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**Comparative content analysis of public service announcements in USA, Russia and Kazakhstan**

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of similarities and differences which are present in public service announcements (PSAs) of the USA, Russia and Kazakhstan. Our study examined approaches used in PSAs of each country. Findings indicate that all of the three chosen countries use similar production techniques. However, there are differences in themes, target audiences and use tactics which indicate that cultural differences play a significant role in how PSAs are produced internationally.

**Key words:** public service announcements (PSAs), Kazakhstan, Russia, USA, content analysis, social advertising, comparative analysis, target audiences, cultural differences.

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Ибраева Г.Ж., Алим Э.  
**АҚШ, Ресей және Қазақстан әлеуметтік жарнамасының ұқсастықтары мен айырмашылықтарын салыстырмалы талдау**

Зерттеудің басты мақсаты — АҚШ, Ресей және Қазақстан әлеуметтік жарнамасының ұқсастықтары мен айырмашылықтарын салыстырмалы түрде талдау. Әр мемлекеттің әлеуметтік жарнамада қолданатын тәсілдері талданды. Зерттеу нәтижесі бойынша барлық мемлекеттер әлеуметтік жарнама жасауда қолданатын тәсілдер ұқсас екені анықталды. Алайда, әлеуметтік жарнаманың тақырыбы, мақсатты аудиториясы және визуалды тілді қолдану әдісінде айырмашылықтар байқалды. Бұл әр мемлекеттің мәдени ерекшелігінің әлеуметтік жарнамада рөлі зор екенін аңғартып отыр.

**Түйін сөздер:** әлеуметтік жарнама, Қазақстан, Ресей, АҚШ, контент-анализ, салыстырмалы талдау, мақсатты аудитория, мәдени айырмашылық.

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Ибраева Г.Ж., Алим Э.  
**Сравнительный анализ содержания социальной рекламы в США, России и Казахстане**

Целью данного исследования является сравнительный анализ сходств и различий социальной рекламы США, России и Казахстана. Нами было проведено исследование подходов, используемых в социальной рекламе в каждой стране. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что все страны используют идентичные методы создания социальной рекламы. Тем не менее, существуют и различия в темах, целевых аудиториях и тактике использования визуального языка, которые указывают, что культурные различия играют важную роль.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная реклама, Казахстан, Россия, США, контент-анализ, сравнительный анализ, целевые аудитории, культурные различия.

**COMPARATIVE  
CONTENT ANALYSIS  
OF PUBLIC SERVICE  
ANNOUNCEMENTS  
IN USA, RUSSIA AND  
KAZAKHSTAN**

*Public service announcements* (PSAs) are an assertive and highly specialized form of communication used for informing the public about various social issues. PSAs carry in themselves information, represented in artistic form that can bring to people's attention important facts about existing social problems. Such advertisements offer significant possibilities and can achieve positive results. Therefore, PSAs can be used as an instruments of involving public in social processes.

PSAs can also play a significant role in public and political life and can be used as a powerful instrument in influencing public opinion. However, their level of development is different across countries. It has been argued that PSAs were first used as a source of agitation and propaganda in the USA and Russia as early as the aftermath of World War 2 (Pimlott (1948); Nikolaishvilli (2009)). However, this assertion is incorrect since forms of communication were very different during that time. PSAs in the post-war period were used to influence mass public opinion whereas the modern PSA has predefined target audiences. Moreover, themes of PSAs in the postwar period in the USA and Russia were very similar as they focused on publicly identifying the countries' enemies and the mobilization of financial and human resources in pursuit of their opponents. Many of the visual representations of Russia and the USA were alike.



Since then PSA's were widely researched, especially in USA academic circles. There have been numerous qualitative and quantitative analysis of PSAs individually or as part of various health or public communication and information campaigns. Their functional effectiveness was researched by such authors as Atkin C. (1989), Nan X. (2002), Plamgreen P. et al (2005), Kotler P. (2012), Lynn J. (1974), Mendelsohn H. (1973).

Researches note that PSA's first appeared in Russia in 17<sup>th</sup> century and were further used by Soviet Union. Historically Russia has been the key source of public service announcements as an administrative center of the Soviet Union. PSA's of soviet time were used as ideological instruments of propaganda. For example, they contained such slogans as: «Be a hero!», «chatterer is good find for an enemy!», «motherland summons!». In comparison modern, PSAs use more channels of distributions. They have greater variety, both artistically and technically. Public service announcements are a new academic field that is only now attracting the attention of Russian researchers (Nikolaishvili, 2006).

Kazakhstan's developments in this field however are virtually non-existent. There are no legislative norms that define PSAs and dictate terms of their use. There is an absence of specialized institutions which can handle production and dissemination of PSA's. Nevertheless, in view of Kazakhstan's aspiration to resolve numerous social problems and create a positive image of itself in the global community, the role of PSAs is becoming increasingly important.

This study, therefore, examines how culturally diverse countries such as Kazakhstan, Russia and USA produce PSAs. In order to achieve this we have used content analysis, a detailed investigation to define stylistic and technical attributes of PSAs in these countries. We also analyzed PSAs use of such criteria as target audiences, message content, characteristics of the speaker(s), communication strategies, and other stimulating factors.

### Literature Review

Content analysis has been used in the research of PSAs by both North American and Russian academics. Noteworthy researchers among US scholars include: Dejong et al (2001), Georgiadis (2013), Roberson (2001), Slater (1999), Carson (2010). Among Russian scholars, Nikolaishvili (2006) and Kuznetsov (2010) are best known for their work in this field. PSAs in Kazakhstan have not been the subject of academic research defines the novelty of

this research. Moreover, there have been no previous attempts in doing comparative analysis of PSAs across these three countries.

In the USA an important PhD dissertation study was completed by Emily Carson entitled «The Importance of Relational Communication for Effecting Social Change in HIV/AIDS Prevention Messages: A Content Analysis of HIV/AIDS Public Service Announcements» (2010). Carson examined the effectiveness of TV PSAs on addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS in USA. She analyzed 152 PSA videos.

The author of this article has created a code book which contained 102 questions as a rubric for reviewing numerous components of PSAs. Video PSAs were chosen as a subject of analysis because of their easy accessibility on the internet. Due to restrictions in accessing primary videos in Russia and the USA, the author chose to use video hosting site YouTube for data collection. Established in 2005 YouTube attracts about 10% of internet traffic and is considered as 4<sup>th</sup> among the most accessed websites in the world (Freeman and Champman, 2007). As noted by Weare and Lin (2000, p. 272): «The World Wide Web is characterized by its ubiquity, global reach, interactivity, decentralized, hyperlinked structure, and multimedia format». The internet is a useful tool as it can store and archive video materials for an indefinite period of time. For example, YouTube can monitor the number of views of each PSA which allows one to conduct a more accurate analysis of the target audience reach. Paek et al (2010, p. 1086) argued that «Unlike traditional media channels such as television and print, video-sharing web sites often have interactive mechanisms that can collect data on content popularity and audience response».

### Procedure

The content analysis used in this study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How similar or varied are the subjects of video PSAs in three countries?
2. What stylistic methods, based on the experience of other countries, can be used by Kazakhstan to create similar types of PSAs.

The research aim is to improve the production of PSAs in Kazakhstan by comparative learning from the USA and Russia. To achieve this aim we outline the following research objectives:

- To determine stylistic and technical and attributes of video PSAs in three countries using the method of content analysis.
- To analyze video PSAs by such criteria as target audience, content, characteristics of the speaker(s),

communication strategy and factors influencing behavioral changes..

- To analyze the strength and weaknesses of video PSAs of three countries using the method of content analysis.

The main feature of content analysis is that it studies documents of social communication. Most often they are messages from the press, radio, television, meetings, minutes, letters, orders, pronouncements etc., and also data arising from open-ended interviews and questions posed in questionnaires; all of which act as the substance of research for content analysis. Holsti (1969, p. 2) argues: «Content analysis is a multipurpose method of research developed specially for studying any problem in which the message content serves as a base for conclusions».

In the current study, the content analysis of 120 video PSAs were analyzed, 40 of which represented three countries: USA, Russia and Kazakhstan. Russia was chosen as a country which shares a historic background with Kazakhstan. Moreover, PSA's in Russia are subjected to academic research which is often not a case in other post-soviet countries. USA is a country noted by its wide and exten-

sive use of PSA's in raising awareness of various social issues.

PSAs were analyzed for determination of target audiences, expected behavioral changes and the communication strategy deployed in each of them. For specification or categorization of content in video PSAs, each of 20 categories has multiple variables. For example, the category describing the speaker and who is answering the questions posed include: «Who is represented in a video?» has as the following codes: A) Nobody: People aren't represented in a video; B) Man (M) or Woman (W) or both (MW); C) Family; D) Child (baby); E) Teenager; E) Only Husband; G) Only Wife; H) Husband and wife; I) Other people (specify).

### Results of the content analysis

The content analysis addressed the following questions:

1. How similar or varied are subjects of video PSAs in three countries?

The content analysis of video PSAs in the three chosen countries revealed some thematic distinctions.

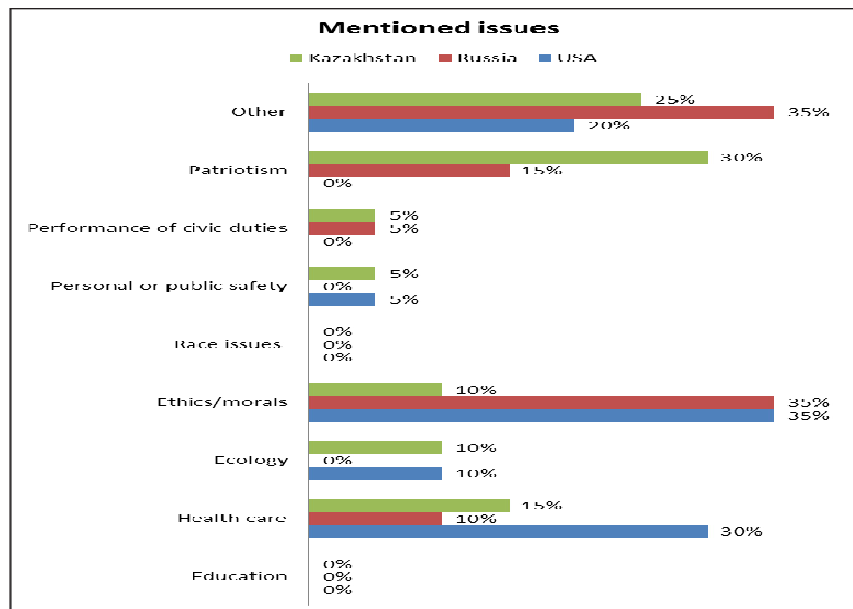


Figure 1 – Mentioned topics

As seen from figure 1, the subject of health care is often presented in PSAs of the USA (30%). Use of PSAs in promoting certain actions in the sphere of personal care about health is a widely used prac-

tice in this country. There is a whole body of research studying all aspects of public health campaigns. PSAs about health care in the USA, as a rule, are part of large-scale long-term information

campaigns. In Kazakhstan (15%) and Russia (10%) PSAs are not linked to specific campaigns and are more discrete and multi-thematic. This can be explained by the scarcity of financial funds allocated to PSAs. On the other hand, the approach adopted by USA public health campaigns is resource intensive. Costs involved in this significant industry include expenses of the Advertising Board, payment of advertising experts and production costs, and public relations specialists. There are also multiple producers of PSAs, for example government and noncommercial institutions and social or not-for-profit companies involved in fund raising for charitable needs.

Peculiarity of Kazakhstan's PSAs is that it is the only one of three countries placing emphasis on patriotic education. Patriotic education entails strengthening a citizen's feeling of pride in Kazakhstan's accomplishments in the fields of politics, sports and culture or the public affirmation of one's national identity. Evidence of patriotism across the three countries under review indicates the following data: Kazakhstan – 30%, Russia – 15%. Russian video PSAs place an emphasis on the importance of honoring historical events (memory of veterans of war) and their cultural heritage.

Ethical and moral issues are reflected to the same extent in PSAs of Russia and the USA (by 35%). In the USA this subject noted in videos about the dangers of placing personal information in social networks, the influence of domestic violence on children, ethnic discrimination, and psychological harassment, bullying ridicule among teenagers. In Russia – videos about the homeless, tolerance towards disabled people, the good parenting and the dangers of religious sects. For Kazakhstan in only 10% of cases was attention paid to ethical and moral issues through PSA's: the consequences of corruption, tolerance towards disabled people, human trafficking, and sanitary maintenance in the cities.

Environmental issues are presented only in the USA and Kazakhstan (by 10%). The subjects in both countries are very similar and highlight the consequences of street pollution and the importance of recycling.

Among the least presented subjects in the selected countries are issues of personal and public security, ethnic questions and observance of civic duties. It is remarkable that the USA and Kazakhstan have identical indicators in terms of personal and public security and ethnic questions (by 5%). Both countries emphasize the importance of interethnic consensus and inclusiveness. The appeal to observance of civic duties is least well-presented and reflected in videos of Kazakhstan and Russia (by 5%).

2. *What can Kazakhstan learn from the experience of PSAs in the USA and Russia?*

Overall, in all three countries there are similar approaches to the production of PSAs. Nevertheless, the content analysis revealed that the PSAs in the USA are better in qualitative and technical aspects than the Russian videos.

**Duration of PSAs.** In the analysis of PSAs of the three countries the author noticed a significant difference in terms of PSAs' length/duration. It is significant that the videos made in the USA do not exceed 30 seconds.

Research in the field of commercial advertisements revealed that in 2013 about 44% of commercial advertising in the USA did not exceed 15 seconds (Wilson, 2013). This strategy saves money that can otherwise be used to buy extra advertising time for promoting the campaign cause. According to statistical data for 2009, only 37.5% of the audience in the USA watched an advertisement lasting from 15 to 30 seconds from start to end (Heine, 2009). Audience members are willing to make some exceptions for PSAs as long as they are interesting and capture their attention.

Analysis of Russian and Kazakhstani PSAs show opposite tendencies. Videos in these countries can last over 5 minutes. This may be one of the reasons for their inefficiency. Audiences do not have enough patience watch PSA's which lasts this long as statistical data in the USA indicated that only 12.7% of the audience watch to the end advertisements lasting more than 60 seconds (Heine, 2009).

As seen from figure 2, video PSA's of three countries predominantly feature men. Teenagers are least presented as a demographic group, especially in videos of Kazakhstan and Russia. In USA 19% of PSAs in the teenagers were represented. USA pays great emphasis on informing teenagers of the consequences of various addictions. For example, the program of the State of Massachusetts for prevention of smoking was intended to several target audiences, but, mainly, it was aimed at teenagers. The program lasted from 1992 to 2009 and proved its efficiency. A four year survey has shown that younger Massachusetts adolescents (age 12 and 13 years) with baseline exposure to video PSAs were half as likely to progress to regulator smoking as their non-exposed peers. (Koh, 2009).

In the scientific environment, research and scientific work are devoted to the issue of perception within PSA messages. Western scientists considered it important to inform teenagers about the harmful consequences of specific addictions and habits. In the PSAs of Kazakhstan this category isn't presented. Therefore, Kazakhstan producers of PSA's should target teenagers as the demographic group with the aim of reducing harmful addictions.

*Image of teenagers*

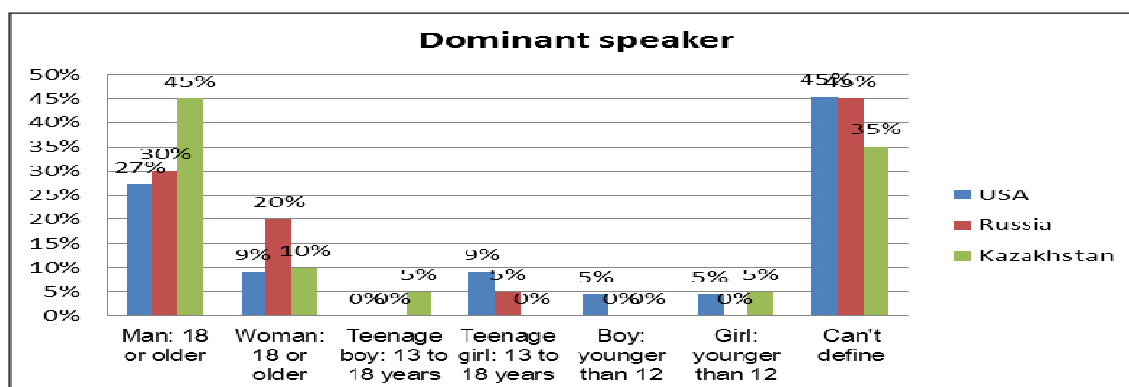


Figure 2 – Demographic representation of dominant speakers in PSA's

*Use of high quality computer graphics*

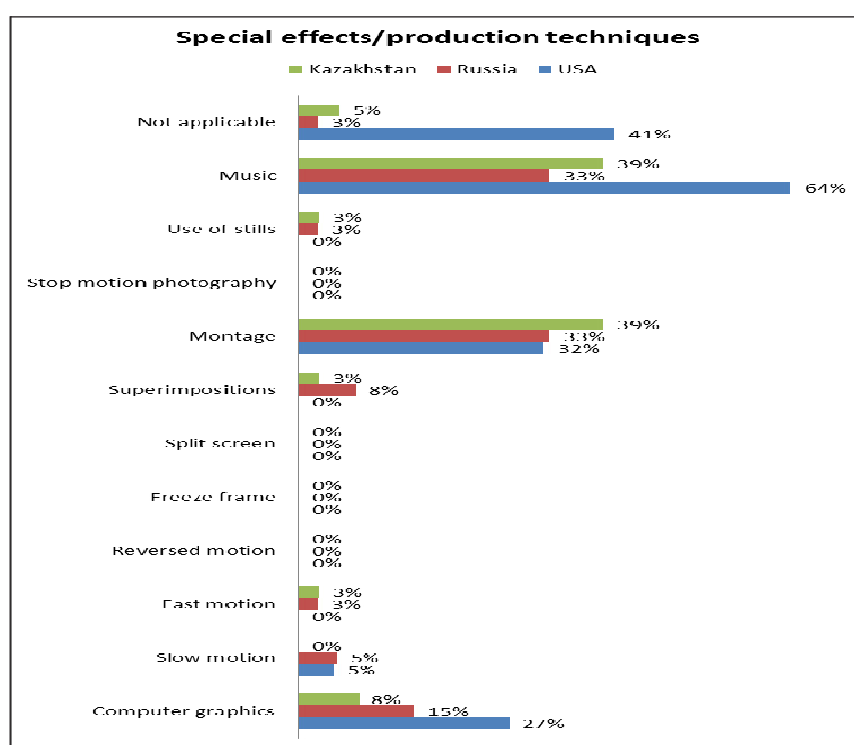


Figure 3 – Production techniques

As seen from figure 3 all three countries incorporate special effects in their PSA's. USA is in the lead in the number of high-quality special effects used in PSAs. Examples include: animated characters, tornado demonstration in apartments, and the use of animals to promote specific messages. Kazakhstan's PSA's computer generated special effects are also applied but they are much inferior in quality and performance compared to US videos. Kazakhstan producers of PSAs should pay more attention to the

quality of computer graphics and try to diversify the content using animation and other special effects.

As seen from figure 4, Kazakhstan doesn't use fear appeals in PSAs. The reasons for these distinctions between USA, Russia and Kazakhstan are cultural differences and features of these countries. There are some reasons why fear appeals are not used in PSA's of Kazakhstan. Western researchers established that correctly used, fear appeals can favorably affect the effectiveness of PSA's (Beiner,

2002; Lee and Park, 2012). However, in the western academic circles there is an opinion that fear appeals can cause an excessive feeling of alarm and concern in society (Spence and Moinpaur, 1972; Duke et al, 1993). This side effect in many respects depends on the subjective and cultural values of target audience. From this it is possible to assume that Kazakhstan's cultural values influence the unwillingness of PSA producers to include fear appeals in plots.

As seen in figure 5, in 22% of US video PSA's the speaker uses personal tone, i.e. describes the history of how the social problem affected his/her life or lives of his/her relatives.

Yu notes that the use of narration is the most natural way of involving the audience in social problems (2014). The creative narration can awaken emotions and create feelings of participation in social issue.

*Use of fear appeals*

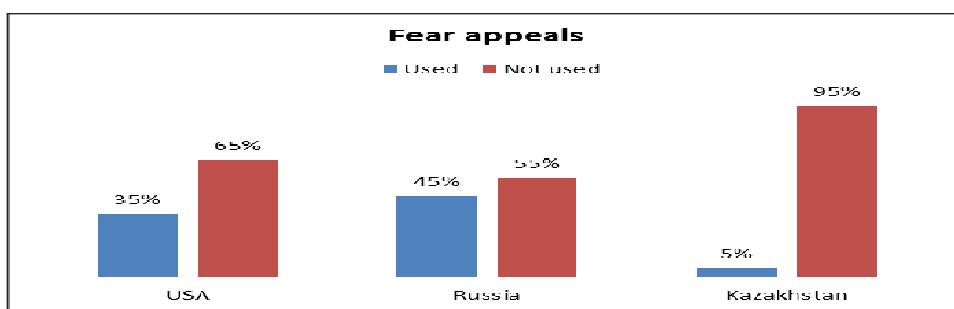


Figure 4 – Use of fear appeals

*Use of a personal approach*

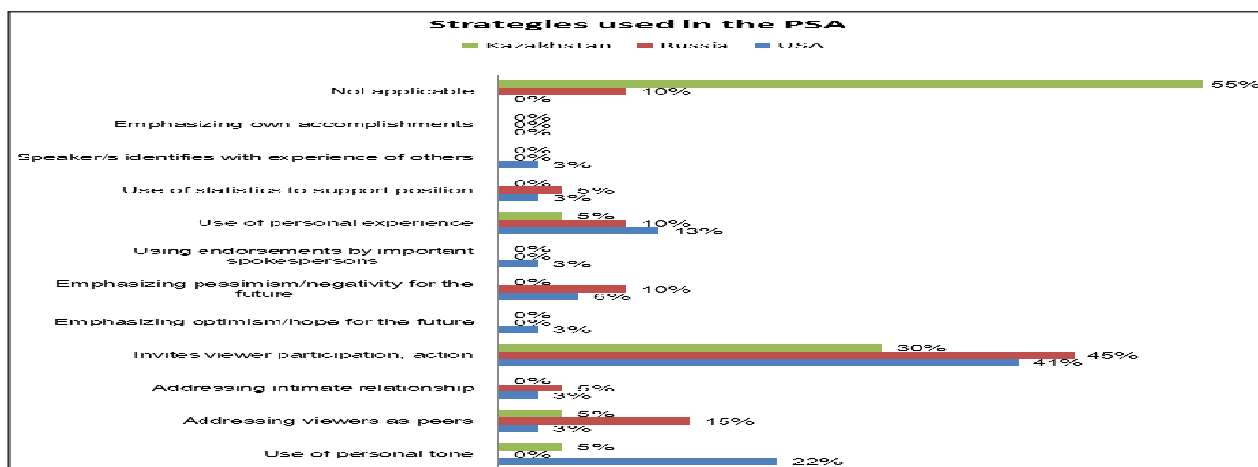


Figure 5 – Strategies used in PSA's

PSA's in USA differs from other countries because they are not limited by such methods of presentation as info-graphics, lists and manuals. On the contrary, US producers try to create messages which appeal to human feelings. Example of such narration is the PSA of the Advertising Council about autism. A video features a close-up view of a young man who reports that he assumes that at his school there is a student with autism. By means of comput-

er graphics he ages and reports that his friend's son has autism. He ages further and matures and says that the son of his neighbor has autism. By the end of the video he confesses that his son has autism. In the final minutes of the video the off-screen speaker announces that autism comes closer and closer to people's every day experience and lists statistics of this phenomenon. The narration and use of personal stories is a natural part of the life experience of

people. PSAs which are able to recreate this type of communication will be capable of awakening strong emotions in the audience and encourage actions necessary for the solution of a social problem. This research has allowed to identify potential perspectives for PSA's in Kazakhstan. USA and Russia have a rich history of implementing PSA's for resolving various social issues. Comparative content-analysis of these countries allowed to show the dependability of PSA's effectiveness on social norms and values. Cultural and national peculiarities of each country influence the choice of approaches and instrumental tools used in production of PSA's

Analysis of experiences of these countries help to identify best practices which can be used in PSA's of Kazakhstan. Development of PSAs in Kazakhstan is a slow and gradual process but they are evolving and developing further. Use of international experience in the production of PSAs can have a beneficial influence on their effectiveness. However, it must be done with great caution. Lack of critical review of foreign experience in PSA's

and blind copying of its advertising techniques will have a negative impact on the effectiveness of PSAs in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, results of this research helped to form recommendations for improving effectiveness of PSA's in Kazakhstan. A video PSA should be more creative and daring in use of fear appeals and mustn't exceed 40 seconds or 1 minute. A video PSA needs to illustrate various demographic groups, examples of socially approved behavior and lead its audience to its own conclusion. The main figure of a video PSA must personally relate to the discussed social issue. Moreover, a PSA must contain a call for action.

Without doubt, the advertising expertise of such countries like the USA has been long-established and based on extensive academic and practical research. This content analysis has shown the importance of preliminary assessment of advertising methods that are adapted from foreign practices. Cultural and national features of countries must influence the way in which the advertising approaches are conducted and how they will be perceived by audiences.

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