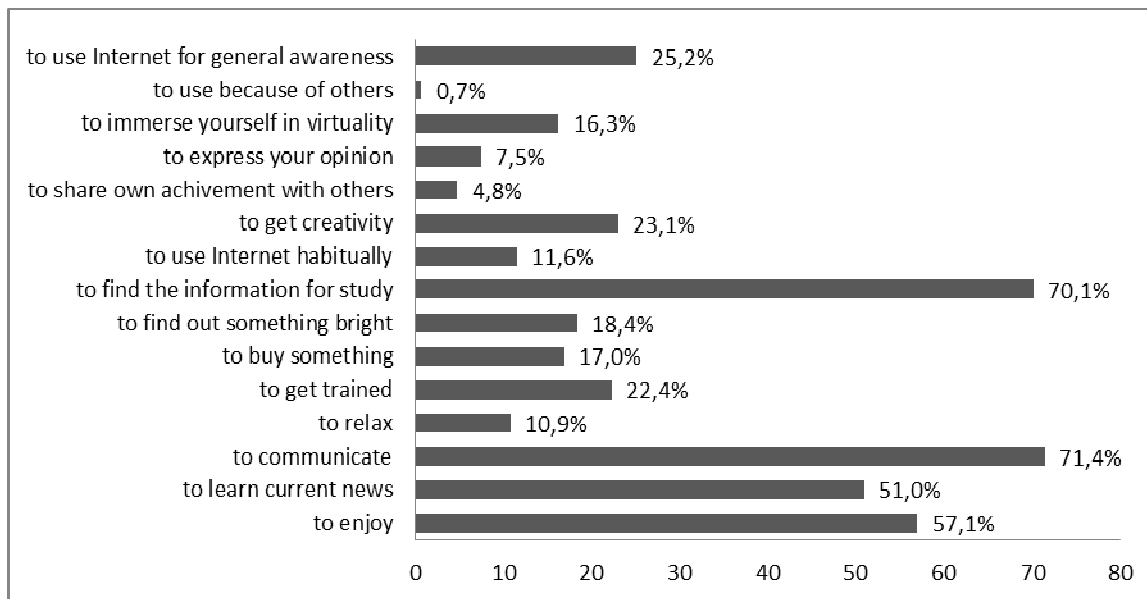
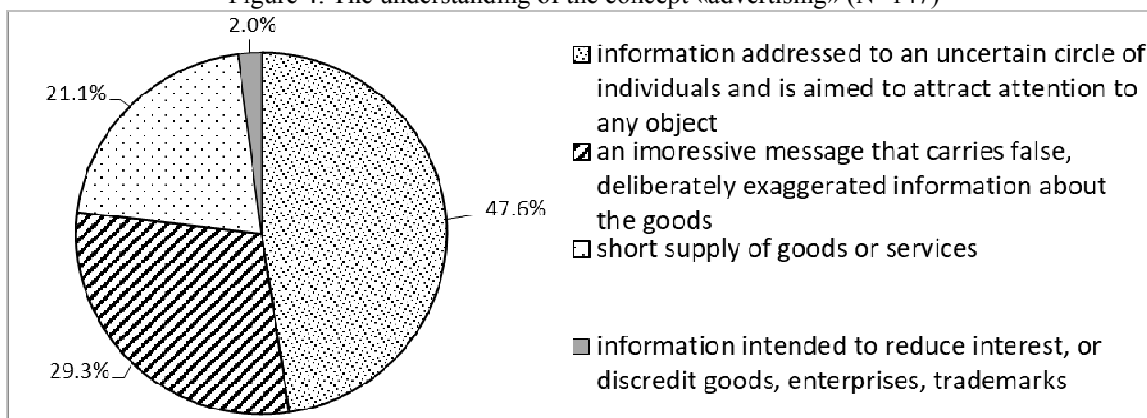


Figure 3. The main motives for teenagers to use the Internet (n=147)

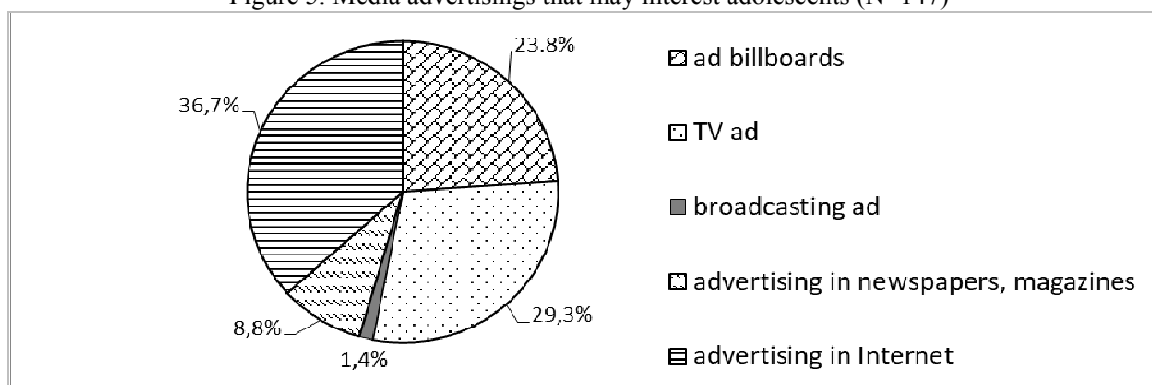
At the beginning of the experiment, it was also determined how the students understand the concept of «advertising». The results of the survey can be seen in Figure 4:

Figure 4. The understanding of the concept «advertising» (N=147)



Having asked the schoolchildren what kind of advertising might interest them, the largest number of votes received online advertising (36,7%), the second was advertising on TV (29,3%), and the third was advertising banners and billboards (23,8%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Media advertisings that may interest adolescents (N=147)



In the answers to the question, which kind of the advertising can appeal to schoolchildren (each student could choose not more than 3 given variants), the announcements of television programs and the film premiere (48% of respondents) received the majority of votes. An interesting fact was also that 3% of the students voted for the advertising of alcoholic beverages. It can be determined by the fact that students observe adult life on the Internet, on TV, and this affects their worldview. The results are shown in Figure 6.

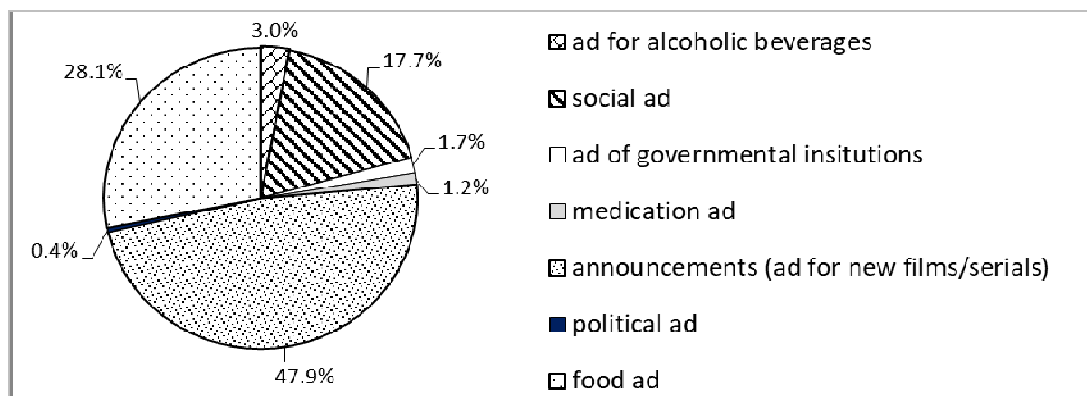


Figure 6. The types of advertising that make adolescents to be interested in (N=147)

At the formative stage of our research (November 2016 – March 2017), practical classes with using methods and techniques of critical analysis of advertising in the experimental group were organized.

At the control stage of the experiment (April-May 2017), a questionnaire in the control and experimental groups to check how the attitude of adolescents to advertising had been changed was conducted, whether they began to take media advertising texts more critically. Below you can see some of the results of this survey.

To test how adolescents are affected by the advertising information they receive from the media environment, the following questions were posed: «How does advertising affect you?» and «How reliable is the product image in the commercials?». The results can be seen in Figure 7 and Figure 8 accordingly:

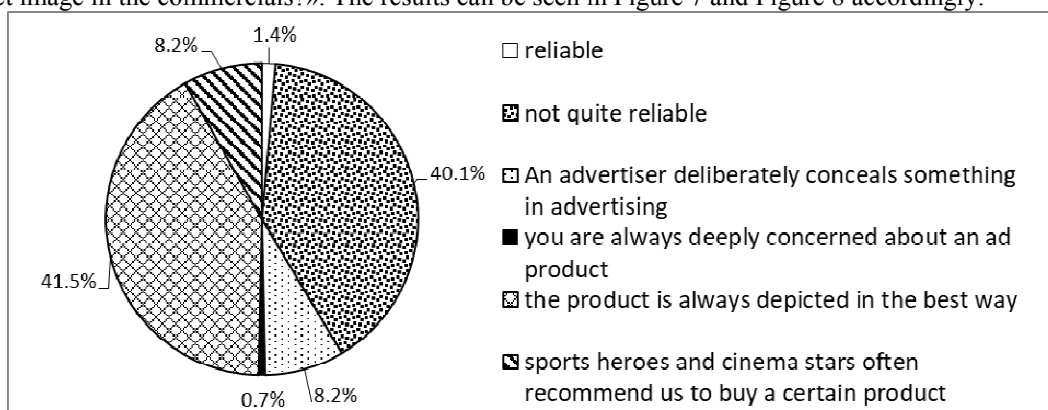


Figure 7. The survey data «How can advertising affect you?» (N=147)

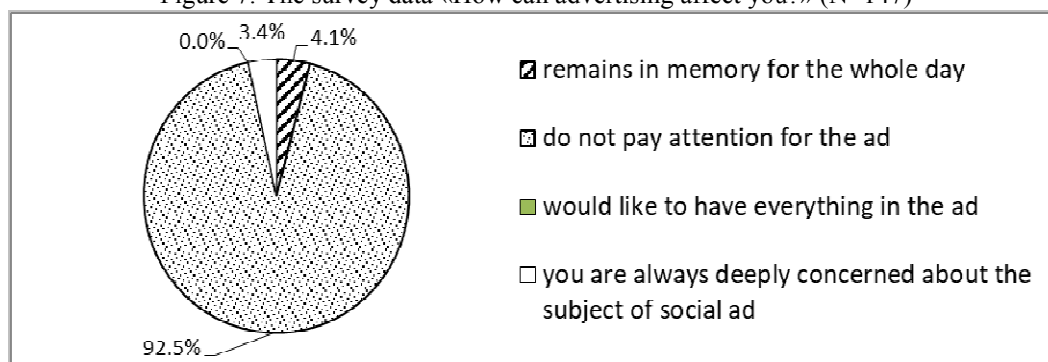


Figure 8. The survey data «How reliable is the product/service image in the commercial ad?» (N=147)

The majority of the students answered that they no longer focus their attention on advertising and quickly forget it, but there were also such answers that what they had seen remained in their memory for the whole day and teenagers are deeply touched by the themes of social advertising. So, media texts in which slogans and melodies are used, as well as social advertising that can play on the feelings of the audience concern to the category of advertising, which is remembered for a long time.

At the end of the experiment, the students' self-esteem for critical attitude to advertising on a 10-point scale was compared. Where 1 is – I am not able to analyze the information critically, 10 is – I do not consider myself to be media literate, and I know how to evaluate and analyze advertising media texts critically, consider myself media literate on the ascertaining stages and forming stages. The results that we obtained in the EG and CG are respectively seen in Figure 9.

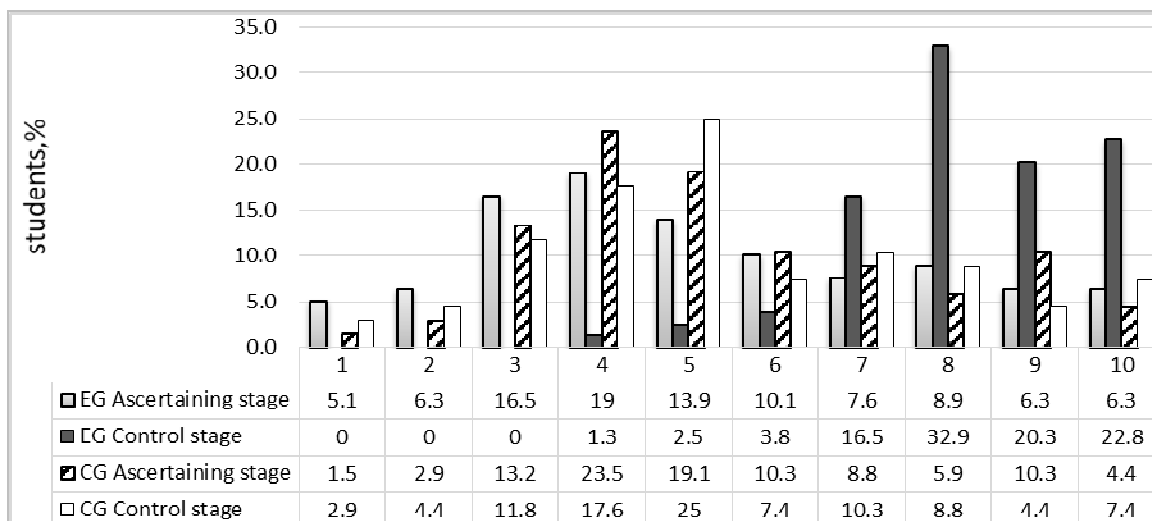


Figure 9. The self-assessment by the students of the EG (N=79) and CG (N=68) of the critical attitude to advertising on a 10-point scale

From this diagram, we can conclude that due to the use of different methods and techniques of the critical analysis of advertising in the experimental group, a critical attitude to advertising has increased. In comparison with the ascertaining stage (6,3 % of respondents), 22,8 % of pupils consider themselves to be media literate with a developed media culture. It can be seen that at the control stage in EG there are absolutely no teenagers who do not consider themselves to be critical thinkers (positions 1, 2, 3 – 0%).

Table 2 shows the relationships between the characteristics of the chosen critical thinking skills and the levels of their development (Naidenova, 2015).

Table 2: Levels of critical understanding as a cognitive component of the media literacy

Level	Level adjectives
<i>Basic</i>	The student is able to acquire, summarize and synthesize the advertising information
<i>Middle</i>	A student knows how to evaluate the advertising information; he/she uses and improves the methods of critical analysis. He/she recognizes the principles of responsible use of the both media communication and content creation
<i>Advanced</i>	A student has knowledge about the media system; he/she is able to evaluate it (in particular, he/she tries to transform the conditions affecting the communicative connections and the creation of his own products), acts as a figure

Based on the above mentioned criteria of understanding the media content and its functioning, the dynamics for developing the cognitive component of the media literacy of adolescents before and after the experiment was revealed (Figure 10).

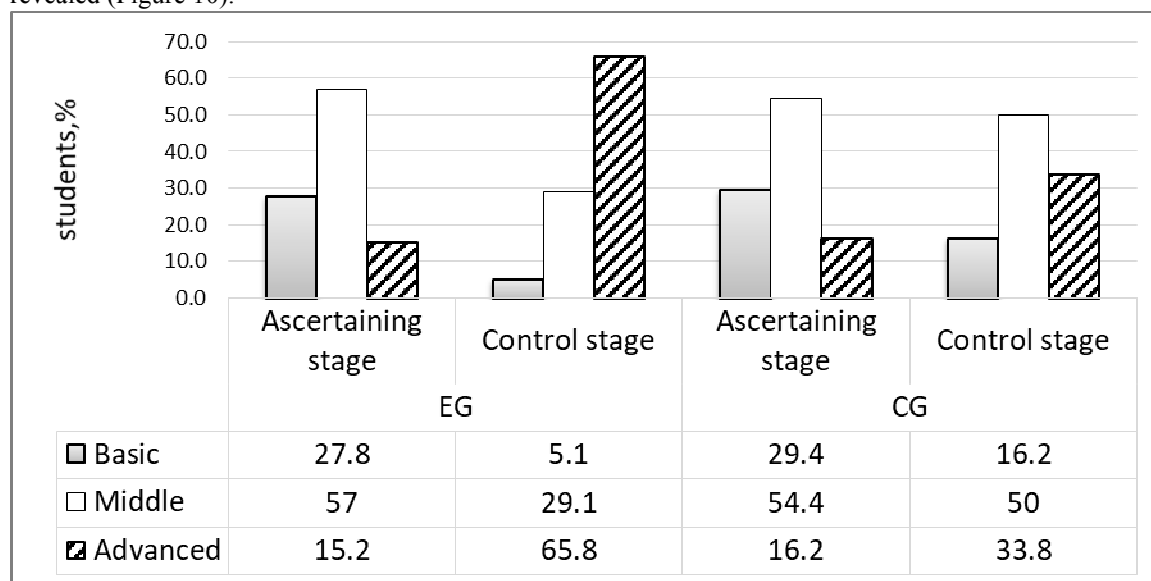


Figure 10. The dynamics for developing the cognitive component of the media literacy of adolescents before and after the experiment

So, at the qualifying stage, the base level of the cognitive component of the media literacy was 27.8% of respondents for EG and was 29.4% of respondents for CG. Middle level was for 57% of students of EG and was for 54.4% of students for CG. Advanced level was for 15.2% of students of EG and was for 16.2% of students for CG.

The diagnostic cuts conducted again after the implementation of the proposed model of media literacy development, has demonstrated the following results: 65.8% of students with a developed level of cognitive component of media literacy were recorded in EG, which is 50.6% higher in comparison with data at the beginning of the experiment. This indicator has been increased by only 17.6% in CG. 29.1% of the students in CG with an average level were recorded. At the basic level of the formation of a critical understanding of the advertising media text after the experiment left 5.1% of adolescents of EG and 16.2% of adolescents of CG.

Thus, the analysis of advertising media texts, the specifics of students' perception of advertising information were determined. The practical significance of the results obtained in that is due to the use of critical analysis of advertising, the level of cognitive component of the media literacy of adolescents has increased. In future, it is planned to introduce the media education technologies in extracurricular educational work and the monitoring the level of technical and communicative components of the students' media literacy. And also it is planned to check the level of the media competence of teachers. The results of the research in the future can be used in practice of introducing media education in other educational institutions.

6. Conclusions

So, revealed the features of advertising and the most common methods of manipulating of adolescents' consciousness in advertising. The use of advertising in developing the media literacy of adolescents in order to counteract the manipulation of consciousness was theoretically justified. After all, adolescents with a high-level media literacy can understand the ways in which advertisers resort to the information in order to pay the attention to the advertised goods and influence on the consumer's consciousness. To evaluate and analyze the information received from the media critically, to use advertising for creative activity, and also to resist manipulative influence effectively, in particular advertising media texts – it can be learned with the help of special methods and techniques.

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