

# Differing Interpretations of Benetton's Advertising Campaigns

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Teoretická část popisuje kulturní pozadí současné reklamy. Zabývá se kulturními aspekty, a rozdělením kultur podle Hofstedeho dimenzí národních kultur. Čtyři motivy Benetton kampaní jsou zkoumány: černá a bílá, láska a smrt, AIDS, a válka. Praktická část objasňuje příčiny a důvody kulturních rozdílů, a předvídá vývoj kulturních hodnot v budoucnosti. Zahrnut je názor Pavla Horňáka na etická stránku kampaní. Výzkum je zaměřen na pět zemí: Českou republiku, Finsko, Itálii, USA, a Čínu, s analýzou kulturních aspektů každé ze zemí. Dva cíle dotazníku byly stanoveny: první, jestli lidé reagují podle Hofstedeho dimenzí, a druhý, jestli se jejich postoj k rasismu opravdu změnil.

Klíčová slova:

Kultura, Hofstedeho dimenze, Benetton, kampaň, interpretace, kulturní hodnoty, reklamy, Oliviero Toscani, rasismus

## **ABSTRACT**

The theoretical part describes the cultural background of the current advertising. It deals with the cultural aspects and divisions of cultures by Hofstede's dimension of national cultures. Four motifs of Benetton's campaigns are examined: Black & White, Love & Death, AIDS, and War. The practical part clarifies the causes and reasons for cultural divergence, and predicts the course of values for the future. The ethical side of the campaigns is being examined by comments of Pavel Horňák. The research is focused on five countries: the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, the USA, and China with the analysis of the cultural aspects of each country. Two goals of the questionnaire were set up: the first, whether people react according to Hofstede's dimensions, and second, if the attitude towards racism has really changed.

Keywords:

Culture, Hofstede's dimensions, Benetton, campaign, interpretation, values, advertisements, Oliviero Toscani, racism

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## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is full of advertisements which do not bring anything new to the table. All of them are alike, based on dreamy world of perfect people and omnipotent products. They declare: if you purchase this all your problems will be solved, and you will be happy. The advertisements attack people's desires, and delude them. The paradox is that they are not even being noticed. People got apathetic, they go by three thousand commercials every day, and are able to recall only four of them.

Benetton was the first company which came to the market with something new. Something which had had no parallel before. Their campaigns displayed social misfortunes, which made people think, and ponder things which were often ignored and tabooed. The author of the campaigns, Oliviero Toscani, created an advertising of the third kind. He did not sell products through the campaigns, however, alerted people about serious social issues. His campaigns caused a lot of attention, discussion, and unfortunately, misunderstandings. Even though there were some who greeted his campaigns favourably, majority of people explained them negatively. In order to understand such reactions, it is necessary to know individual cultures.

This is the purpose of this Bachelor's Thesis, to explain why were Benetton's campaigns interpreted differently. The theoretical part deals with the cultural aspects, and divisions of national cultures by Geert Hofstede's five dimensions, which explain how and why certain societies act in a particular way. It also includes the delineation of the creation of each campaign, and its acceptance or refusal by society. Four motifs of the Benetton campaigns are examined: Black & White, Love & Death, AIDS, and War. Each of these themes describes the most famous and scandalized campaigns.

The practical part clarifies the origin and causes for the culture divergence, and proceeds with the course of values for the future. The Benetton campaigns are campaigns on the boundary of ethic and misfortune exploitation aiming to sell apparel. Hence, a comment on the "good and bad" side of the campaigns is included. The research was focused on five countries: the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, the USA, and China, with a chapter pursued to description of each culture. The contemporary world is different from the 80's and 90's when the Benetton campaigns were released, people are more open-minded and tolerant to different races, and perceive black society as equal. Therefore, two goals to investigate were set up: the first one, whether people react according to Geert

Hofstede's division of cultures, and the second, if the attitude of the current society towards racism has really changed.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 CULTURAL AND ADVERTISING CONTEXT OF ADVERTISEMENT

Commercials are omnipresent. They may be seen in newspapers, magazines, on TV, in cinemas, on billboards, in traffic transport, on clothes, on the Internet, and many other places. They sometimes even do not have to be perceived. Logos (characters, pictograms, titles representing a brand) appear on garments, shoes, appliances, cars, backpacks, computers, mobile phones, etc. Since the consumers are used to ubiquitous commercials and brands, they do not perceive their messages. Advertisers and marketing departments are forced to keep seeking for new ways how to attract and keep consumers' attention. Consumers are used to a big number of commercials, therefore, they have become apathetic. They have more tendencies to turn to the following page when reading a magazine, or to forward a movie, click somewhere else when surfing on the Internet. Products, brands, and commercials, are supposed to represent the things in the way they would be yearned for, and lives which would be envied. Commercials simulate abstract, often dreamy world, which does not occur in presence, but in imaginary future. Advertisements promise: if their products are used, better image, look, higher prestige, and a feeling of fulfilment is guaranteed. (Sturken 2009, 271)

Brand equity is the financial evaluation of products gained from intangible brand profit that overrun the product's use value. These benefits are delivered to its customers by brand in the form of perception of quality, relationship, experience, and sense of identity. The sense of brand is not just a value contribution. It is a prerequisite of prospect for making brand value. Hence, controlling brand equity requires controlling brand meaning or semiotics. (Oswald 2012, 1)

Advertisements are not just pictures to look at. They are a disquisition focused on communicating between the customer and the brand world. (Oswald 2012, 35) Commercials do not try to persuade us to purchase the product. Instead they try to amuse, set a puzzle for to solve, or exhibit their own sophistication. Potential customers are entertained by linguistic and visual signs or codes which they are required to decipher. They are also demanded to recognize the social myths, think of them, and have fun when doing this. Advertisers also need to think of the fact that advertisements are not understood and read by everyone in the same way. Another factor that must not be forgot is the ambiguity

of the sign meaning, and also the possibility that customers may decode the signs differently than intended. (Bignell 2002, 31-32)

Usunier states in his book *Marketing Across Cultures* that: “Advertising, which is based on language and communication, is the most culture-bound element of the marketing mix.” Many misunderstandings occur when companies try to adjust their advertisements to different cultures. It is due to the fact that cultures have basis in languages and images. Language is the strongest link between advertising and the customers. (Usunier 2009, 376-377)

More than 450 definitions of the word culture exist. (Herbig 1998, 11) The term “culture” was defined by Emile Littré in French as “cultivation, farming activity”. The abstract sense of the term was created in Germany, where the word “kultur” referred to a civilization. Nevertheless, not everything is controlled by culture. As Mr Usunier claims: “Individual behavior is influenced, but not determined by culture.” Human behaviour and acting is influenced by culture, however, “it is the most difficult to recognize from within and to understand from without.” Culture is complex and it is complicated to understand what is influenced by culture and what is not. Moreover, human’s perception of different culture is restricted. (Usunier 2009, 3)

## 2 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

### 2.1 The Value Paradox

The value paradox exists both outside and inside of every culture. Skills that come naturally in one country need to be learnt in another one. For example, individualism is one the basic qualities in the USA, however, Japanese need to be taught to that skill. Leadership is a component of all elementary schools in the USA; however, French does not have an appropriate translation for this word, neither do Spanish. (Mooij, 2005, 1) An example of the value paradox inside of one country is the individual freedom-belonging. This contradictory phenomenon can be found in the USA. Although people in an individualistic country want to do things all alone, they also have a need to belong somewhere. According to the American Society of Associations Executives in Washington, D.C., in the year 1995, 7 out of 10 Americans belonged to one club or association. There is nothing like that to be found in Japan, since it is the country of the need for belonging. These all phenomena are called value paradoxes. They are part of human's system, something which is opposing, but real. Examples of such paradoxes are freedom-belonging, tradition-innovation, or order-chaos. They also stand for the desirable and the desired. In translation, what people are supposed to want and what they really want. Eating healthily is required, however, hamburgers and chocolate is popular. Value paradoxes influence people's motives and activate their feelings and emotions. That is the reason why they are used in marketing and advertising. Advertising attacks the things or feelings which are missing in society. (Mooij 2005, 1-2)

### 2.2 Local Markets are People, Global Markets are Products

Marieke de Mooij states that: "Markets are people, not products. There may be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands, but there are no global motivations for buying those brands." For example, in the Western world, the Sony Walkman was used, because people did not want to be disturbed by the people around them. However, the Sony Walkman was invented for the reason that listeners do not disturb others.

There are only a few global brands, and they reflect their own home-country culture. These brands are Coca-Cola and McDonald's with their American value, and Gucci reflecting the Italian culture.

Advertisers struggle to understand cultures, so they may intrigue them correctly. On the other hand, many advertisers make mistake when they think that one general commercial will appeal to women or men from different countries. Language is not the only difference in understanding between people from different countries, they also differ in worldviews. Moreover, translation from one language to another does not carry the same meaning or a way of thinking. (Mooij 2005, 4-6)

### **2.3 Global Advertising**

Brands like Levi's, Nike and Coca-Cola are examples of strong companies which became successful due to their global advertising. However, not only advertising was the key to the success. It was also intensive distribution, which was very important marketing mix instrument. Nivea was worldwide known, even though the TV did not exist at the time; and Coca-Cola was available always and everywhere, when people were thirsty.

Three misunderstandings are common when talking about the standardization of the advertising: (a) visuals are more easily transferrable than text advertising, (b) image strategies may be used if the values are general, (c) advertising themes can be universal, only the implementation needs to be adjusted. Visuals are bound to the culture as strongly as language. Advertising themes are established on buying motives, and the motives are bound to culture. (Mooij 2005, 7-8)

### **2.4 Cultures**

According to Geert Hofstede: "Culture is the glue that binds groups together." Culture is what specifies human community, it is a set of directions which guide behaviour. "Culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience." People living in the same culture act in the same way, usually in a way which worked in the past. It involves shared views, postures, standards, rules, and values. All these things are usually shifted from generation to generation. Culture means to society the same what memory to individuals.

The term "culture" does not mean only national groups within a country, it also refers to ethnic and professional groups, social classes or age-groups. How people act depends on the groups which people belong to. Moreover, the identical groups form different countries vary: eating and dress habits are not the same, as well as gender roles and social classes.



When talking about cultures, it is always important to define the national, corporate and age culture, otherwise chaos may be created.

Every person is bound to one culture, no one is culture-free. Without a connection to a culture, our central nervous system would not be able to conduct our behaviour. All ideas, values, acts and emotions are products of our own culture. (Mooij 200, .35-36)

## **2.5 Values**

Values, defined by Marieke de Mooij as “broad tendencies to prefer a certain state of affairs over others”, lie at the core of culture. People learn them unconsciously at the very childhood, and it is difficult to spot, or change them. Translation into another language is not easy due to the fact that words, which stand for values, have abstract meaning. (Mooij 2005, 38)

## **2.6 Prisoners of culture**

Every nation sees the world differently. People are taught what to see and how to see it when they grow up, it is culturally bound. They see what they want to see and do not see what they cannot see, because it does not correspond with our experience. People are confused and make errors in judgement when things are different. For example, some people may find it polite when our guests arrive an hour later for dinner, some not. Mooij asserts that: “We are prisoners of our own culture.” (Mooij 2005, 39-40) When classifying other cultures, it is impossible to restrain our own cultural value pattern. People tend to think that their own culture is better when comparing with other. (Mooij 2005, 51)

Creative directors have an ability to make the right advertisement for their own culture, however, they are not able to transfer the values into another culture. (Mooij 2005, 39-40)

## **2.7 Language**

Expressions of culture are observable in metaphors. American English has many expressions which are deduced from baseball. British English has many metaphors from cricket. Egyptians would not say “my Sunshine” to a girl, because Sun is understood as cruel. The girl would probably be called “moonlight”. However, “moonlighting” means in English to have second job. Some languages have words which we cannot find in another languages. Although, there are some words which were transferred into other languages. These words mean something special, unique (e.g. management, computer, sauna).

An advertisement of KitKat candy bar serves as an example of untranslatable meaning. Having KitKat in the United Kingdom was an expression of a break. “Take a break, take a KitKat”. The break which is meant here is known only in British English, it is the 11 o’clock morning break when people have tea and the chocolate bar. Due to this, KitKat is called “Elevenses” in the UK. This pause at eleven o’clock is unknown in any other country in Europe. Therefore, the meaning could not be transferred into another language. That is the reason why KitKat is not connected with morning tea break in any other country.

Monolingual people, and sometimes not even advertisers, do not realize how language is important and complicated in advertising. Only bi- and trilingual people are able to fully understand the perplexity of translating values and the exact meaning into another language. Even though English is the most spoken second language in the world, the level of English at non-natives differ, therefore advertisers need to be aware of the fact that non-natives are not always capable of understanding the same collocations as native speakers do. (Mooij 2005, 43-44)

## **2.8 Signs, Symbols and Body Language**

Gestures are important cultural signs. One particular gesture may have a completely different meaning in another country. A gesture with positive meaning may be embarrassing or rude to other cultures. For example, Germans raise their eyebrows in purpose of expressing that they have a clever idea, however, raising eyebrows in Britain or Netherlands is a sceptic gesture. Showing your tongue to another person in Europe means to disgrace him, however, children perceive the gesture as a challenge. Maoris in New Zealand consider it as a sign of great respect in comparison with Asia where it is rude even for children.

Colour may carry a strong meaning. An international company IKEA uses the yellow and blue, colours of the Swedish flag, as the colours of the company. However, Denmark require using red and white, the colours of the Danish flag, for the reason that Sweden occupied Denmark for several years.

What is polite and friendly in one country may be considered rude and unfriendly in another one. (Mooij 2005, 45-46)

## 2.9 Global Culture

People make misconceptions from the few global symbols like Coca-Cola, Levi's, and Nike. They assume that there will be one global world culture, even with consideration of values, created by large world companies. Global communication influenced the relationships among people and created several "global cultures," such as corporate and professional cultures. These multinationals, however, exist at the level of practises and expressions of culture. Shared practices serve in the companies as a mean to shape corporate culture: the way of dressing, meeting, communicating, etc.

Historically and nationally defined cultures have strong meaning for the people who belong to them. It specifies their identity and shapes their values and feelings. Global culture would not refer to common identity on such a level. (Mooij 2005, 48)

## 2.10 Classifying Cultures

Geert Hofstede, a world-famous scientist, developed widely-used five dimensions of national culture, which explain basic value differences. He evolved a study of fifty people working in an international corporation IBM. (Mooij 2005, 28) It was a perfect opportunity, all the examined employees were the same except their national values, therefore, their answers for the study highlighted their cultural differences. (Hofstede 2006, 29)

### 2.10.1 Power Distance (PDI)

This dimension is defined by Mooij as "the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally." In large power distance cultures, everyone has his/her social status, it is something which comes naturally in giving or accepting authority. This is something which is essential for Japanese, every contact can express the degree of social distance. Countries which have lower power distance indexes are focused on equality and respect independence. In large power distance cultures, social status must be apparent for everyone, therefore, people may show the proper respect. Global brands are important for high power distance cultures, to be the top brand is more valuable than in low power distance countries, where challenges and new things are preferred. High power distance cultures cherish old age, however, people living in lower power distance cultures try to look younger and less powerful, even if they are at a high level in social hierarchy. People in large power distance countries hold the dependency

relationship between parents and children; bosses and subservient; professors and their students. Small power distance cultures value independency. Parents teach their children how to be independent yet in the early age. Americans do not want to be dependent on others and the same in reverse. Parents play with their children in lower power distance cultures, however, parents in higher power distance cultures live in a “grown-up world” and therefore, children play with each other. (Mooij 2005, 60-61)

### **2.10.2 Individualism/Collectivism (IDV)**

Mooij states that: “The individualism/collectivism contrast can be defined as people looking after themselves and their immediate family only, versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty.” People in individualistic cultures are I-conscious, they express their opinions and attitudes; and a have feeling of self-actualization. Decisions made by individuals are more important than the ones made by a group. People in collectivistic cultures are we-conscious. The important thing for them is eschewing loss of face. When there is something wrong done by an individual, it has influence on the whole social group. People highly value relationships with people.

From 70% to 80% of the world is collectivistic. Asia, Africa and Latin America are collectivistic cultures. However, there are pieces of some research which differ. One study indicates that north Italy is highly individualistic, another shows that the whole Italy is collectivistic.

People in individualistic cultures have to exert some time into friendship. Americans have close friends, however, such friendships are not very common. They call many other people their “friends”, even though, these friends would be called only “acquaintances” in collectivistic cultures. They do not have such bond as the meaning of friends has.

Individualistic cultures differentiate private time and work time; and private space and public domain. There is not such a difference in collectivistic cultures. They prefer to socialize in public places, and this contrast also explain the use of technology: Japanese do not have any need of having personal computer at home, they work in the office with their fellows until the late night hour, instead of going home and working there.

Sales process of individualistic cultures requires to be straight, in comparison with collectivistic cultures, where customers need to build relationship with the brand on the first place. People in the latter group are more attracted by concrete product features than in the abstract brands. Individualistic cultures see brands as personalities. United States, highly

individualistic nation, allows parents to name their children after brands, such as L'Oréal, Chevrolet, and Armani. (Mooij 2005, 61-65)

### 2.10.3 Masculinity/Femininity (MAS)

The definition of masculinity/femininity described by Mooij is: "The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and success; the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life." Masculinity cultures value power and accomplishment. Achievement must be visible, that is the reason why brands must show their success. What is big and fast is beautiful, whereas feminine societies prefer smallness and are people-oriented. Quality of life is on higher status than success. The importance of success is apparent on the purchase of gold and diamonds in masculine cultures.

Feminine societies also do not cherish winning. In masculine cultures, winning is required. The core value of these cultures is modesty, not flaunting success. Jante's law, taken from a novel by Dano-Norwegian male author Aksel Sandemose, provides 10 rules that demonstrate the moral code in Sweden and the whole Scandinavia nowadays:

You should not feel that...  
 You are anything  
 You are equal to us, i.e.; at our level  
 You are more clever than we are  
 You are better than we are  
 You know more than we do  
 You know more than we do  
 You are more than we are  
 You are good at anything  
 You must not make fun of us  
 You should not think...  
 That anybody likes you  
 Or that you can teach us anything.

If someone violates these rules, your neighbours will condemn you for your uniqueness or boasting of wealth. People in feminine cultures do not want to stand out in a crowd, therefore, the favourite activity in the US "employee of the month" is not understood in these cultures.

The division of the typically female and male work is another aspect differing in feminine and masculine cultures. Males in feminine cultures do typically feminine jobs. Housework is, however, shared less between a couple in Germany, which is higher on

masculinity, than in low-on-masculinity Netherlands. Men in feminine cultures work more on part-time, due to the upbringing of children. Masculine countries highly respect the statement “Men do not cry”. Japan is a collectivistic culture, very high on masculinity. They do not cherish love in marriage, they live together, and take each other for granted.

All these aspects of masculinity/femininity cultures: winning, social position and victory, are very common in advertising. That is why it is so important to understand these culture differences. (Mooij 2005, 65-67)

#### **2.10.4 Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)**

Uncertainty avoidance is explained by Mooij as “the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations.” Some people like the unpredictability of life, some do not. Therefore, the latter follow the rules and anticipate other’s behaviour. The cultures high on uncertainty avoidance need these rules, and also certain structure of life. They put their faith in scientists and experts, and they do not argue, nor compete. Due to the fact that they are more tense and worried, they express their emotions much more. They talk louder, use gestures, drive cars furiously. People in low uncertainty avoidance cultures are peaceful drivers, and never show their feelings (a nice example is the British “stiff upper lip”). They do not like rules, therefore, the less means better. They believe in good sense and do not have problems with contests.

Specialists and experts in cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance need to be real experts in the field with many degrees. This is a fact which is totally different from the USA. There is not stated anywhere, what an expert must have or know, therefore, everyone can become one. Americans even enrol themselves into their “Yearbook of Experts”, only for a very small amount of dollars. (Mooij 2005, 67-69)

#### **2.10.5 Long-Term Orientation (LTO)**

Mooij states that long-term orientation is “the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view.” Values which are covered by long-term orientation are: persistence, the economy, and the sense of shame. The reverse covers the personal stability, tradition, greetings, kindness and presents. The important is in happiness, than peace of mind.

A paradoxical value of this aspect is strong respect for tradition and short-term orientation in the West; whilst respect for old age is a component of Asian countries. This mirrors the desirable versus the desired. Tradition is important, but innovations are desired.

Long-term oriented countries highly respect nature, which are the symbols of advertising in Japan, China and Chinese-related cultures. (Mooij 2005, 69-70)

### 3 BENETTON CAMPAIGNS

Benetton campaigns had been causing political and moral reactions of our society for several decades. They had the impression of a huge street journal, asking about societies' taboos and worries; caused questions and immediate discussions. Generally said, they provoked confrontation with outstanding photographs. These advertisements did not look like any other, and that is the reason why many people considered them as scandalous: they did not fit into the life they were used to. (Toscani 1996, 39)

#### 3.1 Black & White

The first poster, created in 1989, which caused world controversy depicted a white child in the arms of a black woman. (see Appendix I) It looked like the woman was indulging and breastfeeding the child at the same time. (Toscani 1996, 39) She is portrayed without her head and with bare breasts. The picture shows the contrast of bare bloated breasts of a black woman and a delicate, pure infant. Her breasts depict more eroticism than maternity, due to the ample shapes of her body. (Salvemini 2002, 45-46)

It is interesting that in the United States, this picture caused enormous protests of the black society; they were expected to be contented with the anti-racism aims of Toscani. (Salvemini 2002, 46) According to their opinion, the poster deals with the old colonialist cliché of a white child and a black nanny. (Toscani 1996, 40) Paradoxically, the photograph was awarded many prizes in Austria, France, Denmark and the Netherlands, as well as in Italy. (Salvemini 2002, 46) In the Republic of South Africa, the land of apartheid, the picture was boycotted by the advertising agencies; it was too antiracial for them. (Toscani 1996, 41)

Benetton clothes and the advertising campaign does not relate to each other. Toscani does not sell the product neither through the picture, nor through colourful, high quality pullovers. The society is not persuaded to purchase the product, there is just an attempt to find a response to a complicated racial question. The campaign leaned on the mark "United Colours", which very early became the new title of Benetton. It is used as a springboard for the development of antiracist and cosmopolitan thinking to the most distant corners of the world, succumbed by the racism, as the Republic of South Africa, or the United States. The advertising slogan is changed into humanistic act. The antiracial attitude of Benetton made it more colourful. (Toscani 1996, 39-40)



There was a new kind of advertising: it was not Toscani's purpose to make the product more saleable, but to present the values to people. Customer had to deal with an abstract idea, instead of an actual object. This disregarding towards the representation of the product was something that had made no sense in advertising before. Toscani did not want to follow the path of perfection-making figures by using top models together with the Benetton product. (Salvemini 2002, 45-46)

In the year 1990 another campaign covering the topic of the skins and race colours erupted. (Toscani 1996, 42) Toscani wanted to show the equality in diversity, therefore, he photographed two little children on potties, one black, and one white, eyeing each other. (see Appendix II) The difference between the children is obvious in their appearance, the black one is from Africa, and the white one from northern Europe. (Salvemini 2002, 46) The picture was so shocking that even the extreme left-wing Milan city council and the Cardinal of Milan agreed in prohibition of hanging out the poster on Milan's main square. (Salvemini 2002, 46) Nevertheless, the photograph was awarded by Andy Award of Excellence in the United States. (Toscani 1996, 42) Toscani continued with his series of pictures (see Appendix III) which puzzled all the fixed ideas about the colours of the skin: a handcuffs connecting a white and a black man (year 1989), which raised questions: which one of them is the criminal? (Toscani 1996, 43) "Who is who?" (Salvemini 2002, 46) However, the picture had an anti-racist intention. The content of the advertisement indicates that we all are the same, regardless of the skin colour, for example, our emotions. There was not any hint for the solution, neither any uniform, nor any other piece of clothes, which could help us to decide who is the policeman and who is the criminal. Every person, who sees this picture, will resolve according to his or her personal experiences and prejudices. (Salvemini 2002, 46) Miss Thatcher ordered to rip off the poster. It was one of the posters which shake with prejudices and show mixed skin colours of naked human bodies. (Toscani 1996, 43)

He used ordinary people in his pictures, neither beautiful, nor ugly, as in the photograph with two young woman – one black and one white, who are holding an Asian baby, and are covered with a blanket of the same colour as the Benetton logo. (Salvemini 2002, 45) (see Appendix IX)

### 3.2 Love & Death

From the year 1991, the campaigns depicted the forbidden and the embarrassing, making the society to think about the trauma of birth, the agony of death, and sexuality. Toscani pointed out the things we all have in common: the pain of coming into the world, dying, and loving. (Salvemini 2002, 47)

Toscani was accused so many times for the exploitation of death and war for the selling of pullovers, that he was thinking about making a diametrically different photograph. (Toscani 1996, 46) The campaign caught the moment of a newborn girl coming into the world. (Salvemini 2002, 50) She was still connected to her mother by the umbilical cord, her body was soiled with blood, and her face twisted with the power of the first cry. (see Appendix V) Toscani's intent was to demonstrate the embarrassing moment when all people are the same as animals: when giving birth. (Salvemini 2002, 50) Toscani also saw it as a picture of hope in the times of war, uncertainty, and crisis. He saw that life continues even over the omnipresent gloominess, and assumed that he would provide non-censored photograph. Nevertheless, it was even worse. (Toscani 1996, 46) The picture was extremely realistic. He learnt that even an ordinary birth giving may be a taboo. (Salvemini 2002, 50) The Milan city council forbade to open the picture to the public, because of its excessive power and crudeness of the subject. In Palermo, it was the citizens who wanted to ban the display of the poster. It was due to the fact that there is one person murdered every day by mafia, and that is why such a photograph might seem ironic. Then, as usual, the advertising committee intervened, and the poster had to be censored in Great Britain, France, and Ireland. In the end, the photograph got a credit in the Netherlands, and won a prize in Switzerland. (Salvemini 2002, 50) The newspapers rebelled against the campaign in every country. The factor that irritated them was the fact that reality and art penetrate thought advertising. The public and critiques are used to that nowadays. They accept discussion and understand Toscani's pursuing better. (Toscani 1996, 47)

The following campaign was a photograph of a war cemetery in France, taken in 1991. (see Appendix VI) The picture had perfect lines of crosses, standing on grassy shore. All crosses were Christian, however, when analyzing the picture closer, it is visible, that there is one which is different: the Jewish Star of David. Some said that the Jewish star was a photomontage, however, the reverse is truth. There was no blood in the picture, no illustration of soldiers, nevertheless, even such a clean photograph relieved a lot of

emotions. The picture gained important value due to the date when it was published. It was on 18 January 1991, on the day when the Gulf War erupted. Through the picture, people perceived the only consequence of the war: cemeteries. The rejections of the exhibition of the poster came from France, Germany and Great Britain. There was only one newspaper in Italy which agreed on publishing, however, they were commanded not to by the committee of the self-regulation advertising council. (Salvemini 2002, 48)

Another campaign examined the sex phobia in society, and freedom of sexual behaviour. It was a poster encrusted with many condoms in colours of yellow, blue, and red. (see Appendix VII) It was the time of huge expansion of AIDS and the poster served the purpose of education: it was apparent that it was recommended to use them. At the same time, Benetton went into action: all Benetton shops offered condoms for free. (Salvemini 2002, 49) The advertisement met the familiar brusque protests in Italy and pornographic censorship in the United States. (Salvemini 2002, 49)

Next campaign showing love in a different manner was an extremely irritating picture of a priest and a nun, kissing each other. (see Appendix VIII) The picture was absolutely scandalous with its contempt of the Church. Sexual relations between ecclesiastics was an extreme taboo, however, Toscani depicted it with such a goodness that it evoked human feelings. (Salvemini 2002, 49-50) The poster was forbidden in Italy by the advertising committee, however, the opposite reactions were noticeable in countries with Protestant majority. Such a phenomenon of people of the church getting married was common in these countries. The poster won the Eurobest Award prize in Britain. (Salvemini 2002, 50)

### 3.3 AIDS

The AIDS campaign, which caused most emotions and protests, is a photograph taken in a hospital in Ohio. It demonstrated the dying of a young man on AIDS. (Salvemini 2002, 91) It was a photograph of David Kirby, a victim of this disease, in his father's arms. (see Appendix IX) The picture flew around the world. It was a battle against discrimination of people infected by AIDS. Toscani's intent was to illustrate that the sick may pass away surrounded by their family, in the arms of their parents, without infecting them. It was also a proof that people infected by AIDS, considered as plague disabled at the time, do not have to die alone in the rooms for the dying. (Toscani 1996, 50-51) David's face was similar to the face of dying Christ. His body was exhausted by the virus: he had no blood in his

cheeks, his eyes were weak, the arms terrifyingly skinny. His parents were sitting next to him, both of them considerably obese in comparison with David. The grief was visible in every piece of the picture. The mother was soothing a little girl, seeking it at the same time for herself. The father was shattered over the face of his son. The hand of a priest, whose hand was stretching towards David, was giving the sanctity. It gave the unordinary depressed atmosphere to the picture. A picture of Jesus was hanging above the dying man, having his arms as if welcoming the men. David strived through this photograph for awareness of people for this mortal virus. (Salvemini 2002, 91)

There was a conference held in New York with the David's parents. The journalists were almost aggressive, asking the parents why they gave Toscani the permission to publish the picture of their son. The journalists hoped that they would throw them off and accuse Benetton from benefitting from their disaster. However, David's father replied: Until my son was alive, he fought for informing the world about AIDS and its possibilities how to avoid it. Thanks to the terrible photograph and international campaign, he had a chance to speak aloud. We used the competences and fame of Benetton to inform society and fight against the horrible, unknown disease, which we are afraid to look into the face. (Toscani 1996, 57-58)

A storm of protests arose again. This time there were surprisingly contrary attitudes. More than a half of the media and commercial critics called Toscani a cynic provocateur. They claimed that he was playing with disease and suffering to sell pullovers. Was it a game? No, it was a fight. (Toscani 1996, 51) The picture was not criticized for what it showed, but for the addiction on drugs and bad sexual behaviour. Clerics characterized it as a divine punishment and natural revenge. The poster was not allowed to be published in Great Britain's *Elle* magazine. It expanded to America very quickly, and all the famous newspapers and magazines were forced to express themselves about the issue. The *Guardian* was the first newspaper in Britain, which published the photograph. The newspaper guarded Benetton, it said that even through all the criticism, the company is the master of the media. *Financial Times* supported them with the attitude that it should be respected for the advertisements, that it does not include any professional tricks or fiction. The response in France was very mighty. *Libération*, and many other magazines, informed society about the statements of Luciano Benetton and David's parents. The *New York Observer* published the words of Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation, which validated the double entendre of the image, not expressing that the man was gay, however it

attracts attention towards AIDS. In Italy, the famous journalist and politician, Miriam Mafai, said that the advertisement was tawdry. Unexpected was similar claim of Marzio Tremaglia, an employee of a newspaper with an opposite philosophy, who said that it is good that the society is not without interest into such unabashed exploitation of feelings. Another critique said that Toscani's posters made AIDS more sensational and striking when trying to sell more pullovers. There was a lot of criticism, however, not many positive attitudes. (Salvemini 2002, 92-93)

### 3.4 War

When the war in the former Yugoslavia broke out in 1993, Toscani received a mail, written by twenty-two years old Marina Pejicova, living in Sarajevo. She wrote: I found out that when you make a campaign on whichever topic, everybody talks about it. So why don't you show the shamefulness of the war? Toscani got an idea and spoke to the Red Cross. Later on, he received a box with camouflage trousers and a t-shirt, worn by a young soldier. There was a broken belt, dried blood, and a bullet hole. A piece of paper written in Croatian was attached. (Toscani 1996, 78-79)

Marinko Gagro was the young man who wore the clothes. The letter was written by his father, who wanted his son's name and the clothes, which remained from his son killed by Serbian, to serve against the war. He did not want his son, who wanted to study and get married, to die without reason. The letter said: Me, Gojko Gagro, father of Marinko Gagro, born in 1963 in Blatnica, wish for using all the remains from my son to be used for peace and against war. (Toscani 1996, 79)

The reactions on the poster were fierce. (see Appendix X) The smell of the blood flooded the streets. The photograph recalled that just a few hundred kilometres far away from the borders of the state, people kept dying in an unnecessary war. The first human who released some reaction towards this poster was Toscani himself. He sent a letter into Sarajevo's newspaper, saying that the clothes were delivered by post in an ordinary box. When he opened it, his colleagues and himself could not stop expressing very strong emotions. The uniform became a symbol for many youths with the same dreams, wishes, and ambitions. In their memory, the photographer's intent was to raise a kind of memorial to the "Unknown soldier" in the way of demonstrating the picture all over the world. Due to the fact that the uniform was not of any particular army, however, it was an ordinary white shirt and trousers of camouflage material, the picture did not refer to any army in specific,

but to the military universe. As a result, the unspoken meaning of the picture, expanded into every part of the world, enabled to spread its influence into every society of the world, which is something that would not be possible with an ordinary monument. (Salvemini 2002, 116)

The poster caused many arguments in the world. The advertisement was refused in the United States by Los Angeles Times for its violence, and UNICEF accused Toscani from exploitation of the world catastrophes. French le Monde a le Figaro refused to publicize the campaign. (Toscani 1996, 80) However, not all the reactions were so hostile. Even some of the French newspapers published the photograph. The poster was awarded by the prize The Best Art Redactor in Japan. (Toscani 1996, 81)

Some of the associations towards Toscani's previous campaigns could be spotted: as in the photograph with the cemetery, he points at the war without any straight representation of dead human bodies. However, such representation creates even more feelings, emotions, and debates. The photograph of the "Unknown soldier" was rewarded by the Art of Directors Club of New York and of Tokyo and L'Unitá dedicated the front page to the subject. In Germany the campaign attracted a lot of negative criticism. There were echoes that Gojko Gagro had never seen his son's bloody garments, and that they were destroyed in the hospital. Others said that Marinko was not shot by a bullet, but hit in the head by the splinter of a grenade. (Salvemini 2002, 116-117)

## **II. ANALYSIS**

#### 4 THE FUTURE AND THE PAST OF CULTURES

The globalization and the expanding intercultural communication and interaction are significant factors influencing the contemporary world. Hence, one would say that the cultural differences disappear, and the society will approach a world standard. (Bočánková 2006, 23) However, the reverse is true.

The world consists of many various cultures. It might be questioned what power and causes led us towards such diversity. Human kind originated from the same ancestors, moreover, cultures are unalterable. When foretelling the future development of cultures, the grasp of the reasons for the differentiation of our ancestors is helpful. (Hofstede 2010, 23)

The culture changes were, and will be, caused by the significant natural phenomena, and also due to the influence of the society itself. The first reason for the diversification was the adaptation to the new nature conditions. As the mankind colonized almost the whole world, the need for survival led to different solutions in each culture. For example: a society living in colder weather conditions inclined towards equality among its members. Famines, produced by the changing weather, caused large-scale migrating to different locations. Sometimes natural disasters, as earthquake or floods, eradicated the whole communities, and created space for the origination of new communities. Traders, who travelled from one society to another, brought new products, customs, and technological methods along. Also all the big major religions went through disagreements, where the cultural differences played an important role. Some important inventions, as agriculture, were so important that they transformed the whole cultures, even with their values. (Hofstede 2010, 24)

The future of the cross-cultural differences seems quite clear. The dependence on others in power distance cultures has been decreasing, as the level of education gets higher. Smaller and middle large countries will be dependent on the international decisions, which would endorse increase in power distance. Due to the connection between national wealth and individualism, countries whose economic level has extensively risen, will incline towards individualism. Japan used to have a strong moral obligation towards the elders within a family, however, it has changed. In spite of this fact, Japan will maintain the collectivist elements in the future as well. As to masculinity-femininity dimensions, research showed that countries high on masculinity have become even more masculine, and the same applies for feminine cultures. When evaluating the future, the environmental issues and global menaces play a substantial role as well. Our society will be compelled to become



more environmental aware, which will consequently develop more feminine values. Uncertainty avoidance is getting higher, as tension and fear increases. This is produced by the threat of wars. This brings narrow-mindedness, xenophobia, and religious and political fanaticism along. (Bočánková 2006, 23)

The surveys of the cultural values development affirmed that the convergence of international values is very slight, apart from the increase of individualism in countries, which have become rich. Not only that the cultural diversity will persist, but the differences within countries are getting even more recognizable. National groups have realised their identities and require to be politically recognized. The international media spread information how people live in other parts of the world, and influence minorities, which compare their situations with the ones, who have, in their point of view, better living standards. International media also broadcast the information about them more extensively, and to wider society than before. Rebellions (e.g.) are not inventions of our time, they existed in the past as well, however, there was a smaller extent of people who knew about them. (Hofstede 2010, 275)

## 5 ETHICS IN ADVERTISING

When judging the Benetton campaigns, it is necessary to look at the “coin” from both sides. That is what a Slovakian marketing professional, Pavel Horňák, does in his book *Reklama* (transl. *Advertisement*). He claims that if we look at the Benetton campaigns from the perspective of advertising code, we find some rule violations. Motif of fear belongs to the forbidden principles of advertising. When looking at the AIDS advertisements, it is apparent that the primary shock leads toward fear. Toscani claims that the product is not displayed in the campaigns, therefore, it cannot be advertising. Nevertheless, this might be debatable. If it is not advertising, then what is the green title United Colours of Benetton doing there? Or shall people be satisfied with the explanation that the end (the end is not selling sweaters, but influencing the social sympathizing of a human) justifies the means? Another fact to consider is whether it is not subliminal advertising, which is forbidden. In spite of the fact Toscani claims that it is not advertising, people are well acquainted with the Benetton pictures. (Horňák 2010, 253)

Horňák summarized the reasons whether the campaigns are ethical or not, as pros and cons. The main positive facts are:

- Toscani created the advertising of the latest generation, the advertising of the third kind, where he shows to the customer real picture of real life. Simultaneously, he exhibits him the product without its representation in the picture.
- His photographs are masterpieces in both, the form, and the content. The campaigns have become widely known, hence, it multiplied its influence.
- The attention of society to social issues was successfully attracted. The issues were often ignored or tabooed, yet Toscani contributed to its solutions.

The main negatives of the campaigns are:

- The advertisements often exploit morbid, drastic, and inappropriate testimonies for the product distribution.
- For the enhancement of its influence, it uses sensations and scandals as the impact method, which often breaks the essential principles of not only advertising ethics, but also the ethics as such. (Horňák 2010, 254-255)

Horňák states in his book that it is not possible to decide which pros and cons are more important, hence, it is up to each beholder to decide. Without respect to the criticism,

Toscani created something new, something which forces people all over the world to think and talk about current issues. (Horňák 2010, 255-256)

## 6 THE CULTURES OF THE COUNTRIES TO BE EXAMINED

### 6.1 Italy

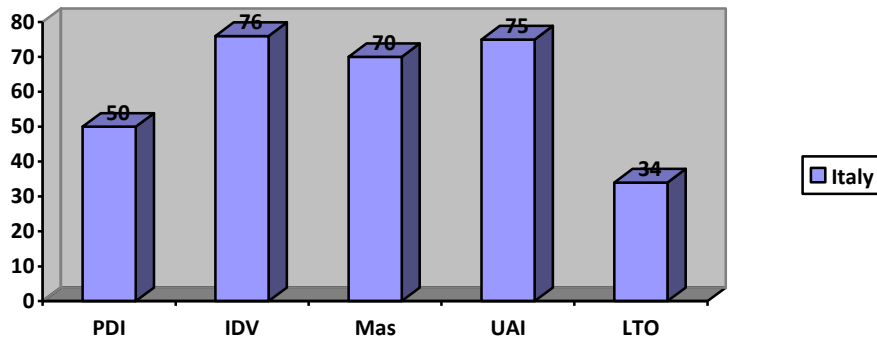


Figure 1: Italy (Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html>)

The north and the south of Italy differ significantly. The divergences are apparent not only in the economic situation, but also in the cultural aspects. There were two factors which played an important role when creating the culture: firstly, Italians are ancestors of one of the oldest and most imposing civilization in the human history, secondly, the fact that it is a young country, culturally differentiated. (Světlík 2003, 228) Italy is a medium country in Power distance with its score of 50. It is a society of hierarchy and inequalities. People who are at high level in the hierarchy have more advantages than others. It is common for a high level manager to have his/her own secretary, a free parking space, or a larger office. The age is very important for career. The current president is 85 years old, the prime minister 75. The Power distance index is higher in the Southern Italy. With the number of 76 in Individualism, Italy is a highly individualistic culture. It is a country of I-consciousness, where people may feel alone even in a big crowd in the middle of a metropolitan city. Hence, families became very important. The term “friend” has the meaning of a human who can be useful to someone, for example, when building a career. Italians are very career-oriented. The feeling of personal fulfilment, in the meaning of achieving what they want, is important and leads to happiness. This feature differs in the Southern Italy, where people are individualistic. Sunday family lunches are very common, as well as huge celebrations and weddings. People who have moved from the southern Italy to the north say that the relationships among people are more restrained. With the score of 70, Italy is a masculine culture. Personal success and competition is expected. Children are taught from the very

childhood, that competition, and especially winning, is good for them. Italians have tendencies to show their success. They like showing off by fast cars, expensive clothes, luxury goods, and experiences (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html> website). Italians also respect those who fight, which is a typical feature of masculinity. (Světlik 2003, 230) They do not feel relaxed in ambiguous situations, which together with score of 75 suggests that it is a country high on Uncertainty avoidance. What is often incomprehensible for foreigners is their system of strict rules and procedures, which is, on the contrary, usually not implemented. The combination of high masculinity and high uncertainty avoidance creates a lot of stress for Italians. That is the reason why they are so passionate. They express their tension and emotions loudly and with gestures. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html> website) More important for them is how they look and what is their discourse like, than what is the core of the information. Italians also use ten times more words than Scandinavians. (Světlik 2003, 230) Italy is a country of a short-term orientation (score 34). History and traditions are important, and quick results of the work for the future required. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html> website)

## 6.2 Finland

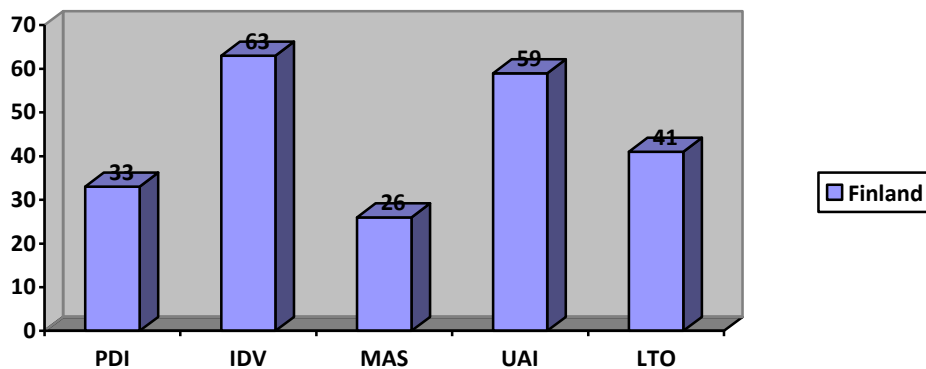


Figure 2: Finland (<http://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html>)

Due to the low score on Power distance (33), Finland may be described as a country of an independent personality, equal rights, and decentralization of power. Finns do not like being controlled, attitudes towards higher status persons (e.g. employees and their managers) are informal and on first name basis. Communicating is also direct and participative. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html> website) The term “silent Finn” is widely known, although, they may emotionally erupt. (Světlik 2003, 246) Finland is an

individualistic country with its score of 63. A common habit for Finns is taking care of themselves and their closest family members. The score of masculinity is very low: only 26, hence, Finland is a feminine country. This is distinguished by the focus on well-being, working in order to live, and solidarity. High social status and wealth is not required to be shown. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html> website) The roots of such a masculinity are connected with the historical development of the country. Men were usually engaged in business, or sea transport, therefore, they used to live very often out of their homes. Women had to take care of everything else, and played an important role in the country leadership. (Světlík 2003, 239) It is a nation with medium mark on Uncertainty avoidance (59). Finns follow unwritten norms of behaviour, do not stick out of a crowd, and do not tolerate if someone does so. They need security, work hard, and are punctual. They also respect traditions, it is a culture of Short-term orientation. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html> website) Finns are also tenacious, hardworking, and persistent. They sometimes seem to be restrained and silent for foreigners who do not know their culture. The Finnish character was formed by the isolation due to the rough nature, and low density of inhabitants. It all caused that the part of their behaviour is pessimism connected with indomitable will and tenaciousness. (Světlík 2003, 239)

### 6.3 The Czech Republic

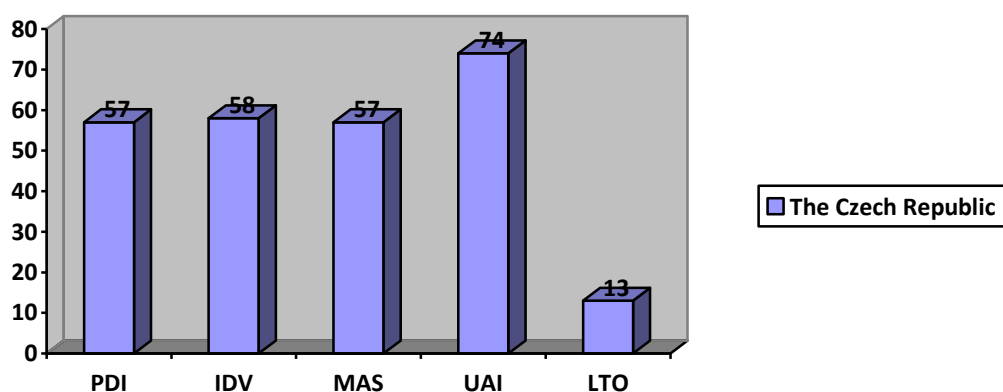


Figure 3: The Czech Republic ( <http://geert-hofstede.com/czech-republic.html> )

The score of 57 in Power distance demonstrates that Czechs are reserved and tolerant at the same time. They differentiate between official authority and authority which is based on

one's knowledge and skills. A person who has natural and social authority is more esteemed than a person who enforced an official authority. Power distance relations are a part of everyday Czech lives. These relations are quite difficult to understand for foreigners, since they are based on complex system of informal social relations and conventional norms of behaviour. The Czech Republic is an individualist culture: personal independence, autonomy, and responsibility are valued. However, they need to have at least a part of their work time free for their personal interests and rest. Such a feature demonstrates collectivistic habits. It might be said that it is a culture combined on individualism and collectivism. A sign of collectivism is visible in the blend of work and private life, in the necessity to have certain rules at work, and avoiding conflicts. The world of men and women is precisely separated. Men are the heads of the families, however, women are said to be the ones who decide. Men provide the financial support for families, since they are rational, objective, and ordered. Women take care of the household and children, and are harmonious, kind, and romantic. At the work, women are loyal, kind, and willing, whereas, men are efficient, assertive, and ambitious. Czechs have very high score on Uncertainty avoidance, they fear of uncertain, unknown situations. They respect rules, plans, and all other codes. On the contrary, they are not completely submissive. The Czech Republic is a country of short-term orientation. Czechs do not plan beyond one year vista. Traditions are important for them, as well as their current state: stability, harmony, and profit. (Bočánková 2006, 31-34)

## 6.4 China

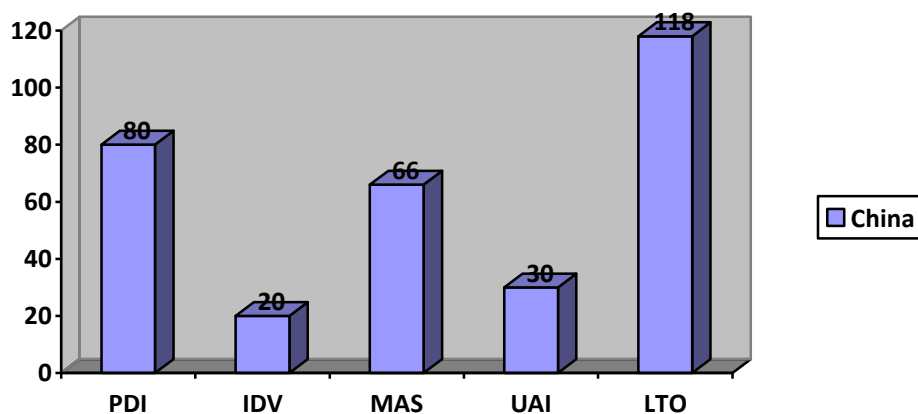


Figure 4: China (<http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html>)

China has quite a high score on Power distance in comparison with Far East Asian countries (average 60), and the world average (55). Such a difference shows unevenness of power and wealth. (Bočánková 2006, 101) Unevenness of people is acceptable. Individuals are affected by formal authority. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html> website) Individualism has significantly lower score (20 with the Asian average of 24) (Bočánková 2006, 101), which indicates that interests of a group are more important than interests of an individual. When being at work, relationship among employees are more important than commitment to the organization. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html> website) The important feature of Chinese culture is taking care of the fellow members of his/her group. (Bočánková 2006, 101) Chinese collectivism is one of the most significant attributes of the culture. The group they belong to defines the individual, and the individual has to repress his/her individuality, in order to maintain the harmony with the fellows in the group. (Bočánková 2006, 102) Harmony is a very important objective common for all Chinese people. It does not matter whether it is harmony for the country, or for the family. In order to accomplish the goal, it is important for everyone to depend on each other. This dependence has two meanings: firstly in a wider sense (people, leaders, gods, the universe, etc., where everything has his/her own place, and has to fulfil the duties to achieve the harmony), and secondly, in the narrow sense of word (reliance on a family). (Bočánková 2006, 101) Due to the one-child policy, children became the centre of attention. On the contrary, the elders used to be valued as the source of wisdom. Their children were expected to take care of them, however, the situation has changed. (Bočánková 2006, 103) China is a success oriented and driven country, with its score of 66 in masculinity. Work is more important than a time for own interests and rest, and sometimes even family. As an example, service is provided until the late night, such as hairdresser. It is not an exception that migrated farmers leave their families and move to bigger and distant cities in order to earn money for their family. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html> website) The index of Uncertainty avoidance is 30, which is significantly lower than the average of other Asian countries. (Bočánková 2006, 101) Chinese people are adaptable, they do not have problems with ambiguous situations: their language is full of equivocal expressions. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html> website) A typical attribute of all Asian countries is Long-term orientation. China's index is 118. (Bočánková 2006, 101) The typical features of the culture is persistence and perseverance. Investments are made into



long-term projects, usually into real estates. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html> website)

## 6.5 The United States of America

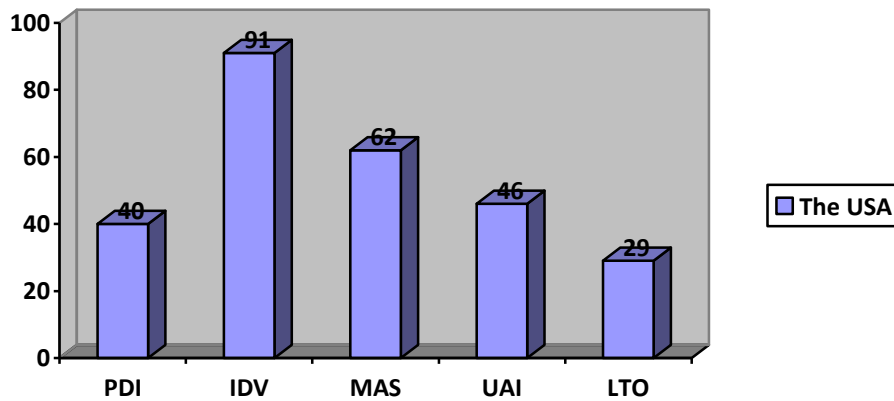


Figure 5: The USA (<http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>)

The United States of America is an extraordinarily large country with a high number of immigrants. Due to this fact, it has many subcultures. It is a country influenced by mass media, educational, religious, and political institutions. The orientation towards consumers is omnipresent, products are vehemently promoted through advertising channels, which states that it is a materialistic country. It is a patriotic, individualistic, and informal culture. They use first names on a daily basis, apart from children addressing adults. (Bočánková 2006, 64) The United States has a low rank on Power distance, it is an index of 40, which underlines the premise of “liberty and justice for all”. Communication is direct, participative, and informal. It is a culture high on individualism, where it is expected that people take care of themselves and their close family. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html> website) Francis Hsu, an American anthropologist of Chinese origin, claims that the over-dependence (individualism) is what causes the insecurity of Americans. According to his opinion, they lack the feeling of being a part of something bigger (as in the case of Chinese). He states that this is the reason why they leave their homes so early, and are also unhappy and restless. (Bočánková 2006, 102) The USA is a masculine culture with its score of 62. People do the best what they can, whether at work or school, and follow the rule that “the winner takes all”. They do not have any difficulties with exposing their success and achievement. Living for working is typical for them, the reason is that they want to gain

higher status by the financial rewards for their work. The permanent objective is to win. It is a country where uncertainty is accepted, with its rank of 46 in Uncertainty avoidance. Americans are open-minded for new ideas, innovations, inventions, etc. They are tolerant towards other's opinions, and support the freedom of expression. Emotions are not displayed very much. It is a short-term oriented country with its focus on traditions. They need to see quick results of their work, and the same applies for employment, where financial profit or loss is based on short-term principle. (as indicated on <http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html> website)

## 7 THE RESEARCH

The research, which answers the question how are Benetton's campaigns perceived and interpreted nowadays, was done by a questionnaire. Two goals to investigate were set up: the first one, whether people react according to Geert Hofstede's division of cultures, and the second, if the attitude of the current society towards racism has changed, or remains the same, as in the eighties and nineties, when Benetton's campaigns were released.

The questionnaire was focused on a sample of younger people, between the age of twenty and thirty, who were just born around the time the campaigns had begun. Hence, it will be visible whether the reactions of the current society of young people differ from the reactions of the society in the eighties and nineties. Five countries were investigated. Ten respondents were set up for each country, fifty respondents in total. Finland and Italy, as the value representatives of northern and southern Europe. China and the USA, as one of the biggest and most important countries of the present time, and also my home country, the Czech Republic. It is important to mention, that the USA consists of many states, therefore the New York City was chosen for the investigation. It is due to the fact that New York is a bearer of The Melting Pot award, a place of various nations and cultures.

The survey consisted of twelve questions and two anti-racist campaigns. I took advantage of the fact that I was an Erasmus student, and send the questionnaire to my friends. Modern technologies for the distribution were used: Facebook, e-mail, and Skype.

### 7.1 Gender

*Table 1: Question n.1*

|       | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Men   | 2     | 3       | 5     | 6   | 0     | 20    |
| Women | 8     | 7       | 5     | 4   | 10    | 30    |

Men and women have different kind of values, and perceive the world and its issues differently. Therefore, it was necessary to find out whether the number of men and women who participated in this survey equal or not. If the ratio significantly varied, the responses would be treated slightly differently.

Nevertheless, the quota is quite equal, the total number of men respondents is 20, and women respondents 30.

## 7.2 Do you know Benetton?

Table 2: Question n.2

|     | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-----|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes | 9     | 10      | 10    | 7   | 8     | 44    |
| No  | 1     | 0       | 0     | 3   | 2     | 6     |

Benetton is a globally known company, yet still, I have met a man who was not aware of the brand. Such a finding was surprising for me, and gave rise to an idea to include this question into my research.

The result is: 44 people know Benetton, however, 6 do not. These 6 people make 12% of the total respondents. I expected that if there were some people who would not know the company, they would be men, due to the fact that apart from men, women are more interested in fashion. Nevertheless, it emerged that 3 of the respondents were women, and 3 men. Such a finding states that Benetton really is a widely-known corporation, however, predominantly in Europe, since the USA and China have lower awareness of the company.

## 7.3 Have you ever bought something from Benetton?

Table 3: Question n.3

|            | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes        | 3     | 4       | 10    | 2   | 4     | 23    |
| No         | 6     | 5       | 0     | 7   | 6     | 24    |
| Don't know | 1     | 1       | 0     | 1   | 0     | 3     |

This question is slightly connected to the previous one. We may expect that when there are 6 people who have never heard of Benetton, those people have never bought any product from the company. Therefore, when we exclude 1 person out of the total number of the Czech respondents for “No”, 3 of the American, and 2 of the Chinese, we get a number of people who have never bought anything from Benetton not due to the fact, that they were not aware of the brand, but due to the reason that they were not interested. Therefore, the figures change:

Table 4: Question n.3

|            | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes        | 3     | 4       | 10    | 2   | 4     | 23    |
| No         | 5     | 5       | 0     | 4   | 4     | 18    |
| Don't know | 1     | 1       | 0     | 1   | 0     | 3     |

Now it is obvious that there are not significant differences in the popularity of the brand in those countries. However, when we focus on the gender in the purchasing of the product, it emerges from the questionnaire that the Czech customers of Benetton are only women (3 women), and the same applies for China (4 women). In the US, 1 man and 1 woman purchased a Benetton product, and in Finland, 1 man, and 2 women.

The conclusion is that the brand is popular mostly among women, but also among men.

#### 7.4 What is your first impression of the picture? (Appendix 1)

Table 5: Question n.4

|                 | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-----------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Embarrassed     | 0     | 0       | 4     | 3   | 1     | 8     |
| Sex. attractive | 0     | 0       | 0     | 0   | 0     | 0     |
| Shameful        | 0     | 0       | 0     | 0   | 0     | 0     |
| Anti-racial     | 10    | 8       | 5     | 6   | 7     | 36    |
| Other           | 0     | 2       | 1     | 1   | 2     | 6     |

The purpose of this question was to find out whether people react nowadays to the campaign in the same way as it was in the past. It was described in the Salvemini book: "United colors: the Benetton campaigns" that the picture was understood as being sexual. The book also claimed that in the United States, the black woman was perceived as a maid and a child she takes care of. This question answers how open-minded and tolerant are respondents towards the nakedness in advertisements, whether they find it sexually attractive or not, and how much they are prejudiced towards the combination of black and white skin.

Without respect to the nationality of the respondents, the answers indicate that the option "I like the anti-racial point of the picture" was chosen in 36 respondents (72%). 8

people chose the answer “I’m embarrassed, it is inappropriate due to the bare breasts”, and 6 respondents picked the “other” option. Nobody found the photograph to be too shameful due to the black and white skin, nor was anybody sexually attracted by the campaign. The respondents who chose the “other” option thought of the picture as:

- “they are trying too hard” (USA)
- “I have nothing against the nakedness but it's unnecessary in this commercial. Otherwise the black woman/white baby and everything else is just fine.” (Finland)
- “I like it” (Finland)
- “It is kind of "out of scheme" advertisement, commonly used by Benetton” (Italy)
- “I don’t get the message.” (China)
- “The love from mom” (China)

The results suggest that the Czech Republic and Finland are the most open-minded and tolerant cultures towards nakedness in large scale advertising. All of the respondents approved the anti-racial purpose of the campaign. 4 Italians stated that they feel embarrassed due to the nakedness of the woman, which is the highest amount of responses from the five countries.

These reactions are explained by the Uncertainty avoidance index. The Czech Republic is a country of high UAI (74). Czechs do not like being in unknown situations. They are tolerant and reserved at the same time. The reaction towards the campaign may be explained by the tolerance towards the racism. Such an attitude was held even in the past, when this photograph was released. Their disposition has not changed. Finland is a country of medium UAI (59), even though they follow certain rules of behaviour, they are quite tolerant and sensitive. Their values are very similar to the Scandinavian’s, and since Denmark and the Netherlands awarded the campaign by many prizes in the past, it could have been expected that they would have similar attitude in Finland. Finland’s open-mindedness remains unchanged. Italy is at the same level in UAI as the Czech Republic (74 and 75), however, the respondents attitude differs a lot. Half of the Italians responded that they feel embarrassed by the nakedness of the picture, which may be explained by their discomfort for ambiguous and uncomfortable situations. Anyway, another half of the Italian respondents stated that they like the anti-racial side of the photograph. The reason for such a differentiation may be the fact that the Italian culture differs very much in the north and in the south of Italy. China seems to be very open-minded towards the photograph: 7 responds

for approve of the anti-racial objective. Chinese are very adaptable and do not have any issues with ambiguous situations (UAI 30). A harmonious family is very important for them, which is also supported by the one-child policy: the child becomes the centre of the attention. Such a value influences them makes them being tolerant towards the campaign. The USA seems to be quite tolerant towards the black and white skin, however, this did not apply for the past, when the campaign was released: the American reactions were fierce and the photograph was misunderstood. Although 3 respondents (1 woman, and 2 men) stated that they feel embarrassed by the picture, it looks like that the situation has been changing.

### 7.5 The woman and the child in the picture are related:

*Table 6: Question n.5*

|        | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Mother | 7     | 9       | 4     | 8   | 4     | 32    |
| Maid   | 3     | 1       | 6     | 2   | 6     | 18    |

The purpose of this question was to find out whether the perception of the woman in the picture has changed. As mentioned above, the advertisement was taken very positively, except the USA, where it reminded respondents of a white child and a black nanny she takes care of.

The responses have changed from the past. 32 people think that the woman is a mother (64% of the respondents), and 18 people think that she is a maid. It was assumed that the responses would be quite the same, as in the past, at least for the USA. Black maids were quite common in the USA, hence, it is more probable that Americans would connect the perception of the picture with the national habit of hiring a (black) nanny, then the rest of the world. At least in the New York county. According to the results, the reverse is truth.

## 7.6 The photograph is more:

Table 7: Question n.6

|          | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|----------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Maternal | 10    | 10      | 7     | 9   | 10    | 46    |
| Sexual   | 0     | 0       | 3     | 1   | 0     | 4     |

Although people found the campaign being more sexual than maternal in the past, that does not apply for the contemporary world. 46 respondents (92%) found the photograph to be maternal, only 4 people perceived its eroticism.

The reason for that may be the fact that the current world is generally more open-minded than it was before, which applies for eroticism as well. Commercials sell products via sexy men and women, scantily dressed. It could be generally said that it depends on the gender of respondents: men would perceive the advertisement as sexual, and women as maternal. However, in the case of the Czech Republic, both of the men who filled in the questionnaire marked the photograph as maternal. All American men (6 of them) tagged the picture as maternal. The only one, who perceived the woman as a sexual object, was an American woman. Finnish man (3) labelled it as maternal. There were no Chinese men in the survey, however, all women comprehended the campaign as maternal. Only Italians, 2 men out of 5, tagged the picture as sexual, together with 1 woman.

This disproves the initial theory about the men's sexual perception of the campaign. Perhaps it is due to the fact that today the child in the picture gives it a different meaning, for example, invokes more maternal than sexual feelings in men.

## 7.7 Who do you think is who? (Appendix 3)

Table 8: Question n.7

|                                 | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| White criminal, black policeman | 1     | 2       | 0     | 0   | 2     | 5     |
| White policeman, black criminal | 0     | 0       | 0     | 0   | 1     | 1     |
| Both policemen                  | 2     | 1       | 1     | 1   | 1     | 6     |
| Both criminals                  | 7     | 7       | 9     | 9   | 6     | 38    |



When I saw the campaign for the first time, my reaction was that both of the men are criminals. Then I found out that the photograph was intended to portrait a policeman and a criminal without any sign of who might be who, and that the public understood it that way.

Therefore, the purpose of this question was whether the respondents comprehend the photograph in the same way as me, or whether they react to the campaign as intended by Toscani. In most cases (38 responds – 76%), the men in the picture are perceived as criminals. Czech and Finland have similar figures again, and together with China, their responds stated, that the white man could be a criminal, and the black one a policeman. Italy and the USA have the identical number of the responds for each option. Only China differs, it is the only culture, where one respondent marked the option that the white is a criminal, and the black is the policeman.

It is necessary to take into consideration that majority of respondents marked the option that both of the men are criminals, and only one person tagged the option that the white man would be a policeman, and the black a criminal (which would be a sign of racism). It is obvious that the respondents were more interested in the fact that according to the handcuffs and clothes, which is closely related to prison than to the police uniform, they were not focused on the colour of the skin, as intended, but on the status of each of the men. In conclusion, they did not act racially.

## 7.8 How do you decide?

*Table 9: Question n.8*

|                                       | Finland |   |       |     | China | Total |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---|-------|-----|-------|-------|
|                                       | Czech   | d | Italy | USA | a     |       |
| Experiences, prejudices               | 0       | 1 | 3     | 2   | 6     | 12    |
| Logic, statistics, widely- known fact | 8       | 7 | 3     | 2   | 4     | 24    |
| Other                                 | 2       | 2 | 4     | 6   | 0     | 14    |

The purpose of this question was to find out what drives the respondents towards such conclusions. People usually act according their own experiences, and prejudices, which play a big role in each culture. However, according to the results, we can see that people do not make conclusions according to their own experiences and prejudices, but according to their logic, statistics, and widely-known facts. That means that they expect a black/a white man to behave in a certain way, without actually seeing or experiencing a man of any particular

colour to act in a certain way. People jump to conclusions without experiencing themselves. Such acting may be connected to Uncertainty avoidance index.

14 people stated a different reason for their conclusions:

- “I decide according to the feeling which I get from the pictures...it is like the pictures are talking to me” (the Czech Republic)
- “I think that if somebody has the handcuffs it is a criminal. And it does not matter if the person is white or black.” (the Czech Republic)
- “Looks like prison uniforms” (the USA)
- “Policemen do not handcuff themselves to criminals” (the USA)
- “Policemen do not lock themselves to each other or their prisoners” (the USA)
- “No good answer” (the USA)
- “Just my first impression. Why would policemen cuff themselves? They are suspects of some kind.” (Finland)
- “First image that came to my mind” (Finland)
- “Identical clothes, they look like prisoners” (Italy)
- “It is common in American movies” (Italy)
- “Same clothes” (Italy)
- “They have handcuffs and the same clothes” (Italy)

Most of these comments support the theory that it does not matter which colour they are, when they are locked in handcuffs, and wear uniform similar to the prison one, then it indicates that they are criminals, regardless of the fact whether both of them are white or black.

The finding which arises from the responses is that the current society does not care about the colour of the skin as much as it was in the past. They are more interested in the content of the picture, and make their own opinion according to their own logic, or according to the statistics, and widely-known facts.

## 7.9 How would you feel if there was a white man and a black woman in the picture?

Table 10: Question n.9

|                               | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Woman policeman, man criminal | 6     | 6       | 8     | 5   | 7     | 32    |
| Woman criminal, man policeman | 4     | 4       | 2     | 5   | 3     | 18    |

The purpose of this question was to find out whether people perceive women as being the “good one” and men as the “bad one”, even when the woman would be of black a colour, and man of a white.

The results demonstrates that majority of respondents would consider the woman to be a policeman and the man as the criminal (64%), regardless of their skin colour. The options for respondents were mixed, the category of a male and a black person is being the most prejudiced, and the reverse with a female and a person of a white colour. It is obvious that more important aspects according to which respondents decide is the gender, not the skin colour. This is a change from the past, where the skin colour played more important role. Italy is the culture highest on masculinity from those 5 countries, and has the biggest number of respondents who tagged the woman as the policeman. Cultures high on masculinity perceive women as obedient, loving, and tolerant, therefore, they suit more to the role of policemen: the “good one”. China has similar answers, and is the second highest culture on masculinity.

## 7.10 Do the advertisements make the product more attractive?

Table 11: Question 10

|     | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-----|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes | 8     | 5       | 8     | 2   | 3     | 26    |
| No  | 2     | 5       | 2     | 8   | 7     | 24    |

In total, these two advertisements do not make a big step in making the product more attractive. The answers are half to half. However, when examining particular cultures, it

made some difference. Czech and Italy are cultures which were influenced by the advertisements the most (8 respondents out of 10 stated that it makes the product more attractive). Finland is on a boundary, 5 respondents declares that it makes the product more attractive, 5 that it does not. China and the USA have the reverse answers: it does not make the product more attractive. Only 3 Chinese respondents found the advertisements useful for the product, and 2 American citizens claim the same claim.

**7.11 If you imagine that there was no logo of Benetton in the pictures, would you still think that they are advertisements for a clothes company?**

*Table 12: Question n.11*

|     | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-----|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes | 3     | 1       | 2     | 2   | 2     | 10    |
| No  | 7     | 9       | 8     | 8   | 8     | 40    |

Toscani claims that he does not sell products, which is he being criticized for. However, as introduced at the beginning of the questionnaire, Benetton is a widely-known company. Hence, the placement of the logo in the corner of a campaign is sufficient, majority of people became aware of the product when seeing it.

Respondents were invited to record what would the advertisement remind them of, when tagging the answer “No”. Only 10 people stated that they would feel that it is a commercial for a clothes shop, even if there was no logo, and 40 respondents assert that they would not be aware of this fact. Those people would think of the commercial as an advertisement for:

*Table 13: Question n. 12*

|                    | Czech Rep. | USA | Finland | Italy | China | Total |
|--------------------|------------|-----|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Adoption           | 1          | 0   | 0       | 0     | 0     | 1     |
| Movie              | 1          | 1   | 0       | 0     | 0     | 2     |
| Anti-racism        | 3          | 2   | 5       | 4     | 3     | 17    |
| Human/equal rights | 0          | 1   | 3       | 1     | 0     | 5     |
| NGO                | 0          | 4   | 1       | 0     | 2     | 7     |
| Do not know        | 2          | 0   | 0       | 3     | 3     | 8     |

People would associate the commercials with an anti-racist advertising in 17 cases. 8 people cannot imagine what the commercial would be for, 7 respondents would thought of an non-governmental organization, and 5 people would think that it is an advertisement for human rights and equality support. The results demonstrate that in most cases people would understood the objectives of the pictures.

## 7.12 Have you seen these advertisements before?

Table 14: Question n.12

|     | Czech | Finland | Italy | USA | China | Total |
|-----|-------|---------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Yes | 3     | 2       | 1     | 2   | 2     | 10    |
| No  | 7     | 8       | 9     | 8   | 8     | 40    |

The purpose of the question was to investigate whether people really had not been familiarized with the campaigns before. The campaigns were released in the 80's and 90's, when people of the investigated age were not very likely to meet the campaigns on billboards.

However, the results are surprising. 10 respondents had seen the commercials before. Although, it is impossible to say, whether they really personally experienced them, and remember them, or whether they just saw them on the Internet. Anyway, 75% of the people had not seen the photographs before, therefore, the respondents could not be influenced by the knowledge what are the advertisements for, and distort with the results.

## CONCLUSION

Jane Austen said: “Pictures of perfection makes me sick and wicked.” (Branston 2006, 153) The Benetton’s campaigns displayed everything, but perfection. They were criticised for its rudeness and tragedy exploitation, and often violated ethic and advertising rules. It happened innumerably that they were forbidden. However, over its crudeness, Toscani’s campaigns were more effective in increase of social issues awareness than any other campaigns supporting the same things. His campaigns became widely known, which multiplied its influence.

The culture values will remain the same in the future. The globalization and increasing intercultural communication has given rise to the divergence of cultures and its values. Moreover, the differences will be even more significant, as environmental and war threats increase uncertainty avoidance, and national groups require to be politically recognized.

The research clarified that the respondents perceived the first advertisement of a black woman with a black child (appendix 1) as anti-racial. Only in some cases, people felt embarrassed by the nakedness. Czechs and Finns appeared to be the most open-minded respondents, their attitude has not changed since the past. The Italian responses were mixed, which is incurred by the cultural division of the country, even though, the advertisement was awarded a prize in the past. China found the campaign positive, since children and family are desired aspect of their culture. The USA responses emerged to be quite open-minded, even though, that did not apply in the past, when the advertisement was misunderstood. The respondents considered the woman in the picture as the mother of the child in more than half cases, although, it is not a big improvement for the better, since this issue was the reason for misunderstanding in the past. The photograph was regarded as maternal in most cases, which is a significant improvement from the history. The contemporary society is more accustomed and tolerant towards the nakedness in commercials, even male respondents did not find it to be sexual. Perhaps, it is the child which gives the picture slightly different meaning.

The perception of the second advertisement (appendix 2) seems to be considerably dissimilar. The men in the campaign were in the past understood as intended by Toscani: one of them as a policeman, and one of them as a criminal. However, according to the responses and echoes for my questionnaire, such a role differentiation is not understood same nowadays. The respondents decided that both of them are criminals by the handcuffs

and the clothes similar more to prison than to police uniform, not by the colour of their skin. They did not act racially. However, they were influenced, hence, decided, by their logic, statistics, and widely-known fact. Merely, they jumped into conclusions without experiencing themselves. Those responses support the theory that it does not matter which colour the men are, it was decided according to the clothes and handcuffs. In conclusion, the skin colour is not as important for the current society, as it was in the past. This is also supported by the second finding: if there was a white man and a black woman in the picture, people would consider the woman as the policeman, and the man as criminal. This result states that the gender is more important than skin colour when judging. It is a recognizable change from the past.

Both of the statements of this Thesis appeared to be right. They were endorsed by the questionnaire that the society and its attitudes have changed. People act and decide according to the culture they belong to, however, they are more open-minded and tolerant, than it was in the past. The skin colour is not the most important factor for them when judging others, there are other factors which play more important roles.

Olivier Toscani created something new, something which caused enormous resistance. He managed to connect advertising without showing the actual product with the increase of social issues awareness. This is something which had not been achieved by anyone else before, and I dare to say, not even afterwards. This, and the fact, that he used his and Benetton's fame, for making the world to think about things which really matter, force me to forget about the disadvantages the campaigns had.

The current companies and their advertising neither express any values, nor differentiate. They do not have the power to affect the customer emotionally, and lack any connection with him. There is an urge for something which has a different concept, or a higher sense, and is not superficial as all the current advertisements are.

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## APPENDIX P I: A CHILD IN THE ARMS OF A WOMAN



Source: <http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2006/united-colors-of-benetton-1989/>

## APPENDIX P II: CHILDREN ON POTTIES



Source: <http://selectedphoto.ro/tag/benetton/>

## APPENDIX P III: WHO IS WHO?



Source: <http://www.thephotographypages.co.uk/articles/toscani-tested/>

## APPENDIX P IV: EMBRACE IN BLANKET



Source: <http://oreklame.kz/articles/4e2ead37d0a69412f000012>

## APPENDIX P V: THE NEWBORN



Source: <http://nahtschatten.com/2011/01/11/benetton-oder-wie-wahr-darf-werbung-sein/>

## APPENDIX P VI: CEMETERY



Source: <http://www.adme.ru/kreativnyj-obzor/united-colors-of-benetton-manifesty-protesty-i-socialnye-testy-22384/22384-906105/>

## APPENDIX P VII: CONDOMS



Source: <http://observatory.designobserver.com/slideshow/graphic-intervention/15768/1328/12>

## APPENDIX P VIII: A PRIEST AND A NUN



Source: <http://www.livelifelife.pl/?p=14960>



**APPENDIX P IX: DAVID KIRBY**



Source: <http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2007/benetton-pieta-in-aids-campaign/>

## APPENDIX P X: MARINKO GAGRO



Source: <http://dailyartdesign.posterlounge.de/fotografie/die-benetton-kampagnen-von-der-schock-fotokunst-zum-mueden-gaehnen.html>

## **APPENDIX P XI: QUESTIONNAIRE**

Gender

- Woman
- Men

Do you know Benetton?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever bought something from Benetton?

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

How do you perceive these two advertisements?

### **Picture n.1** (see Appendix I)

What is your first impression of the picture?

- I am embarrassed, it is inappropriate due to the bare breasts
- It is sexually attractive
- It is shameful due to the black and white
- I like the anti-racial point of the picture
- Other ...

The woman and the child in the picture are related:

- It is a mother (a custodian) and her child
- It is a maid and a child she takes care of

The photograph is more:

- Maternal
- Sexual

### **Picture n.2** (see Appendix III)

Who do you think is who?

- The white is a criminal, and the black is a policeman
- The white is a policeman, and the black is a criminal
- Both of them are policeman
- Both of them are criminals

How do you decide?

- According to my own personal experiences and prejudices
- According to my logic/statistics/widely-known fact
- Other: ...

How would you feel if there was a white man and a black woman in the picture?

- The woman would be the policeman and the men the criminal
- The woman would be the criminal and the men the policeman

Do the advertisements make the product more attractive?

- Yes
- No

If you imagine that there was no logo of Benetton in the pictures, would you still think that they are advertisements for a clothes company?

- Yes
- No (your ideas) ...

Have you seen these advertisements before?

- Yes
- No