THE INFLUENCE OF GLOBALISATION ON POLISH CONSUMER ATTITUDES

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With Hungary’s accession to the EU in the immediate future, it is worth paying attention to people’s attitude to globalisation in Poland, in a country, which is in a situation similar to that of Hungary. These two countries, which experienced an era of changes in the 1990s close to each other, have made parallel progress, helping each other throughout their earlier history. So as not to be only vulnerable consumers for the ‘more developed’ countries, it is worth rebuilding and developing the foreign trade relations between the two countries. A necessary condition for this is to see clearly what effect globalisation will have on people living here. It is important to know what community marketing tools can help Poland to become – while preserving its national values – a member state of the European Union, where Polish people – also in their Polish identity – can enjoy the benefits of globalisation. In fact globalisation has not only advantages, it may also have obvious disadvantages if we disregard the various local characteristics, i.e., treat every country and region according to a single pattern, which has been worked out and proved in a given area. We do not have to go very far, it is enough to think of the unexpected effects on the biological environment:

1. Globalisation and the biosphere

We have been able to observe both in the fauna and the flora the ‘free’ migration between countries and continents, which has taken place partly spontaneously, but partly consciously – as a result of globalisation. (Lem, 2002):

- In the past century rabbits, which had migrated from Europe to Australia, then spread all over the continent and became harmful animals, were infected by a virus so that their numbers would decrease. The result was not only a decrease in the numbers of rabbits, but we also ‘managed’ to ‘get rid of’ several native Australian small rodent species. As a matter of fact, nature did not fail to respond since shortly afterwards new rabbits resistant to the virus appeared.

- The venomous Brown snakes from Australia and Indonesia got to Guam, where they multiplied. From there, wound onto the wheels of aeroplanes during takeoff, they flew across the Pacific Ocean and spread further all over the world.

- In West-India small mammals – the best known mongoose is Riki Tiki Tawi from Kipling’s novel – were settled to stop the overmultipication of rats. But unfortunately, several native bird and lizard species also fell victim to them.
Certain native Asian ant species destroy rainforests on the Easter Islands. They destroy the continental crabs, which play an important role in the local ecosystem. In 18 months the ants killed 3 million crabs.

- The foot-and-mouth disease of the recent past in Great Britain was also the result of a virus indigenous to Asia. That is why the local livestock was unprotected against it.
- A few years ago I saw a picture of a large, palm-sized, spider, which arrived in Poland with a banana shipment and was ‘caught’ in a banana ripening …

2. Polish characteristics

As a result of European integration Poland becomes open, investors and consumers from all over the world show more and more interest in the country. Therefore it is necessary to harmonise the marketing activities with the functioning of the integrating European market.

As a result of the Polish local government reform (Bárkányi 2000) the country was divided into EU-conform regions, whose names and areas are the same as those of the historical Polish regions. This powerful traditionalism can also be seen in other fields.

The Polish attitude to advertising differs from the experience in other countries. As a consequence of their strong patriotism, the most popular mediums are those which emphasise national values.

On the other hand, due to intense religiousness and perhaps the influence of the church, commercials in which the product or the character of the commercial is Polish are given preference (Bárkányi 2000).

Before the EU accession the observation of the above characteristics should come to the front, because the results of the latest surveys show that Polish people are against globalisation.

![Diagram 1. Is globalisation useful to all members of the Polish society? (Wyniki badan 19 May 2002)](image)

The above survey shows that the majority of the respondents are against globalisation. It also appears that more than 10% of the respondents are not fully aware of the meaning of globalisation. It may follow that among the opponents there could be some people who do
not really know what globalisation may mean to Poland, but they do not dare to admit it. Instead, on account of conformity they join the party, which seems to be bigger, opposing the idea.

In one respect it is due to the media: news speaking about extreme incidents against globalisation across the world is becoming more and more frequent. On the other hand, we need to consider that the attitude of many people to globalisation is founded not only in clear financial and economic terms, as we could expect according to the Homo Oeconomicus theory (Kozłowski 2002). Even Adam Smith’s grandchild could be an inhabitant of the global world, as his country is the Earth, where he travels free and without a care. The motivation that makes him travel is the hope to make larger profits. A great many people attach other values to the meaning of their lives: e.g. the country, insistence on what they own, what they have achieved themselves.

We cannot treat the total population simply as the demand and supply of the market, because people also take into account other aspects when they choose or change their jobs and they adjust not only to changes in the labour market.

Among the supporters of globalisation we may find those who think that this is an irreversible process, therefore we quite simply need to accept it. The more we adapt ourselves to the expectations of the global world, the more cleverly we proceed.

According to the above thoughts we may see that the reasons of both the supporters and the opponents of globalisation can be accepted only as part of the truth. It appears that the society has no clear idea what globalisation means to them and the majority does not even dare to admit it to themselves.

3. Globalisation, but how?

Globalisation does not affect only Poland but the whole world. It also has a great effect on Polish economy, for it has to join economic integration going on throughout the world so as to improve its competitiveness. But – as in other countries – the question arises also here: Should it be realised without any barriers, adjusted only to the market processes or with certain restrictions, not always drifting with the events? Globalisation affects every part of the free market; thereby the unfavourable effects of the market may show up throughout the world.

Therefore it is necessary to regulate both the market and globalisation, i.e., the roles of politics and government come to the front. Just think of Kant’s ‘World Government’ conception (Kozłowski 2002), which nowadays is not just a dream, but slowly it will be unavoidable. The basic idea is this: it is better to try to co-ordinate global processes rather than allow things to develop by themselves.

Nowadays the USA, as the greatest power, could carry out this duty best. But we cannot forget that in this case it is not sure that the whole world’s interests would lead the USA. It is more likely and logical that the USA would consider it more important to achieve its own
national goals than the goals of the world. Since no country has a government – despite their power position – which can formulate the latter goal on its own.

Even if there is no ‘World Government’, globalisation should not gain ground without any limitations. A network of international contracts may be able to govern it. The contracts apply to various areas (e.g. environmental protection, armaments, public health, mobility of capital and manpower, taxation, etc.). Based on a higher-level loyalty, all the countries in the world can be interconnected, for such a chain of contracts represents the interests of the individual countries.

In order to finalise the above contracts the support of the people in each country has to be won. The conditions in the first place involve information for and education of the population about the advantages of the globalisation processes. National values must not be forgotten either if, as a result of information, support is to be obtained.

It is a Polish speciality that in the community marketing activities related to globalisation the Roman Catholic Church has to take on a significant role. With its help influencing the Polish people’s attitude to globalisation in the right direction may be more successful. For this purpose, awareness of the following must be raised:

• The Polish Catholic Church also sees more opportunities than threats in globalisation. The church has experience in this field, for it has been combining global - local and universal - particular elements for nearly two thousand years.

• The most important Polish national values are as follows: language, history, traditions and religion. In addition, it may be even more important that the entire society wants to maintain its national independence. There have been many examples for this in history, when Poland was under political oppression. But right now there is no threat that after the EU accession they Poland should give up this healthy national identity-consciousness.

• Maybe the most important results of globalisation in Europe will be peace and security. In Europe the present EU citizens represent the values developed by Christianity free from belonging to any religious denomination. As Poland embraced Western culture as early as its foundation as a nation state, today it has to join the united Europe while preserving its sovereignty, national identity and culture, for lack of any other alternatives.

• Examining Polish traditions and culture it can be shown what effects other cultures had on Polish identity: Polish culture was always enhanced when it opened towards other cultures. Therefore the effect of globalisation on culture is likely to be favourable.

• As a result of globalisation the prices of goods and services are likely to decrease, the mobility of capital will be freer, and finally the opportunities for economic growth will be more auspicious. But we cannot disregard the fact that state institutions cannot control huge international companies completely. Therefore in their activities they may not always take into consideration attaining the wealth and welfare of the society where they operate.

• One of the most important consequences of Poland’s accession to the EU is that it may take a more active part in making decisions about Europe achieving greater appreciation.
Summing up the conclusions: globalisation does not necessarily threaten Poland’s national identity. As a process it cannot be stopped and in itself it is neither good nor bad, but it will be what people will make it. Globalisation has to serve people’s interests therefore it cannot become a colonisation of our times appearing in a new guise.

4. Summary

With Hungary’s accession to the EU in the immediate future, it is worth paying attention to people’s attitude to globalisation in Poland, in a country, which is in a situation similar to that of Hungary. These two countries, which experienced an era of changes in the 1990s close to each other, have made parallel progress, helping each other throughout their earlier history. So as not to be only vulnerable consumers for the ‘more developed’ countries, it is worth rebuilding and developing the foreign trade relations between the two countries.

It is interesting to note that more than 10% of the respondents are not fully aware of the meaning of globalisation. It may follow that among the opponents there could be some people who do not really know what globalisation may mean to Poland, but they do not dare to admit it. Instead, on account of conformity they join the party, which seems to be bigger, opposing the idea.

It is a necessary condition to see clearly how globalisation will affect the people living there. It is important to know what community marketing tools can help Poland to become – while preserving its national values – a member state of the European Union, where Polish people – also in their Polish identity – can enjoy the benefits of globalisation.

References