THE SEMIOTICS OF ADVERTISING IN POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA: CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT MEANINGS IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION AND GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

This thesis aims to answer a research question of how television commercials appealed to Russian national identity using culturally significant meanings in post-socialist context. In order to do so the thesis examines television commercials adopting semiotic approach. Using of semiotics presupposes the analysis of advertisements as system of signs and as narratives. Commercials are analyzed within their historical context from the late 1980s to the early 2000s.

Thesis focuses on the culturally significant meanings deployed in the television advertising through folklore, nostalgia, stereotypes and history in order to appeal to Russian national identity. Commercials chosen for semiotic analysis are taken from different periods of post-socialist Russian history and are examined as case studies, each of which appealing to Russianness using specific techniques, thus comprising a unique style of Russian advertising.

Depending on a particular time period within the development of Russian post-socialist advertising, different methods were applied to appeal to potential consumers through exploitations of shared beliefs and values, including national identity that forms the continuous field within the frame of post-socialist advertising. Using semiotic tools from the studies of *signs*, such as binary opposition, the thesis examines commercials both interpretatively and within their historical context.

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Introduction

Advertisements are selling us something besides consumer goods; in providing us with a structure in which we, and those goods are interchangeable, they are selling us ourselves.

Judith Williamson[1]

Television commercials appeared in Soviet Russia not long before the fall of the Soviet Union and became an integral part of mass culture in post-socialist Russia in the course of the 1990s. Paraphrasing Judith Williamson, advertising is aimed to sell life-styles, rather than products; however, the common denominator in the early 1990s advertising in Russia is the *cri de coeur* that in television "[they] don't show our life, our Soviet life (*ne nashu, ne sovetskyu zhizn' pokazyvaiut*)"[2] Interestingly, the adjective "Soviet" is used interchangeably with the adjective "our" in the middle of the 1990s, several years after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The major aim of this thesis is to use semiotic analysis of television commercials taken from different time periods in the history of post-socialist Russia to analyze how "our life" was presented in advertising.

Much has been written on semiotics of advertising starting from the 1970s - 1980s. Among the most notable authors are Roland Barthes[3], Judith Williamson[4], and and Gillian Dyer[5]. The post-socialist Russian context was also covered in advertising studies by such scholars as Birgit

[1] Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1993(1978), 13.
[2] Alexei Levinson, *Zametki po sotsiologii i antropologii reklamy i literatury* (Notes on sociology and anthropology of advertising and literature) in (Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 22, 1997), 107.
[3] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967);
– *Mythologies(* St. Albans: Paladin, 1973).
[4] Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1993(1978).
[5] Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, (London: Routledge, 1982).

Beumers[6], Ellen Mickiewicz[7], Elena Omelchenko[8] and Alexei Levinson[9]. Moreover, national-specific appeals in Russian advertising have been discussed semiotically by such authors as Eliot Borenstein[10] and Jeremy Morris[11]. Therefore by marrying semiotics with post-socialist Russian advertising this thesis will contribute to an established, yet relatively young field of knowledge.

Advertising in post-socialist Russia is as diverse as advertising worldwide – various products and services have been advertised differently starting from the first appearance of television commercials in the early 1980s. In Russian advertising "there are the same recognizable genres as the family tableau, the washing powder testimonial, the MTV-style soft-drink advert, the alternative and ironic adverts setting out to shock the consumer into recognition of a brand." [12]

However, in the thesis I will argue that in the course of the development of Russian television advertising one particular category of significant meanings came to be exploited more extensively thus creating the unique post-socialist Russian mode of television advertising. Those are the meanings which hardly can be classified as "selling", but rather as appealing to Russianness of the advertised products, comprising the field of culturally differentiated advertising. The hypothesis of the thesis is also that the appeal to Russianness through folklore, history, stereotypes and nostalgia, which developed in the course of the 1990s comprise the unique Russian character of television advertising and that commercials chosen for the study can only be analyzed semiotically within their geographical and historical context. Paying homage to

[6] Birgit Beumers, *Pop Culture Russia: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2005)
[7] Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[8] Elena Omelchenko, *Reklama v Rossii* (Advertising in Russia) (Ekaterinburg: University of Ekaterinburg Press, 1993).
[9] Alexei Levinson, *Zametki po sotsiologii i antropologii reklamy i literatury* (Notes on sociology and anthropology of advertising and literature) in (Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 22, 1997).
[10] Eliot Borenstein, "Public Offerings:MMM And The Marketing Of Melodrama" in *Consuming Russia*, ed. by A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999), 49-76.
[11] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1387-1403.
[12]Ibid, 1401.

the fact that television advertising is relatively young in Russia, the thesis will seek to historicize those television commercials which can be defined as appealing to national identity. This will help to argue for the hypothesis, which requires that the chosen commercials are analyzed albeit semiotically also in their historical context.

Analysis of the meanings (especially of those appealing to particular national values and beliefs) is a complicated task.[13] However, the adoption of semiotic approach is useful while talking about such phenomenon as an appeal to national identity in advertising. Semiotics was chosen as a tool to examine the historical materials I have collected in order to provide a thorough vision of how advertising, influencing society and being influenced by it, was appealing to what can defined by the term of "Russianness".

The methodology focuses on the semiotic interpretation of chosen commercials that comprise a historical continuity in the course of the development of Russian television advertising. The chapters of the thesis are made in the form of the case studies following the timeline: the late 1980s – The appearance of the first television commercials; 1992-1994 – Series of MMM financial pyramid's commercials; 1995-1997 – Channel One (major Russian federal channel) sponsored series of vignettes under the name of *Russkii proekt* (Russian project); 1998 – The Coca Cola "Drink the Legend" campaign's attempt to "localize" Coca Cola through appeal to Russian folklore; and 1998-the early 2000s. – Beer commercials as a characteristic example of advertising of Russian local products.

The choice of the commercials with their further semiotic analysis was made to argue for the hypothesis of the thesis that an appeal to national identity exploiting in the television commercials was of continuous nature in the course of the 1990s with a tendency to increase after financial crisis of 1998.

[13] One can argue for the analyzing meaning from the author's viewpoint or from the multiple viewers' viewpoints.

Chapter one of the thesis will provide a theoretical framework on semiotics as applied to the study of advertising. I will discuss the major ideas and concepts such as *signifier* and *signified* which are necessary for studying commercials. Narrative analysis will also be discussed as a useful tool to study commercials. These two ways of looking at commercials as a system of signs and as narratives will be used for the semiotic interpretation of chosen commercials. The historical trajectory as a methodology for interpreting the development of commercials overtime will also be provided in this chapter.

Chapter two will begin with the late-Soviet years when the first television commercials appeared. The first case study in the chapter is the advertising campaign for MMM – a financial pyramid scheme from the early post-socialist years; the second case study is *Russkii Proekt,* a Channel One-sponsored series of vignettes, which might be considered as a precursor for the further adoption of appeals to "Russianness" in commercials, that became especially salient after the financial crisis of 1998. Thus 1998 year serves as a borderline between chapters.

The first part of chapter three will analyze the 1998 "Drink the Legend" campaign and the attempt of Coca Cola's "Russification", where the initial appeal to its "foreignness" was replaced by the appeal to its "Russianness" through the deployment of Russian folk tale heroes and narrative. The second part of the chapter will examine the after-crisis local beer commercials and use of different *signifiers* in order to appeal to national identity.

Chapter one.

Semiotics of advertising. Signs, narratives and history

The chapter one focuses on the theoretical base for the semiotic analysis of post-socialist Russian advertisement. Firstly, the background of the major contributors to the study of advertising in Russia and to the adoption of semiotics as an approach to analyze advertising will be discussed.

The chapter is divided into several sections, firstly focusing on scholarly works on advertising in Russia and semiotics applied to the study of advertising. Further, the definitions of the major terms and techniques to treat historical materials semiotically will be discussed, e.g. what is the meaning in advertising (*signified*) and what is its *signifier* (techniques, words, images or even narratives). The following sections include: categorization of *signifiers* for culturally significant meanings (folklore, nostalgia, collective images, history) through which appeal to Russian national identity was done, as only those are the subject of the thesis; discussion on narratives in commercials and on usefulness of narrative analyzes while examining advertisements; historicizing of the examined commercials thus creating a method for their ordering.

Advertising as a subject of scholarly studies, and as an empirical tool of implementing capitalist techniques into socialist reality was examined in Soviet Russia in the late 1960s by such authors as Bekleshov[14], and Voronov[15], Degtyeryev and Kornilov[16], However the thorough insights on the subject for the West were provided by Philip Hanson in his 1974 *Advertising and*

[14] D. B. Bekleshov, *Reklama v Promyshlennosti (*Advertising in Industry), (Moscow 1969).
[15] D. B. Bekleshov, K.G. Voronov, Reklama v Torgovle (Advertising in Trade), (Moscow, 1968).
[16] Y. Dyagterev, L. Kornilov, *Torgovaya Reklama: Ekonomika, Iskusstvo*, (Trade Advertising, Economics, Art,) (Moscow, 1969).

Socialism, a book which comprises the cases of four countries, the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia, mostly dealing with the administrative structures and budgeting[17].

The analysis of the late Soviet advertisements during *Perestroika* and the sound background for studying advertising in transition was provided by Svetlana Kolesnik in her article *Advertising and Cultural Politics*. Advertising in the post-socialist Russia was examined in some details by several scholars such as Beumers[18], Mickiewicz[19], Pilkington[20], Omelchenko[21], Zassourskii[22] as part of a broader field of study, such as youth culture, mass media or Russian studies.

Semiotics has been applied to the study of the post-socialist Russian advertising from different time periods focusing on the particular cases of the television commercials, by such scholars as Elliot Bornstein[23], Theresa Sabonis-Chafee [24] and Jeremy Morris.[25]

In theoretical terms, among semioticians Roland Barthes was among the firsts to apply semiotics to the study of advertising. Following Barthes several scholars addressed advertising semiotically, thus forming the field of study. Among the most influential are studies from the late 1970s-early1980s by Judith Williamson[26] and Gillian Dyer.[27] More recent scholars such as Liz McFall[28] argue for more critical study of advertising focusing on history, but not forgetting about

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[17] Philipp Hanson, *Advertising and Socialism*, (London: Macmillan, 1974).
[18] Birgit Beumers, *Pop Culture Russia: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 2005).
[19] Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).
[20] Hilary Pilkington *et al*, *Looking West? Cultural Globalisation and Russian Youth Cultures* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).
[21] Elena Omelchenko, *Reklama v Rossii* (Advertising in Russia) (Ekaterinburg, University of Ekaterinburg Press, 1993)..
[22] Ivan Zassoursky, *Reconstructing Russia: Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York, M. E. Sharpe, 2004).
[23] Eliot Borenstein, "Public Offerings: MMM And The Marketing Of Melodrama" in *Consuming Russia*, ed. by A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999), 49-76.
[24] Theresa Sabonis-Chafee, "Communism As Kitsch: Soviet Symbols in Post-Soviet Society" in *Consuming Russia*, ed. By A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999) Consuming Russia, 362-383.
[25] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1387-1403.
[26] Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1993 (1978).
[27] Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, (London: Routledge, 1982).
[28] Liz McFall, *Advertising. A Cultural Economy* (London: Sage Publications, 2004).

semiotics as far as "[s]emiotic theory and method have been of defining importance to the development of academic approaches to advertising."[29]

In the thesis I plan to apply semiotics as an approach to analyze advertising in post-socialist Russia. Before doing so it is necessary to provide methodological background on how semiotics can be adapted to make a thorough analysis of the post-socialist Russian advertising in its historical development. Acknowledging the fact that advertising can be analyzed from different perspectives, this work focuses predominantly on semiotics "at the centre of [which] account to advertising is the relation between [embodied] meaning and reality"[30] as an instrument for the further analysis. Exploiting semiotics as a tool presupposes the fact that the subject matter of this work is the content of Russian post-socialist advertisements, "[analyzing which] involves looking at both verbal and visual aspects of an advertising text."[31]

After positioning semiotics within the studying of advertising, the following step to be done is to provide the classification of advertisements themselves. One of the classifications to be applied is the classification against the criteria of a medium used to communicate advertising message. This broadly involves television, radio, press, product placement, billboards, points of sales materials, packing, and Internet, each of which can be a subject for a separate analysis and study. In this thesis semiotic analysis will be applied to the study of television commercials[32], the importance of which was salient in the course of the development of advertising in post-socialist Russia starting from the early 1990s. However, the subject matter of the thesis is specifically deployment of culturally significant meanings and appeal to Russian character of the products advertised in television commercials.

[29] Ibid, 9.
[30] Ibid, 9.
[31] Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, (London: Routledge, 1982), 86.
[32] Different advertising media presuppose different approaches to study them, e.g. narrative analysis which I'm using applied to the study of television commercials is of little use in analyzing billboards.

Advertisement as a system of signs

Focusing on the major theoretical descriptors of what is argued in the thesis as bringing national identity into "[Russian] ads as sign and sign systems"[33] the starting point is the concept of *signified* and *signifier*, firstly introduced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. These two elements comprise a sign, when *signifier* is a "material vehicle [with] potential but not actual meaning"[34] and *signified* is an "actual concept or meaning which the *signifier* refers to."[35] Initially, the *signifier* was determined by Saussure as an *image acoustique* thus "[w]hen a series of sound waves is heard, a sound pattern (*signifier*) is perceived mentally from those waves, the sound pattern is associated with a concept (*signified*), and that connection between sound pattern and concept results in meaning (sign)"[36] while applying to the system of language.

Applying the approach from the field of one system of signs – language – to another – advertising – it is worth mentioning that words, images, and sounds can play a role of the *signifiers* while the *signified* is the particular collectively shared belief actual in a certain community about the features this very word, image or sound is associated with, thus creating a link between product and advertisement[37]. Judith Williamson explains this approach with an example of perfume which "has no particular significance"[38] *per se* and therefore is advertised through the images of a celebrity associated with glamour, whereas glamour is a *signified* and celebrity's face is a *signifier*[39]. Similarly, the "Russianness" of a product or service might be

[33] Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, (London: Routledge, 1982), 117.
[34] Ibid, 118.
[35] Ibid, 118.
[36] Nancy Spivey, *The Constructivist Metaphor*, (San Diego: Academic Press, 1997), 100.
[37] For example use of famous people, colours, music and tones in advertising.

[38] Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1993(1978), 25.
[39] See Williamson and her example of Catherine Deneuve's face and the Chanel bottle placed together on the same print as there is an assumed link between Catherine Deneuve, who is the signifier for glamour, taken, however, from another, than actual advertisement, system of signs (referent system). Thus the advertisement makes sense only for those who know Catherine Deneuve as a glamorous celebrity. The advertising strategy of using celebrities is based on the juxtaposition between celebrity's image, signifying any particular virtue or value shared by any particular

considered as a *signified* with certain *signifiers* such as collective images or nostalgic elements, which will be defined further.

Further contribution of semiotics to the study of advertising is what was defined by Peirce as *iconic-indexical-symbolic* meaning of the sign.[40] For example, representations of bottles and glasses in beer commercials have an *iconic* meaning as they are similar to actual bottles and glasses. The costumes heroes are wearing *indicate* their profession or social class, or even a time of a day such as "at work", "partying" or "with family" for example, casual clothing of men drinking beer indicates that they are having an informal meeting, or the orange vests of the women (see Chapter Two, analysis of *Russkii proekt* campaign) indicate that they are railroad workers. However, various signs may have a symbolic meaning such as rose being a symbol of love or skull and crossed bones being a symbol of danger. In the post-socialist Russian advertising the idea of national identity can be signified by certain symbols that conventionally are understood as Russian, for example *Russkii muzhik* (Russian man), therefore being the *signifiers* of Russianness. For the purposes of the semiotic analysis which will be done in the next two chapters I have chosen four types of the *signifiers* of Russianness as important for establishing Russian national identity in television commercials:[41]

Folklore. Examined post-socialist Russian commercials are embodied with Russian folkloric characters directly or indirectly, i.e. denotatively or connotatively;

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community (Catherine Deneuve (celebrity) and glamour(virtue) for the Western world in the 1970s) and the image of advertised product (the Channel bottle).

[40] As it was defined by Paul Manning in his Semiotics of Drinks and Drinking, following Peircean difinitions : *Icon* is a sign that stands for its object by virtue of similarity or resemblance, for example, any mimetic image, a pencil drawing or painting of a tree in relation to the tree itself; *index* is a sign that stands for its object by existential or physical connection or contiguity, for example, a weathercock pointing in the direction of the prevailing wind, or the way physical evidence at a crime scene (a bullet hole, blood on the floor) points to the commission of the crime (the bullet that made the hole, the wound that produced the blood); *symbol* is a sign that stands for its object by convention alone, for example, the conventional signs of a language, which must be memorized by rote.

[41] One might say those are denotative advertisements (following Barthes), or advertisement bearing symbolic meaning(following Peircean system of sign). However, what is important is that the pure semiotic approach to the study of these advertisements is of low analytical value without marrying it with a historical context of post-socialist years.

Nostalgia. As it was defined by Svetlana Boym nostalgia is a "sentimentality for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations"[42]. However nostalgic elements, deployed in the post-socialist Russian television commercials are both personal (as they apply to a particular viewer) and shared. In the materials that comprise the field of the thesis the nostalgic elements are analyzed either from the perspective of the utopian (e.g. the ideas of "Unity", or "Friendship of People") or ironic (references to the Soviet comedies) meanings;

Stereotypes by age (pensioner), social belonging (student, worker) or gender e.g. *muzhik* (man);

History. Actual historical figures and events as *signifiers* for national identity, e.g. Alexander Nevsky and the Battle of Ice in 1242.

Figure 1.1 Snapshots from 2003 *Three Bogatyrs* and 2004*Tolstyak* beer commercials

To exemplify the mechanics of semiotic analysis it might be useful to refer to Roland Barthes and his concepts of denotation (literal meaning of a sign) and connotation (conventional meaning of a sign)[43]. As shown in the figure 1.1, in the *Three Bogatyrs* commercial the literal meaning of the *Bogatyr*'s image is a bearded man wearing chain armor and helmet, whilst connotatively this image signifies the idea of *Bogatyr* as a defender and a savior of native land

[42] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (Basic Books, 2002), 14.
[43] See *Elements of Semiology* (1967) where the ideas of "signifiers of denotation" and "signifiers of connotation" were firstly introduced by Roland Barthes.

appealing to Russian masculinity and trough it to national identity. The same appeal, but exploiting another *signifier* can be found in *Tolstyak* (Fatty) beer campaign, where resourcefulness, openness and mother-wit of Russian man is signified on the connotative level by the image of Fatty.[44]

Narratives in advertising

A second approach to the study of advertisements is narrative analysis, especially paying homage to the fact that the most advertisements under study are culturally differentiated both by the symbols used in them and by the narratives deployed. As the focus of the thesis is predominantly on the commercials, i.e. on the chain of events on the screen, it is necessary to discuss particular narratives deployed in advertising. Following Arthur Berger "[n]arratives, in the most simple sense, are stories that take place in time"[45]. However, to the extent that narrative analysis will be applied to the commercials in this study, two types of narrative analysis, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, should be stressed.

First to mention is the work of the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp who, in his *Morphology of the Folktale*, uses the term *function*, which he defines as an action which has to be done by a particular character of the story (within a certain narrative)[46]. Studying Russian folk tales Propp "offers what can be described as a syntagmatic analysis of narratives."[47] Narrative evolution, that is when one function is followed by another, is often a narrative type exploited in commercials. "Many modern narratives [and commercials in this sense are not exceptions] borrow not [only] content but structure from fairy tales"[48], and great variety of products from

[44] More detailed analysis of the post-crisis beer advertisements will be provided in the chapter three.
[45] Arthur Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 6.
[46] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968(1928).
[47] Arthur Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 28.
[48] Ibid, 25.

beverages to detergents and financial services[49] are advertised following this structure. Second, in order to make more insightful narrative analysis one should consider the ideas of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Straus, who having been inspired by Saussure, offers the *paradigmatic* analysis while studying narratives. A paradigmatic analysis of the text (or a commercial) "examin[es] the binary oppositions that exist in a text and that can be elicited from the text that give it meaning."[50] The binary oppositions salient for the post-socialist Russian context will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.

Even though "so many tales, told in many different parts of the world, are so similar"[51], one should put a special emphasis on how culturally significant meanings are brought into the narratives exploited in these tales, of which commercials are an example though not without several specific peculiarities. Since the commercials' goal is to "tell" in order to "sell" I focus on commercials' narratives, as commercials are analyzed not from the perspective of how the "sell" works, but from the perspective of how they appeal to masses through national identity. These narratives are shorter than in a novel or in a film; thus the plot is deliberately simplified, complications and resolutions are the matter of few seconds (for example, see MMM commercial in the chapter two or the *Three Bogatyrs* beer commercial in the chapter three).

Narratives used in the Russian post-socialist commercials, albeit not all of them, should be considered as defined culturally; in other words having culturally significant meanings. However, the cases analyzed in the thesis (in terms of how narrative develops within a commercial) are inseparable from the Russian cultural context, in the same respect as the

[49] See MMM advertising in the chapter two and Russian beer and Coca-Cola advertising in the chapter three.
[50] Arthur Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 30.
[51] Ibid, 23.

narrative of the 1984 Macintosh commercial wouldn't have been understood by those who haven't read or at least heard about 1984 novel by George Orwell[52] (see figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Snapshots from 1984 Macintosh commercial

As it is shown in the Figure 1.2, the image of "the face on the screen" is a reference to Big Brother of 1984, which is a *signifier* of IBM, Apple's rival and a "company known for being somewhat authoritarian."[53]

Advertising in globalization and domestication

Semiotic research of advertising seems impossible without putting it under historical lenses.[54] A pure semiotic approach is not enough to fully grasp advertisements' embodiment with culturally significant meanings. Taken out of their historical and geographical context, considered only as closed systems of signs, certain advertisements will not make much sense. For example, the MMM campaign and Russian cultural patterns it appealed to is very much situated in its historical context. This campaign would have been understood completely

[52] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIUcNLTsyYo, accessed 25 May 2013.
[53] Arthur Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 119.
[54] Liz McFall, *Advertising. A Cultural Economy* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 89-90.

differently if it were analyzed within the historical period of the early 1990s. This historical distinction also works for the preoccupation with Russian national identity in advertising consumer goods, particularly, beverages, after 1998 financial crisis. Bearing in mind that the subject matter of this thesis is culturally significant meanings in advertising, I will focus on such processes as transition and globalization and their influence on the "Russification" of advertisements. Moreover, the influence of both transition and globalization is considered from the perspective of bringing in national identity (defined as comprised of four major elements). Thus, in this respect, the term of globalization[55] should be dichotomized with local identity and binary oppositions (Saussurean binaries, firstly applied to language are especially salient in stressing the national character of products, e.g. "emotional" versus "rational", "ours" versus "alien") it provided for further use of Russian advertising style.

The term "transition" in Russia originally has much to do with the changes in the field of economy, more precisely "[a] transition economy or transitional economy is an economy which is changing from a centrally planned economy to a free market"[56]. However, the "establishment of political and ideological pluralism in Soviet life and the development of market relations in the economic sphere"[57] presupposed the appearance of the television commercials, a type of advertising unfamiliar in the Soviet Union. Bearing in mind the achievements of both pre-revolutionary and 1920s advertising as well as the fact that advertising in the Soviet Union instead of being "driver of trade" was rather trying to conform to the ubiquitous idea of socialist prevalence over capitalism, the idea which was present in almost all official media, including

[55] Some elements of commodity globalization occurred in Soviet Union, for example Soviet-American exhibition in Moscow in 1959 with further introduction of Pepsi-Cola to the Soviet Union, see chapter two.

[56] Edgar Feige, The Transition to a Market Economy in Russia: Property Rights, Mass Privatization and Stabilization in Alexander, Gregory S.; Skąpska, Grazhyna. *A Fourth way?: privatization, property, and the emergence of new market economics* (London: Routledge, 1994), 57–78.

[57] Svetlana Kolesnik, Advertising and Cultural Politics in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, edited by Marsha Siefert (Oxford University Press, 1991), 48.

films, newspapers, prints, etc, this resulted in that "hypertrophia of the ideological content didn't allow Soviet advertising to develop according to the laws of rationality"[58] . This marks the importance of transition, rather than continuity within the field of Russian advertising. The late 1980s and the early 1990s will be discussed in the chapter two in terms of how television commercials emerged as the new medium of advertising in the late Soviet Union.

Putting analyzed materials under historical lenses also corresponds to the main argument of the thesis that the *signifiers* of Russianness in television commercials came to be deployed more extensively in the course of the 1990s, from an exceptional case of appealing to Russianness in 1992-1994 MMM campaign (first case study) to 1995-1997 *Russkii proekt* Chanel One-sponsored series of commercials which strongly deployed Russian nostalgic elements and shared stereotypes (second case study) to the first attempt of Coca-Cola's "Russification" in 1998 through the use of the content of the Russian folk tale (third case study), and to the *signifiers* of Russianness, which were used in local beer commercials after the 1998 crisis (fourth and last case study). Thus, historicizing is important for providing timeline for ordering analyzed commercials in terms of time periods each case study belongs to.

Starting from the appearance of the first television commercials in the late 1980s chapter two will provide an analysis of the first case study which is a series of 1992-1994 television commercials for the MMM, a Russian company, established by Sergei Mavrodi, his brother Vyacheslav Mavrodi and Olga Melnikova in 1989. Initially, the company's main business was selling computers, however it appeared to be transformed into one of the world's largest financial pyramids of all time. The distinct feature of that pyramid was its aggressive advertising campaign, directed by Bakhyt Kilibaev, which started in 1992 and reached the peak of its popularity in 1994. As Jeremy Morris argued, "The MMM pyramid scheme in which clever advertising directly courted the poorest in

[58] Vladimir Tulupov, *Teoriya I Praktika Reklamy* (Theory and Practice of Advertising), (Saint Petersburg, 2006), 52.

society [and] was an exception proving the rule [that] [b]anking initially was seen by consumers as a murky area of the new capitalist system"[59]. This considering of MMM through the lenses of history provides better insights on why the campaign was successful and the advertising was "clever" as it appealed to the shared stereotypes of *prostoi* (simple) people.

The second case study of the chapter two is a series of vignettes under the name of *Russkii proekt* (Russian project) which main goal was the selling of Russian national identity, not consumer goods. This project started as a promotional campaign for the Channel One, the major Russian television channel. The first season of *Russkii proekt* was shown in 1995-1995 following the second season in 1996-1997. This case study is salient, albeit it is not a commercial series; it has established a practice of national appeal, which was adopted by the local producers after 1998 financial crisis with following rapid growth of domestic market, especially in terms of consumer goods.

Chapter three of the thesis starts with the analysis of five commercials which comprised 1998 Coca-Cola "Drink the Legend" campaign as "naturalized or 'glocalized' advertising continues to be popular, where the form of an advert conforms to a global template, but may be re-shot in the locale, or slightly adapted to allow for cultural differences."[60] To understand the essence of such naturalized global adverts one may look at the Coca-Cola campaigns within particular localities; for example, MexiCoke, Coca-Cola naming adopted specially for Mexico which is widely distributed in the U.S. by now, is a version of "glocalized" advertising. However, the creators of the "Drink the Legend" campaign[61] decided to signify the alleged "Russianness" of Coca Cola through deployment of Russian folk tale characters and narrative.

The last case study will focus on the analysis of television commercials of local Russian beer brands that being underdeveloped during the first years of the post-socialist era, took

[59] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1391.
[60] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1390.
[61] The campaign was created by Publicis Russia advertising agency.

advantage of the financial crisis of 1998 "when the mass departure of transnational firms not only created opportunities for domestic companies to meet market demands but also prompted customers to support local industries for both patriotic and economic reasons."[62] This created an opportunity for Russian goods to promote themselves in the Russian market as opposed to global brands, or, in other words, as culturally differentiated brands. In this process various oppositions such as 'collectivism' versus 'individualism', 'warmth' versus 'coldness', 'sincerity' versus 'falsity', and 'emotion and spirituality' versus 'rationality and emptiness' emerged as the key binaries most applicable to Russian advertising.[63]

Further exploiting Saussurean terminology and paying homage to the fact that in commercials products, services or ideas are presented in a positive manner, it is crucial to stress that two binaries, i.e. "good" and "bad" have the nature of *signified*; whilst other binaries, i. e. "ours" and "foreign/alien"[64], are the *signifiers*. It also should be stressed out, that "ours" being the *signifier* for quality is itself signified by the other *signifiers*, such as, for example folkloric or nostalgic elements. The importance of the "alien" while emphasizing the "ours" was pointed out by Yuri Lotman "[as] alien civilization is sort of a mirror and a counting point [while] in Russia the main interest towards the 'alien' traditionally is a way of self-understanding"[65] , This understanding is applicable to Russian post-socialist advertising with the deployment of national identity.

[62] Melissa Caldwell, "Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald's and Consumerism in Moscow" in *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: a reader*/edited by James L. Watson and Melissa Caldwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 181.
[63] Hilary Pilkington et al, *Looking West? Cultural Globalisation and Russian Youth Cultures* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 208.
[64] In this sense the "foreignness" of products, i.e. Coca-Cola or Snickers chocolate bar can be *signifier* for both positive and negative *signified*, as in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, This stereotypical thinking works even in contemporary society and is fruitfully exploited in branding, for example such notions as "the German cars are the best" or " the Italian shoes are of the highest quality."
[65] Yuri Lotman, *History and Typology of Russian culture*,(Saint Petersburg, 2002), 68 (author's translation from Russian).

Chapter two.

The use of the culturally significant meanings in the 1990s advertising.

MMM and *Russkii proekt* (the Russian project) case studies.

This chapter examines advertising development in the post-socialist Russia starting from the late 1980s to the early 1990s in order, firstly, to analyze foreign (Western, more precisely American) attempts to introduce advertising of global brands and, secondly, to examine how locally produced advertisements were embodied with culturally significant meanings. The chapter will discuss the appearance of television commercials and the first notion of Soviet *reklama* (advertising) as a new phenomenon for the public during the late 1980s. Next MMM commercials from 1992 will be examined with much attention paid to the *signifiers* deployed in them, i.e. to the images and narratives used to appeal to potential Russian investors. Finally, the analysis of two vignettes from 1995-1997 *Russkii proekt* campaign will focus on the concept of national identity as signified through particular collective images and nostalgic elements. This semiotic analysis demonstrate techniques used at the key moments of the late Soviet and the early post-Soviet advertising as with the first attempts to appeal to Russian national identity before the crisis of 1998.

"We do have sex, we don't have commercials". Late Soviet and early post-Soviet advertising

"*Perestroika* has changed the concepts of Soviet mass culture by introducing the possibilities of its commercialization"[66] particularly through the television commercials, which became a characteristic feature of the late 1980s in the Soviet Union. Even though advertising existed in the Soviet Union, what would be marked as the predecessor to the post-socialist

[66] Yassen Zassoursky, "Mass Culture as Market Culture" in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, edited by Marsha Siefert (Oxford University Press, 1991), 14.

Russian advertising emerged in the late 1980s, and is primarily associated with television advertising, whilst the Soviet viewers became acquainted with the first US commercials "during 1987 broadcast of the satellite 'space bridge' on the Soviet television and American ABC called 'Capital to Capital"[67]. *Telemost* (space bridge) projects between the Soviet Union and the United States initiated by the television professionals, Vladimir Pozner from the Soviet Union and Phil Donahue from the United States, in order to allow Soviet and American viewers to learn about each other's countries, and the first foreign commercials were usually shown as "interruptions" during the television programs. To grasp the perception of foreign *reklama* (both advertising, advertisement and commercials), by Soviet viewers it is useful to look one year back at 1986 Boston-Leningrad space bridge (hosted by Phil Donahue and Vladimir Pozner) and at the one very specific episode, where the following dialogue between two female viewers took place:

> American woman: I would say that television commercials have a lot to do with sex in our country. Do you have commercials on the television?
>
> First Soviet woman: We don't have sex, and we are definitely against it (*laughs*).
>
> Second Soviet woman: We do have sex, we don't have commercials.[68]

The phrase "we don't have sex" became emblematic, for research on Russian advertising. The correction that there are no commercials is even more emblematic as proving the idea that the development of Russian advertising can be understood and analyzed from the perspective of its discontinuity as "Soviet [which ceased to be Soviet and became Russian in the year the book was published] advertising today embodies a paradox: by following Western models to sell

[67] Svetlana Kolesnik, "Advertising and Cultural Politics" in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, edited by Marsha Siefert (Oxford University Press, 1991), 51.
[68] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zldKrY4-y4 accessed 7 May 2013 (author's translation from Russian).

often nonexistent consumer goods, it ignores its own achievements of the 1920s [when such figures as Mayakovsky and Rodchenko were involved into the creation of advertising]."[69]

The first advertisements in Soviet and later post-socialist Russia appeared in the form of foreign brands. One of those commercials was an advertisement for Pepsi, with its slogan of 'Generation Pepsi'[70], which was shown during the 1988 television program *Pozner v Amerike* (Pozner in America). Thanks to their 'exotic' origin "in the early and mid-1990s [global products] were valued precisely for their foreignness"[71] taking into account their unavailability during Soviet times. This argument is also legitimate for the last years of the Soviet state during *Perestroika*; the importance of such a positive attitude towards foreign brands among Russian people is illustrated by the *agiotage* around the first McDonald's restaurant in Russia, which opened in 1990 in downtown Moscow.

Figure 2.1. Opening of the first McDonald's in Moscow at *Bronnaya* street. January 31, 1990

[69] Svetlana Kolesnik, "Advertising and Cultural Politics" in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, edited by Marsha Siefert (Oxford University Press, 1991), 46.

[70] Some global brands, very few though, one of which was Pepsi were introduced to the Soviet people long before *Perestroika*. Pepsi-Cola is a good example of those brands. Pepsi march along the Soviet Union started with the first mutual Soviet-American exhibition that was held in Moscow in 1959 in order to make calm relations between the two superpowers a bit warmer. Vice-president of PepsiCo, Donald Kendall, was among the participants, obviously, from the American side, and not without the help of Richard Nixon, he promoted Pepsi to the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. "Khrushchev is learning how to be sociable" with Pepsi became the part of the advertising campaign with slogan "Be sociable, have a Pepsi".

[71] M. Caldwell, Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald's and Consumerism in Moscow in *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: a reader*/edited by James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 181

The eclectic and oftentimes bizarre character of goods and services to be promoted is salient in the early stages of Russian advertising after the fall of communism. As Russian advertisers did not have much experience in the field, ads were considered not as an instrument of sales but as an index of status. Advertising was not important either in terms of its content or in terms of the products advertised, but indexically pointed to the high status of the advertiser. The drastic transition to the open-market economy made it possible that "imported baby food and French liqueurs [were promoted] alongside one another on the front shelves,"[72] resulting in "spectacular combinations as Christian Dior perfume and bananas being sold at the same kiosk."[73] A good example of such advertising is the 1993 *Russkaya Amerika* (Russian America) commercial starring popular showman Alexander Tsekalo promoting foreign exclusive alcohol and cigarettes at a low price (see Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2 Snapshots from the 1993 commercial of the *Russkaya Amerika* firm

The ad shows a table full of bottles of the foreign alcohol and packs of the foreign cigarettes and a bearded man (allegedly a firm's owner) who is drinking, smoking and at the same time talking very fast, that it is almost impossible to understand what he is saying:

> Don't shoot me. Take the camera away, do it right now. I'm not going to sell all these goods for such a low price. I will drink Amaretto myself. Here are Camel cigarettes. Wait, but I'm not smoking, However, for such a low price I'll smoke all of them, as well as Marlboro, in a hard pack by the way.

[72] Adele Barker, "The Culture Factory: Theorizing The Popular In The Old" And New Russia in *Consuming Russia*, ed. By A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999), 13.
[73] Ibid, 38.

> Royal spirit, I'll drink it… six different Belgian liqueurs all of which are the best, the sweetest, and here is Napoleon [French cognac], and here is champagne. Don't even call us, only the insane can sell all of these, because the prices are hilariously low.[74]

This 1993 commercial is a good example of how people's desire for foreign goods was used to promote those very goods. The commercial did not use sophisticated techniques, e.g. the camera was not moving. Rather, the assumption made in this commercial was that all of those goods are of high value by and large because they are foreign. Thus the advertising strategy was to play on contradictions (the persuasion was of "don't" nature, e.g. "don't buy" or "don't call") in order to make the desire for foreign brands even higher, while their low prices were advertised denotatively.

1992-1994 MMM advertising campaign

"[T]he most effective and unrelenting media campaign in the former Soviet Union"[75] was the MMM campaign. MMM was a financial pyramid, which encouraged viewers to invest to make money, while its commercials exploited different categories of Russian cultural artifacts. MMM has become a benchmark in mass consumption in post-socialist Russia, particularly because it was one of the first examples of how a Russian company succeeded totally thanks to its advertising, MMM was purely a product of its advertising, a function of its promotion while its "ads themselves became the company's greatest product: Mavrodi's medium was his message."[76]

[74] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=de-JyF129oI (author's translation from Russian), accessed 8 May 2013.
[75] Eliot Borenstein, "Public Offerings: MMM And The Marketing Of Melodrama" in *Consuming Russia*, ed. By A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999), 49.
[76] Ibid, 50.

What makes MMM an important case is its deployment of the stereotypes. Catchphrases used in MMM advertisements were the reflections of some culturally significant notions of the post-socialist working class *milieu*, such as "I'll buy winter boots for my wife" or "I'm not a *halyavshik* (freeloader), I'm a partner." The series of commercials covered almost all aspects of post-socialist everyday life, and "by the summer of 1994, there was no aspect of life that could not somehow be subsumed within the omnivorous rhetoric of MMM."[77]

Figure 2.3. Snapshots from the first commercial of the 1992-1994 MMM campaign

Lenia (short version of Leonid) Golubkov is a stock character of a *prostoi Russkii muzhik* (simple Russian man), as Russian advertising professional says about the images of MMM heroes during the 2011 interview devoted specifically to MMM advertising:

> Lenya Golubkov (especially him), Marina Sergeevna, students Igor and Yulia[78] were the reflection of those 'simple' people, those people who gave their money to cash points of Mr Mavrodi. As they used to call it, communication achieved the proximity with the consumer. Indeed, the image of Golubkov has its roots in Kuravlev's hero fom 'Afonya' and Kramarov's hero from 'Dzhentl'meny Udachi'

[77] Eliot Borenstein, "Public Offerings: MMM And The Marketing Of Melodrama" in *Consuming Russia*, ed. By A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999), 51.
[78] Other stock characters were used in the various commercials of MMM advertising campaign.

> [Gentlemen of Fortune]. They are simple but cunning; they are loved by people, because they reflect their essence[79]

Golubkov's cunning doesn't go apart with the major feature essential for the main hero of the financial pyramid advertisements, which is his omnipresent honesty. One can say that Lenia is a post-socialist Ivan the Fool, a character from the Russian folk tales, while in his image there is a clear *melange* of the folkloric elements and the Soviet comedy heroes such as plumber Afonya (*Afonya*[80]) and criminal Fedya the Squint (Gentlemen of Fortune[81]). Yet another reference, probably the most salient one (considering the similarity of characters' last names and the facial resemblance of the actors) is the character of Semen Gorbunkov, portrayed by Yuri Nikulin (Gorbunkov-Golubkov play of words) from the film *Brilliantovaya Ruka*[82] ("The Diamond Arm"). All of the heroes are not perfect (all of them drink a lot, and Fedya the Squint being even a criminal) but all of them are kind and honest, they are loved by the millions of Soviet viewers.

Figure 2.4 Snapshots from *Afonya*, *Dzhentl'meny Udachi* and *Brilliantovaya Ruka* Soviet comedies and MMM commercial

The narrative of the first MMM commercial which was aired in 1992 syntagmatically follows the narrative of the Russian folk tale about Ivan the Fool, where at the beginning the hero is living calamitous life. Ivan (in some folk tales being even a Prince, the younger among

[79] Available at: http://www.adme.ru/mmm-387771/istoriya-reklamy-mmm-70241/, accessed 6 May 2013 (author's translation).
[80] *Afonya*, is a 1975 Soviet comedy film directed by Georgiy Daneliya.
[81] *Dzhentl'meny Udachi* is a 1971 Soviet comedy film directed by Alexander Seryi.
[82] *Brilliantovaya Ruka* is a 1968 Soviet comedy film directed by Leonid Gaidai.

the three brothers though) is mocked by everyone for being fool. Then he makes some action (yet effortless one, just for good) and obtains *schastie* (happiness) via successful marriage or becoming rich. The same chain of sequences is deployed in MMM commercials where Lenia, at first being a needy person gives his last savings to MMM company and becomes rich *na khaliavu* (for doing nothing).

In the second example of MMM commercial to be analyzed the plot is structured around the same idea of *khaliava.* The semiotic analysis of this commercial which contains Lenia's *cri de coeur* "I'm not a freeloader, I'm a partner can help to illuminate the techniques used to incorporate Russian cultural patterns.

Figure 2.5. Snapshots from "I'm not a freeloader, I'm a partner" MMM commercial

The following dialogue between two brothers comprised the advertising narrative of the commercial:

> Voice over: This is Lenia Golubkov. And this is his elder brother Ivan, a miner from Vorkuta.
>
> Ivan: You are a *khalyavshik*, Lenia! A dunce! Don't you remember what our father and mother taught us? To work honestly. And what are you doing?? Running around, kicking up a fuss, buying stocks. You are a khalyavshik!
>
> Voice over: Leonid thought for a while and said.
>
> Lenia: You're wrong brother. I'm not a *khalyavshik*, brother. I'm earning my money honestly, working on an excavator and then investing for profitable stocks. Let's say you want to build a factory, you can't

build it alone - but if we all pool together, we can build it. It will bring us profit, will provide us with food I'm not a *khalyavshik*, I'm a partner.

Voice over: You are right, Lenia, we are partners. MMM.[83]

The new hero of the commercial (as far as Lenia appeared in the previous commercials) is Lenia's brother Ivan, a reliable man who shares the folk wisdom thus trusting no one, not even his younger brother, and who is also about to learn that MMM is something worth of trust in the course of the commercial. Besides the appearance of the two heroes, there are several *signifiers* through which culturally significant meanings were incorporated into the commercial creating an appeal to everyman. First, the narrative of the commercial is set at the stylized kitchen. Second, there are certain symbols of an average kitchen dialogue, absence of which could have made the "truthfulness" of the setting less truthful, i.e. bottle of vodka, can of pickles, 200 ml glass and cauldron put directly onto the table. Paying due homage to the "[u]navoidable eclecticism, stylistic irregularity and certain amateurism"[84] of the late Soviet and the early Russian advertisements, it must be pointed out that the kitchen walls are purely white, which creates the effect of staging.

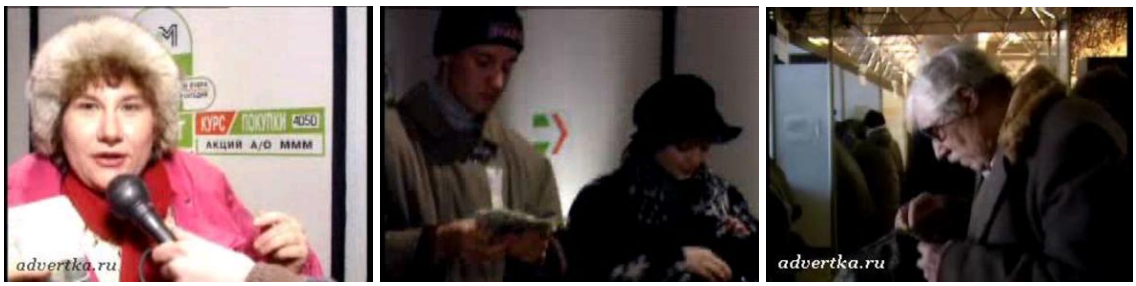
The commercial's narrative features both Russian folk tale elements and hero's transformation in the course of the story, acquiring "the right knowledge". The alleged realism of the commercial is clear from the appearances of the heroes and from the story setting while the idea of hero's transformation is clear as the transformation of Ivan, Lenia'a elder brother, whereas it must be stressed, that the commercial firstly introduced Ivan to the public. In order to do so the main narrative is divided into two major stages (in the first sentence the narrator, or

[83]Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvvigZY_ms8, accessed 10 May 2013 (author's translation from Russian).
[84] Svetlana Kolesnik, "Advertising and Cultural Politics" in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, edited by Marsha Siefert (Oxford University Press, 1991), 51.

voice over, introduces Ivan and Lenia to the viewer), followed by Ivan's monologue and Lenia's reply.

At the beginning Ivan (the hesitating hero, to be transformed into MMM supporter in the end) accuses Lenia of being a *khalyavshik* (freeloader), using the structured scheme *Accusation – Explanation of Accusation – Repetition of Accusation*. Lenia replies at the similar manner of *Denial of Accusation – Explanation of Denial – Repetition of Denial*. In the course of Lenia's reply the viewer can see the transformation of Ivan from a disbeliever to a believer which is depicted symbolically (Later commercials depict Ivan as a diehard supporter of MMM), whereas the process of lighting a cigarette[85] signifies the emerged seriousness of the dialogue for Ivan (at the beginning he called Lenia a dunce). And at the finale of the commercial Lenia drinks a glass of vodka, symbolically rising a glass both for MMM and for his statement of being not a freeloader, but a partner.

MMM commercials appealed to masses using other typical characters representing various collective types of the Russian society such as Marina Sergeyevna, a lonely middle-aged woman who trusts no one, Igor and Iulia (poor students), Nikolai Fomich, a poor pensioner, who after investing was portrayed as eating caviar (yet another symbol of prosperity).



Fugure 2.6. Characters of 1992-1994MMM commercials: Marina Sergeyevna, Igor and Iulia, and Nikolai Fomich[86]

[85] in Russia a lighted cigarette is an attribute of serious conversation regarding business or personal issues. For example one can consider a phrase "Let's have a smoke" as an invitation to have a twosome dialogue.
[86] Available at: http://www.advertka.ru/tags/MMM/, accessed 10 May, 2013.

Paying due homage to the scales of the MMM pyramid (from 10 to 15 million people invested in it), its advertising bore a pan-national character and "[n]ow [in 1994] saying 'I invested in MMM' unites people not less than 'I fought on the Belorussian Front'[87]. But the idea of *narodnyi* (national), appeal was born even before the first MMM commercials were created and aired:

> The MMM cooperative firm sells imported office equipment exclusively for rubles and has 34 branches in various cities of the USSR. Expenditures on advertising, according to some estimates, comprise up to about 5 million rubles monthly. On July 31 the firm paid for all the passengers in the Moscow metro starting from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., which was of a charity by its nature. Incidentally, the amount paid to the Moscow metro is a trade secret. Observers estimate this campaign of MMM as very successful - almost all the Moscow citizens were informed about it, and thanks to the of reportage in *Vremya* (federal Russian television news program) – it became known to the entire Soviet Union. According to Sergey Kusliy, the head of MMM's advertising department, the strategy was to create an image of MMM as of a reliable firm.[88]

Here is another excerpt from *Nezaavisimaya gazeta* which is insightful as it provides a through vision of how financial pyramid's advertising campaign, which was successful in its appeal to everyman started to transform into manifesto of a sort, embodying MMM's founder Sergei Mavrodi, with prophetic values:

> Starting on July 20 or so, the previously listless campaign of slander against MMM picked up unprecedented speed. Even heavy government artillery swung into action. . . .
> According to the most modest estimates, the number of MMM shareholders has topped 10 million. If you count these people together with their families, . . . the total number of citizens who are vitally interested in a prosperous MMM is 45 million to 50 million, or almost a third of the entire Russian population. In all the history of the USSR and Russia, not a single organization or a single common cause has united so many people on a VOLUNTARY basis!
> The secret of MMM's popularity is simple and clear to everyone: The firm keeps all its promises to literally every shareholder. . . .
> Unconsciously, over time, the millions of MMM shareholders have been developing an awareness of their commonality. MMM, for its part, is becoming the nucleus, as it were, around which protective ranks of shareholders are forming. Among them are a good many people who put literally all their savings into MMM, selling their car, dacha or even their apartment. And who are ready to "go the last mile" in defending the very possibility of leading, at long last, a dignified life and making decent money. All of this is making MMM a real and most powerful POLITICAL FORCE in Russia.

[87] Bakhyt Kilibaev, Prostota luchshe vorovstva: Obsuzhdeniye reklamnoi kampanii MMM (Naivety is better than Theft. Discussion of MMM campaign), in *Iskusstvo Kino* (Art of Cinema), (No 1, 1995), 7.
[88] Excerpt from *Kommersant* weekly magazine (No31, 1991) cited at http://www.adme.ru/retro/istoriya-reklamy-mmm-70241; accessed 10 May 2013.

> The movement has a well-defined leader MMM President Sergei Mavrodi. There is the potential possibility of even changing the country's Constitution, since to hold a referendum on changing the country's Basic Law requires the collection of only 1 million voters' signatures. . . .
> Let's reconstruct the chronology of events aimed at discrediting MMM. At a meeting of the government on July 14, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin "warned Lyonya Golubkov and Marina Sergeyevna" [characters in MMM's extremely well-known TV commercials Trans.] that they (that is, MMM shareholders) should not count on superhigh income from "financial speculation." . . .
> No matter what kind of low blows are struck, MMM will stand its ground and will become even stronger and even more popular. This is assured by five years of successful operations and by the will of the millions of shareholders, who are the people of Russia. (MMM Press Service).[89]

Heroes of the commercials literally entered the real life, as even Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin addressed MMM shareholders talking to the created characters, Lenia Golubkov and Marina Sergeyevna. This *narodnyi* appeal of MMM heroes made the television commercial campaign grow from a financial scheme's advertisements into a real political force, while Sergei Mavrodi was even elected to the State Duma in 1994.

The Russian project of 1995-1997

The second case is the *Russkii proekt* series of television commercials aired from 1995 to 1997. In this series the viewer was addressed via "the familiar old Soviet images in a utopian-nostalgic manner"[90], almost binary opposed to the 'soulless' manner of the then prevailing commercialized life influenced by *beznravstvennaya reklama* (immoral advertising). By contrast "[a]ll of the vignettes in the *Russkii proekt* series are highly sentimental tales of strong people in difficult times […] to create images of Russia and a people that are great in spite of adversity."[91] Short vignettes demonstrated the scenes, in the interval from misery to greatness, in order to promote friendship, love, toughness and patriotism.

[89] Advertisement: MMM: URGENT COMMENTARY. Who Is 'Saving' the People From MMM and Why. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1994 July 28, p. 3. Excerpts).

[90] Theresa Sabonis-Chafee, Communism As Kitsch: Soviet Symbols in Post-Soviet Society in *Consuming Russia*, ed. By A. Barker, (Duke University Press, 1999) Consuming Russia, 369.
[91] Ibid, 369.

One of the first vignettes depicted the harshness of Russian life and the ubiquitous idea of "the fate of the woman" in Russia, with two working women repairing railroad track wearing recognizable orange vests. The narrative starts with general talk about life moving through curses, scandal, tears, to a folk song. All of this is depicted while women are involved in very hard physical labor. The monologue of the first woman is emotionally strong and might be called the monologue of depression, while the hero herself is desperate yet powerful and beautiful thus can be called, following WJT Mitchell, "the Mona Lisa of the Depression"[92] (which is Walker Evans' photograph of Annie May Gruber from 1939 *Let Us Now Praise a Famous Man*) within the post-socialist Russian context (see figure 2.8)

What makes the vignette even stronger is that it starts instantly with an insult – the main character addresses her colleague in a very harsh yet humorous manner:

> You are a fool. And your husband is a fool, albeit he is dead. And your brother-in-law is a fool. And…your goat is a fool too, a bloody psychopath. Toil and moil till your eyeballs won't go out. You have worked at this railroad for forty years, and you'll die here with a hammer in your hands [93]

Figure 2.7. Snapshots from 1995 "God Bless You" vignette of the *Russkii proekt*

[92] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 294.
[93] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efVovQJ0z0c, accessed 10 May 2013 (author's translation).

Figure 2.8. Nona Mordyukova portraying "Mona Lisa of Russian Depression"

An appeal to the idea of national identity (the *signified*) here is clear with the deployment of a *signifier* of the collective image of *prostaya russkaya zhenshina* (simple Russian woman). The image connotatively points to the harshness of life – repairing rail road tracks with hammers is not what one would do with a great pleasure. However, denotatively, with the exploitation of a particular narrative (repetition of several insults accompanying by knocking sounds followed by climax with the second character falling unconsciously and a resolution comprising a "happy end" with both characters singing a Russian folk song) the idea of endurance is both signified by the narrative and images of laborious women and is a *signifier* of national identity.

Another vignette from the same season is called "This is my country" and depicts two astronauts (portrayed by Nikita Mikhalkov and Vladimir Mashkov) flying over Russian lands and naming the cities they are passing.

Figure 2.9 Snapshots from 1995 "This Is My Country" vignette of the *Russkii proekt*

All of the cities are allegedly Russian, except for Kostanai, which is in Kazakhstan. This vignette is mostly about the greatness and boundlessness of Russian land imagined through the illuminator of a space station, the idea which was successfully exploited in the after-crisis 2004

Baltika beer campaign under the slogan of "Where Russia Is" where "the vast but homogeneous territory […] imagined through the window of a space-age train."[94]

The cases of MMM and the *Russkii proekt* campaigns demonstrated how a move from global adverts to culturally differentiated campaigns, paying attention to pre-revolutionary and Soviet nostalgic elements, people's needs and common stereotypes was made. Semiotic analysis of the materials also helped to illuminate how pre-crisis (before 1998) Russian advertisements came to be vested with culturally significant meanings. The next chapter will cover the post-crisis advertising (after 1998) and their embodiment with culturally significant meanings appealing mostly to national identity through historical figures and events, folkloric elements, narratives and nostalgia.

[94] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1396.

Chapter three.

Television commercials and national identity after 1998

As the "virgin" Russian market opened for global brands, such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's, their parent companies urgently started to advertise their products and services to the newly available Russian consumers. What should be taken into consideration while talking about advertising in the post-socialist Russia is the "distancing effect" which was created, according to Beumers, by the early post-Soviet advertisements. The realities of the post-Soviet Russia, "given the pauperization of the population in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union"[95], were completely ignored by the global brand advertisements, creating a dream world of Western lifestyles and experiences which by no means corresponded to the actual conditions of living.[96] However, starting from the mid-1990s on, the situation changed with such domestic campaigns as MMM and *Russkii proekt* appealing to Russian national identity in this or that respect using particular *signifiers*, discussed in the chapter two.

In analyzing the development of the Russian advertising it is necessary to highlight the role of 1998 financial crisis shortly after which "companies oriented on the domestic market increased their competitiveness because of the increased prices of foreign products"[97]. It also should be mentioned that the 1999-2000 world increase in oil prices was beneficial for Russian economy thus for local Russian producers. This presupposed the expansion of the market for

[95] Birgit Beumers, *Pop Culture Russia: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 2005), 318-319
[96] As a salient example one should take into consideration early advertisements of cat/dog food, when people themselves were starving. Whiskas or Pedigree commercials (both brands owned by the American food-giant Mars) were considered annoying.
[97] Dmitrii Kuvalin, *Ekonomicheskaya Politika I Povediniye Predpriyatiy:Mechanismy vzaimnogo Vliyaniya* (Economic Policy and Behavior of Organizations: Mechanics of Reciprocal Influences) (Moscow: Maks Press, 2009), 132-133.

Russian local products when "the association of specific products like beer with the 'national question' (how Russia might regain the greatness of the Soviet Union) became explicit."[98]

This chapter focuses on television commercials starting from the 1998 and is divided into two major parts. The first part analyzes the 1998 Coca Cola campaign, which was aimed to "glocalize" or "russify" the brand based on the deployment of a Russian folk tale. The second part of the chapter analyzes how local Russian products (local beer commercials were taken as a case study) were vested with culturally significant meanings, through such *signifiers* as folklore, nostalgia, shared stereotypes and history. Thus, this part of the chapter will concentrate predominantly on the culturally differentiated advertisements, which can be defined as "containing cultural discourse specific to the locale which is not merely an adaptation or localization of a transferable global marketing idea"[99] of which beer advertisements are a good example.

"Russification" of Coca-Cola. 1998 "Drink the Legend" campaign

As it was discussed in chapter one, advertisements can be classified as "global" and "culturally differentiated" in terms of *signifiers* used to appeal to the consumers, while appeal to "Russianness" of advertised products is a major focus of this thesis. However, next campaign to be analyzed demonstrates how global brands, such as Coca-Cola, were "glocalized" or 'russified" through a particular *signifier* of culturally significant meanings which is Russian folklore.

[98] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1395.
[99] Morris also theorizes on cultural differentiation being juxtaposed with firstly preoccupation with Soviet cultural artifacts, including television, film and literature that comprise a form of nostalgia and, secondly, pre-soviet notions of greatness and national destiny.

The 1998 Coca-Cola advertising campaign[100] was based on the narrative from "Tsarevitch (Prince) Ivan, the Fire Bird and the Gray Wolf Tale"[101] under the slogan "Drink the Legend". Coca-Cola had acquired its symbolic meaning among the population of the post-socialist Russia not as a mere drink, but as an embodiment of the "West."[102] Thus, the alleged "Russianness" of Coca-Cola, signified through a folk tale narrative and characters, was a characteristic feature of the late 1990s, when an appeal to national identity came to be deployed in the television commercials. The advertising campaign consists of five television commercials which comprise a series of sequences within a single narrative.

The campaign starts with the formulaic beginning of the Russian folk tale *V nekotorom tzarstve, v nekotorom gosudarstve zhil byl Tsar I bylo u nego tri syna (*Once upon a time in a land far away there was a Tsar and he had three sons*)*[103] followed by introduction of the main hero, Tsarevitch (Prince) Ivan and two of his brothers (Prince Vasilii and Prince Dmitrii). It is denotatively explained with a plain text that Ivan is "good" and his brothers are "bad". Interestingly, from the very first seconds historical time and the geographical place of the story

[100] Commercials were created by *Publicis Russia* advertising agency.
[101] A. Afanasiev, *Narodnyye Russkiye Skazki* (Russian Folk Tales), (Moscow, Goslitizdat, volume 1 1958), 168.
[102] The following urban legend from the Cold War times illustrates the symbolic importance of Coca-Cola brand (at least in Soviet minds) as *signifier* of capitalism and the "West", being opposed to *signifier* of the Soviet Union which is the color red, one of the most popular symbols of the Soviet Union:

Americans landed on the moon just to find Russians painting the Moon red. NASA official calls the US President.
Official: Mister President, the Russians are painting the moon red, what should we do?!
President: Nothing, just calm down.
A few hours later.
Official: Mister President, the moon is half red!!
President: That's fine.
Some more hours later.
Official: Mister President, the whole moon is red!
President: Great. Now wait for Russians to leave and paint Coca Cola there.
It is important to stress the value of the same equivalence of both *signifiers*, the red color and Coca-Cola. This example and this opposition shows, that for Soviet and post-Soviet people Coca-Cola was much more than a soft drink brand, rather it was a symbol of the "West" and of the "non-Soviet".

[103] Other equivalents of this beginning may be translated as once upon a time in a faraway kingdom; long ago and far away. Online Russian-English phraseology dictionary, available at http://phraseology_ru_en.academic.ru, accessed May 28 2013.

are made clear with the use of landscapes of contemporary Moscow, e.g. Red Square or the *Duma* (Parliament) Palace, which creates a mixture of folklore and the late 1990s Russia. Moreover the figure of the *skazitel'* (narrator) throughout the campaign appears in contemporary Moscow environment, surrounded by ordinary people (old ladies, school children, metro passengers), telling the story to these people while drinking Coca-Cola, symbolically emphasizing yet another characteristic feature of the Russian folk tale, i.e. the importance of the narrator.

Figure 3.1. Snapshots from the 1998 "Drink the Legend" campaign for Coca-Cola

The first two lines of snapshots are taken from the first commercial, as the first commercial contains two sections. Using Propp's terminology, the first commercial contains the initial situation with introduction of the main heroes, and absentation, the beginning of hero's adventure with introduction of the quest, in the tale the quest is to catch a firebird. This first commercial also introduces Gray Wolf, the hero's magical helper. Gray Wolf donates Coca-Cola

to Ivan (reference to the magic gift concept from the folk tales), thus making him stronger. The concept of magic helpers (donors) and magic gifts (donations) also analyzed by Vladimir Propp[104], is exploited in various commercials both in Russia and worldwide (e.g. detergent, chewing gum or chocolate bar as a magic gift) and Coca-Cola campaign being one of such examples. The third line of snapshots is from the second commercial where the hero catches the firebird, not without Gray Wolf's assistance, thus fulfilling the quest; he also meets his love, Elena the Beautiful. The fourth line of snapshots is made from the third and the fourth commercials and contains the struggle section, where Elena is kidnapped by the hero's evil brothers, while Ivan is frozen to half to death. In the original folk tale Ivan is killed by Vasilii and Dmitrii; however, in the commercial the scene of killing is not depicted. In the end of the fourth commercial Ivan is brought to life by Gray Wolf with a help of Coca Cola. This action structurally positions Coca-Cola within the narrative of the Russian folk tale by creating a reference to both *zhivaya voda* (vivid water/aqua vitae) and *mertvaya voda (death water)*, magical liquids which Gray Wolf used to resurrect Ivan in the original tale.

The last line of snapshots is from the fifth commercial, where three actions are taking place: the rescue of Elena, the punishment of the evil brothers and the wedding, which exactly correspond to the final part of the original folk tale.

Interestingly, that the whole campaign was launched under the slogan *Pei Legendu* "Drink the Legend", which several advertising critics considered as a weakening of the appeal to "Russianness" through the deployment of folkloric elements:

> The "Drink the Legend" slogan leads away from the folkloric materials. We don't address Russian folk tales as legends. The word *legenda* (legend) has a different connotative meaning, and the

[104] V., Propp, *Istoricheskiye korni volshebnoi skazki* (Historical Roots of the Wonder Tale) (Leningrad: Leningrad University Press, 1986)253-254,277.

> difference between folk tale and legend appears to be very clear starting from the school age, when children are taught what is "legend" and what is "folk tale"[105]

The idea of Coca-Cola's "Russification", and the exploitation of Russian folk tale in the television commercial in terms of its very content, e.g. denotatively, literary addressing Coca-Cola as a magical water (either vivid or death) is a good example of how the drink was *signified* within Russian context. This case of a foreign product's "glocalized" advertisement opens a field for the further discussion on culturally differentiated advertisements in Russia after the 1998 crisis. The rapid post-crisis economic growth was the reason that a great variety of Russian producers[106] entered the market. Advertising for the local Russian beer brands is a good example of culturally differentiated commercials in will be discussed in the next part of the chapter.

Culturally differentiated Russian beer brands. In a search of the national identity

Nostalgic and folkloric elements in Russian beer commercials

When talking about beer within the Russian context one should bear in mind that beer was never historically considered as a Russian national drink in the same way as vodka or kvass. Different scholars list different beverages as Russian national drinks. Hellberg-Hirn considered tea and vodka as Russian national drinks.[107] For Maurice Baring the two Russian national drinks are tea and kvass, rather than tea and vodka.[108] Graham Dix argues that kvass, rather than tea, was "clearly the national beverage," when "the samovar and tea-drinking are associated with what is quintessentially Russian in the popular view."[109] Historically beer "was brewed

[105] L. Bogomolova, *Protivorechiya reklamnoi kampanii "Pei Legendu" Coca Cola* (Antagonisms in Coca Cola "Drink the Legend" campaign) in *Reklamnye Idei*, 26, 2003.
[106] Including food and beverages industry with Russian soft drinks, dairy products, dumplings, confectionary came to be advertised with strong emphasis on their local origin.
[107] E. Hellberg-Hirn, *Soil and Soul: The Symbolic World of Russianness*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1998), 158.
[108] M. Baring, *The Russian People*. (London: Methurn & Co., Ltd., 1914), 58.
[109] G. Dix, Non-Alcoholic *Beverages in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Petits Propos Culinaires 10, 1982), 21.

specifically for festivals, especially in the autumn and winter after the harvest but not as an everyday drink."[110] Following this argument Morris states that, beer, unlike vodka, was never considered as a staple good, being for the majority of the population a "deficit product."[111] Moreover, in the early post-socialist times beer (first of all foreign) was associated with luxury and high-quality lifestyles, which its foreignness presupposed. Beer can be put into a binary opposition to vodka as a beverage without any ritualistic meaning for the Russian consumer, being "stereotypically associated with a domain of plebeian, informal, non-ritual, non-domestic masculine sociability."[112]

The second important notion about beer in the post-socialist Russia is that local beer production was strongly influenced by Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign of 1985-1987. The following excerpt from 1990 *Izvestia* newspaper can partially explain the almost complete absence of local beer brands in the Russian market in the early 1990s.

> The spearhead of the antialcohol legislation of 1985 was not aimed at the production of champagne or high-quality natural wines and beer. But the zeal of local authorities, encouraged from Moscow, went so far that they had hundreds of hectares of vineyards cut down, brewing equipment dismantled and plants closed […]
>
> As for the beer-brewing industry, it was destroyed just when it was on the upswing. Beginning in the mid-1970s, under a special program, dozens of breweries were built in industrial centers and southern regions and outfitted with imported equipment. On the initiative of the local government bodies at that time, the construction of plants in Saratov, Magnitogorsk and Krasnodar was halted. Our Czechoslovak partners simply couldn't understand why machinery capable of producing first-class beer was distributed to dairies and margarine-producing shops as auxiliary equipment.
>
> But good beer also requires high-quality barley malt and hops. The production of both these things will have to be revived too, and that will take years. [113]

Since the early 1990s beer has acquired a strong domestic market. Following the key event of the devaluation of the ruble in 1998, which gave a significant boost to local producers,"[114]

[110] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1385.
[111] Ibid, 1385.
[112] P. Manning, *The Semiotics of Drink and Drinking*,(New-York: Continuum, 2012), 210.
[113] Current Digest of the Russian Press, The (formerly The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press), No. 42, Vol.42, November 21, 1990, 28.

ambitious local breweries came to require culturally differentiated advertisements of their brands. Responding to the demand from both consumers and producers, "a commensurate style *a la Russe* in advertising was soon found, emphasizing Russian cultural difference and historical achievements, mythic and real, and the stability of Soviet times."[115] What should be added regarding the specificity of beer advertising, is a male discourse and the usage of Russian *muzhik*[116] image in order to reflect both Russian national identity and masculinity visible in beer advertisements.

Beer became a culturally differentiated commodity and was filled with the *signifiers* appealing to its Russianness, by bringing in various historical and folkloric themes. To discuss historical narratives used in beer advertising campaigns, I will start with the most salient example of the 2003 *Three Bogatyrs* beer advertisement, where Russian heroes, the *Bogatyrs*[117] are fighting with the Teutonic Knights (see figure 3.2) on an improvised ice rink, a reference to the Battle of Ice as it was depicted in Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*[118]. As the advertising campaign developed, the Teutonic knights turned into the Americans and the beer brand sponsored Russian national hockey team.

[114] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1390.
[115] Ibid, 1392.
[116] Historically the term *muzhik* refers to the male Russian peasants, bearing connotations of rudeness, illiteracy, poverty, etc, in opposition to higher classes of Russian society. According to Ozhegov's definition,the term *muzhik* refers to 1)peasant 2)man in general 3)husband 4) rude, impolite person (obsolete). In contemporary Russian, the term *muzhik* can represent a brutal Russian masculinity.
[117] Russian folkloric heroes.
[118] *Alexander Nevsky* is a 1938 Soviet historical drama film directed by Sergei Eisenstein.

Figure 3.2. Snapshots from 2003 *Three Bogatyrs* commercial and 1938 film *Alexander Nevsky*

To examine another embodiment of Russianness in beer advertising it is useful to consider *Baltika* beer brand. *Baltika*, in its advertising campaigns, connotatively used the *signifiers* for national ideas that could be described in terms of "all-Russianness" and "one country of many nations". In its 2001 "People Friendship" campaign, people of different ethnicities were portrayed using stereotypical images e.g. stereotypical image of the Georgian ethnicity (as there are many Georgians living in contemporary Russia) is obvious from the commercial. However, it might be interesting to highlight that as the ethnicities, being the *signifiers* of the unity are considered as blurred and not natural as it is unclear what kind of unity and "Friendship of the People" (Russian or Soviet) is signified. [119] This campaign is a reference to the 1936 film *Circus*[120](see figure 3.3), where people of different Soviet nationalities were singing a lullaby to a black American baby (hence representing the Soviet Friendship of People, an important element of Soviet nostalgia in post-socialist Russia).

[119] P. Alexandrov *Chukcha v Banke* (Chukchi in the Bank) in *Ezhenedel'nyi zhurnal* , 52, 2003
[120] *Circus* is a 1936 Soviet melodramatic comedy musical film directed by Grigori Alexandrov.

Figure 3.3. Snapshots from the *Baltika* "Friendship of People" commercial (2001) and film *Circus* (1936)

The 2004 *Baltika* "Where Russia Is" campaign also dealt with Russian unity, exploiting the theme of "the vast but homogeneous territory […] imagined through the window of a space-age train."[121]. In 2005 the "unity" *signifier* was replaced by the reference to the world dominance of *Baltika* under the slogan "Baltika. The World Beer".

Figure 3.4.Snapshots from *Baltika* 2005 "World Beer" campaign

The story told by the narrator of the television commercial develops from *Baltika* beer's recognition in London to pipes used to convey *Baltika* beer from Russia to Europe to transportation of beer to America by ships to the appearance of a space-station comprised of beer cans in the commercial's finale. The image of the space-station might be seen a connotation for the local Russian beer prevalence over the foreign "rivals".

[121] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1396.

Besides the nostalgic *signifiers*, culture especially literature and cinema, was also used as a unifying element in the recent 2011 *Baltika* campaign, where words, rather than images bear those unifying meanings. The catchphrase (or rhetorical question, asked in the commercial) was "What unites Us within Russia?" The answer was provided in the form of a verse, comprised of culturally significant quotes from Russian literature, Soviet movies and songs.[122] The same strategy was used by another beer brand, *Staryi Melnik* (Old Miller), in its football sponsorship commercial that stated that *Staryi Melnik* is an official sponsor of Russian national football team. The tone of the narrator implied that what was important was that "Russia is the Motherland of Mendeleev, Lomonosov, Kutuzov, Suvorov, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Tchaikovsky, Glinka, Stanislavsky and Chaliapin."

Beer commercials and Russian masculinity

As it was pointed out by both Morris and Manning, beer advertising in Russia is a masculine discourse, thus beer consumption is predominantly a male activity, signified in beer commercials through the exploitation of the image of *muzhik*. The positive virtues of *muzhik*, such as resourcefulness, collectiveness, hardworking and spirituality are presented in various campaigns, including those of *Three Bogatyrs* ("Together We are Power"), *Arsenal* ("Beer with male character"), *Staryi Melnik* ("We should meet more often") and *Tolstyak* (Fatty), which advert "stressed the resourcefulness of the Russian muzhik, exhorting men to 'stick together'"[123] and which positioned itself as a beer for the "*true muzhiks*". If the *Three Bogatyrs* advertisements portray the symbolic transformation of *muzhik* into *bogatyr*, the savior of the Motherland (both *muzhik* and b*ogatyr* being the bearers of Russian spirit), then in *Tolstyak* adverts, the virtues of the working-class collectiveness, friendship and spirituality are

[122] Lermontov's "Borodino" and "the Sail"; V. Tsoy's, "The star named Sun" song; "Magic oaks", a song from the Soviet movie "the Diamond Arm"; S. Galanin's "Light in the window"; song "What a wonderful world" song by "the Cheerful Guys" (Soviet band).

[123] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1400.

demonstrated, defining the target audience of this brand. Very popular in the early 2000s, the image of Fatty (portrayed by Russian actor Alexander Semchev) is a typical Russian *muzhik*, who always finds himself in different comic situations, being late for various important assignments (Santa, Astronaut, see figure 3.5) because of his passion to drink beer with other *muzhiks.* Beer drinking can be considered as a peak of Russian working-class masculinity use in advertisements[124]. The answer to the legitimate question "Where have you been?" is always "I have been drinking beer". These campaigns argue that regardless of any situation what is most important for men is to "stick together". Thus, the values of male collectiveness in this culturally differentiated advert are opposed to the Western individualism.

Ficure 3.5. Snapshots from various *Tolstyak* commercials aired in the early 2000s

It is interesting to observe also man's relation to woman and to family values in general[125]. In the figure 3.6 the next *Tolstyak* advert from 2004 provides such an example. Here the male beer-consuming community is opposed to the man's family (wife and mother-in-law) as one bearing a positive connotation to one bearing a negative connotation.

[124] Russian working-class masculinity, being "ours", was exploited from early 90-s (Golubkov brothers in 1994 MMM advertisement), but in *Tolstyak* Russian *muzhik* became almost national symbol.
[125] Family values are successfully exploited in juices and dairy products advertisements, such as "My family", "Kind", "Cottage in the Village".

Figure 3.6. Snapshots from the 2004 "Freedom to the true *muzhik*!" *Tolstyak* commercial

Besides the use of the image of the Russian *muzhik*, the masculine discourse can be grasped in the naming of the various beer brands through the exploitation of Russian proper or last names. A good example is provided by *Afanasiy* and *Stepan Razin* beer brands and their reference to the names of Russian historical figures, respectively the 15th century traveler, Afanasiy Nikitin and the 17th century rebel Stenka (Stepan) Razin. It is also interesting to see how the use of "beer" last names such as *Bochkarev* or *Solodov*[126], embodies beer with both the sense of Russianness and the relation to beer consumption.

Two cases of "glocalized" and culturally differentiated commercials for beverages, one of which is the global brand Coca Cola while another are local Russian beer brands which started to take over the domestic market after the crisis of 1998. The first case demonstrates how Coca Cola brand was firstly domesticated and russified with the deployment of the Russian folk tale, which can be seen as the starting point for linking consumer products, of which beverages are a good example, with the idea of "Russianness" as it was highlighted in the beginning of this chapter. In the second case culturally differentiated Russian beer advertisements were analyzed from the perspective of use of particular the *signifiers* (folklore, nostalgia, stereotypes) while appealing to the Russian origin of the product. Moreover, particular values, meaningful within Russian national context (collectiveness, Russian masculinity), were juxtaposed with each other and with national identity, using the *signifiers* such as nostalgic and folkloric elements, and gender

[126] *Bochka* means "barrel" and *solod* means "malt".

stereotypes. Paying due homage to Jeremy Morris's 2007 study on contemporary Russian beer commercials[127], this part of the chapter enlarged the field, focusing on several aspects as the *signifiers* for Russianness which were only slightly analyzed by Morris, e.g. Russian masculinity.

[127] Jeremy Morris, "Drinking to the Nation: Russian Television Advertising and Cultural Differentiation", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 8 (Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2007), 1387-1403.

Conclusion

The thesis has examined television commercials from post-socialist Russia by positioning them within historical framework from the late 1980s to the early 2000s and by putting them under semiotic lenses. The major aim of this thesis was to grasp the development of culturally significant meanings deployed in television commercials in terms of their appeal to Russian national identity, through the certain *signifiers.*

Albeit semiotics can provide some interesting insights while examining any commercial as a system of signs, putting this commercial into its historical context is vital for the analytical value of the research. The example of the two case studies one of which is 1995-1997 *Russkii proekt* campaign, and another is 2005 *Baltika* beer advertising campaign, demonstrates the usefulness of semiotics and history while applied to the studying of advertising. As both of these campaigns appealed to Russianness deploying quite similar *signifiers* (e.g. boundless territories, space-stations), what was advertized in the first case was the idea of Russianness itself, while in the second case the idea of Russian origin of the product was used to advertize local beer. However, the exploitation of Russianness as a *signifier* for consumer goods became salient only after the post-crisis boost in Russian domestic market. Thus, the *Russkii proekt* campaign was a precursor for consumer goods advertising in terms of the techniques (*signifiers*) exploited; interestingly, the economic reasons for this came only one year after the *Russkii proekt* ended.

As it was stated in the Introduction of the thesis, Russian advertising is as diverse as advertising in the other countries, however, the question I planned to answer by doing this research was whether it is possible to define a unique mode of post-socialist Russian advertising focusing only on a single, yet very important part of it that is television commercials. Both semiotic and historical tools were helpful for answering this question and for examining it more thoroughly. The s*ignified* or culturally differentiated meaning was established as Russian national identity or Russianness in advertising while the *signifiers* or the techniques exploited to

appeal to Russianness, such as folklore and nostalgia, determined the unique character of post-socialist Russian advertising.

In doing this research my aim was to contribute to the broader field of scholarly works specializing on advertising. Bearing in mind that there are several ways of studying advertising, e.g. studying changes in advertising budgeting, or interviewing advertising professionals and viewers, I have chosen semiotic approach to advertising, and applying it to the materials collected within historical context, I have tried to demonstrate that marrying semiotics with history can provide fruitful results for both disciplines and for the further research on advertising.

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