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## **Physical Activity, Disability and Health in Advertising Campaigns Associated with Major Sporting Events in the World**

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**Abstract** The purpose of the article is to present commercials broadcasted during global sporting events such as the US Super Bowl, the Olympic Games and Paralympics, the world championships, as well as the European Football Championships. While examining the phenomenon of commercials, a quality method was applied, in the form of film content/plot analysis. The commercials were treated as peculiar texts of contemporary culture, an element of wider discourse associated with sport—an important component of postmodern social reality. Nowadays mass media are a universal language of communication of the global world. Public duties also rest with them, the sign of which are advertisements concerning disability, encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle and an escape from diseases associated with the progress of civilization.

**Keywords** Physical Activity, Mass Media, Disability, Advertising, Sport, Health

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Mass media, being a universal language of global world communication, *telling* sport in a diverse way puts stress on the broadcast images. The images contain crucial social issues, essential from a sociological point of view, such as diseases associated with the progress of civilization and disability, as well as physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, as the panacea to these sore points: obesity, excess weight, marginalization of social groups, ageing of societies. Only the most representative and transparent advertisements were chosen from the multitude of the available ones with social col-

oring. They were broadcast during global sports events: European and World Championships, the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games and the Super Bowl, so important for Americans. The years 2010-2014 constituted a time framework for the research. When examining Internet and television advertisements together with actions and public service announcements (PSA), qualitative analysis of content/plot of films was applied. The films were treated as texts of contemporary culture, included in wider narration associated with sport— an important component of social reality. Exemplificative-hermeneutic analyses were carried out. The presented text, with its specificity, aspires to a social research essay. The simpler version was published in Polish in the journal “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” (Sahaj 2016:35-57).

## Major Sporting Events in the Social Perspective

Till the end of the 20th century in Poland philosophy of sport and sociology of physical culture were regarded as marginal scientific fields. At present, a philosopher Maria Zowisło claims that sport attracts more and more representatives of culture and social sciences, becoming a subject of numerous debates and theoretical studies. Sport, with its ancient origins, is an important component of mass culture (Zowisło 2007:27). At the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Sociology of Sport Antonina Kłoskowska, a sociologist, noticed that popular observation shows how many people are keen on sport; a larger part of contemporary societies. This alone should make the scientists deal with this phenomenon (as cited in Krawczyk 2011:26). Until recently, only the

researchers from the Academy of Physical Education and Medical Universities have dealt with the body, fitness, sport, physical education, and health together with illnesses and disabilities. Now university researchers are taking the floor (Loy, Kenyon, and McPherson 1981; Dziubiński and Krawczyk 2011; Giulianotti 2015; Pawłucki 2015).

Today we already “know well enough,, that sport is an important fragment of social reality, that many social actors induce us to action and reflection, that sport triggers great emotions and involves huge funds. In the Polish Sociological Society was created a section of the Sociology of Sport (Jakubowska and Nosal 2017). A relatively new “discovery,, is the sport of physically and intellectually disabled people (Kowalik 2009; Botwina and Kowalik 2013 Niedbalski 2015; Zakrzewska-Manterys and Niedbalski 2016). The winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Nelson Mandela organized and provided, in an electric wheelchair, the first African World Cup in 2010. He claimed that sport was a universal language of communication, thanks to which the dialogue between the Whites and the Blacks is possible; an intercultural dialogue. A reporter, Wojciech Jagielski, wrote that Mandela practiced such sports disciplines, where physical fitness counted as much as perseverance in aspiration to victory (Jagielski 2013:45). Another South African Nobel Peace Prize winner— Desmond Tutu—and well-known sport lover, saint, Pope John Paul II—repeatedly spoke to listeners at the biggest football stadiums of the world. John Paul II spoke “ecumenically,, about sport believing, that “[...] it will become a factor of the emancipation of poor countries, help in the fight against intolerance, as well as help to construct a more brotherly and

loyal world; sport, which will bring a love of life, which will teach dedication, respect and responsibility, letting you appropriately value each and every man,, (John Paul II 2005:10-11).

Karl Marx said that “religion is the opiate for the masses.” Today sport performs such a social role. It compares with today’s global sporting events, such as the European Championships or the World Cup. The sociologist of physical culture, Zbigniew Krawczyk, claims that bodies of The Olympic Games’ participants entered the world of the sacred, as a success tool given to the gods, an object of the community’s adoration and worship (Krawczyk 1995:104). Brazilian sociologist Mauricio Murad notices elements of religious ecstasy in South American supporting. He thinks that there are elements of adoration in mass, folk sport—like in every religion. Footballers’ myths resemble the lives of saints (*vide* Domosławski 2000). Football triggers emotions and similar behaviors to the ones aroused by faith (*vide* Mason 2002; Foer 2006). Such sociologists as Dominic Antonowicz, Radosław Kossakowski, and Tomasz Szlendak bring into focus the *quasi*-religious element of sport. Sport researchers administer Thomas Luckman’s concept of “invisible religion,, for explaining the social phenomenon of supporting (Antonowicz and Wrzesiński 2009; Sahaj 2009; Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Szlendak 2012). Sport is now egalitarian, popular, and available to everyone. Pierre Bourdieu wrote: “(...) sport, born of truly popular games, that is, games produced by the people, returns to the people (...) in the form of spectacles produced for the people,, (Bourdieu 1978:828; *vide*: Bourdieu 1999:427-440). Eric Hobsbawm concludes: “(...) the Olympic Games and international football match-

es had interested chiefly a middle-class public,, (Hobsbawm 2017:142; *vide*: Wilson 2002:5-16; Lenartowicz and Jankowski 2014:12-19; Grodecki 2017:1-20). Modern sport is an element of global economy, politics, and mass media (Roche 2000; Real 2005:337-360; Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; Rowe 2004).

Since 1960 the Olympic Games have been broadcasted by television, which considerably affected the ratings and began the new media era in sports transmissions. Today it is inconceivable for the key public and private media not to show such a socially important event as the European Football Championships or the World Cup and at least excerpts from the Olympic Games’ opening and closing ceremonies. According to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, telemetry is fetishized, and according to the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the media appropriate and make the spectator dependent on them. Józef Lipiec, a philosopher, notices that an era of *sport for the sportsmen* finished and an era of *sport for the audience* started—with all its consequences (Lipiec 2007:336). Sports shows acquired a more autotelic character, and the spectator became *homo zappiens*, a remote-control device making socially meaningful choices. Today nobody despises sport anymore; today sport is talked about and sport is practiced; it is an element of everyday life. Sociologist Piotr Sztompka said: “Lunch at work and Sunday mass, shopping in the mall and laying a wreath at the memorial, a football match and the symphonic concert, are all equal elements of everyday life” (Sztompka 2008:24).

Sporting events accompany us daily and on high days and holidays. At the beginning of 2014 over

111 million Americans watched the end of an unofficial “holiday”—the professional league of American football, the Super Bowl (National League Football, NFL). Many Americans feeling national pride wished the day after the competition to be a day off – to be a national holiday written down in the constitution. A hundred thousand people signed the petition to the president of the USA whose participation in the inaugural match is considered simply obvious. It is a fact, that the majority of Americans aren’t capable of working after the riotously celebrated final competition. As far as the level of consumption is concerned, the Super Bowl can be placed right next to Thanksgiving and Independence Day. Sociologist Robert D. Putnam notices an interesting relation: “While *practicing* sport takes Americans less and less time, *watching* it takes up more of their time and money than several dozen years ago. The number of spectators increased very violently (...). Partly, the increase in watching sports events reflects the change of our habits associated with watching TV; however it can also be noticed in the rise in the number of people watching events live. (...) the participation in more important sports events since the 60’s almost doubled” (Putnam 2008:193).

Philosopher Marshall McLuhan noticed the main reason for public changes in mass media, and as one of many examples, he gave the transfer of the interest from static baseball to dynamic American football, which conveyed more of the “American spirit.” In baseball he saw the essence of the stable industrial era, in football-fluent and impetuous postmodernism. Football in the USA was pushed out (McLuhan 2004:312). The cherished American football joined other male disciplines shown in the media:

basketball and ice hockey. Thus a meaningful paradigmatic turn took place (McLuhan 2004:417; Lipóński 2012:521-528; Mazurkiewicz 2014). In 2017 Pope Francis delivered an address to supporters of the Super Bowl—the first time in the history of the Catholic Church—paying attention to the spiritual aspect of the sport.

In Europe fans get excited when watching the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games following right after them. Both as for funds necessary to prepare them, as well as records of ratings. The Sochi Winter Olympic Games in 2014 ate up so much money as all the earlier winter Olympics together: over 50 billion dollars. The opening ceremony of the Russian Olympics was watched by 3 billion people worldwide, and even more watched the closing ceremony. During the closing ceremony the International Olympic Committee (IOC) chairman, Thomas Bach, said that the Olympics let “the people see the face of new Russia; friendly, patriotic, and opened to world.” The VIP speaking next called them “cool,” and the volunteers the “base of the Russian civil society.” A few days later unmarked Russian troops annexed the Ukrainian Crimea, triggering an international crisis.

Sociologist Piotr Rymarczyk says: “The Beijing Olympic Games broadcast in 2008 was watched by a total of 4.7 billion spectators, so about 70% of mankind” (Rymarczyk 2011:87-88). During the closing ceremony of the Chinese Olympics David Beckham announced the Olympic Games in London in 2012. The number of fans and spectators of the British Olympics exceeded 5 billion people. These Olympics hosted with a swing and social commitment, caused a lot of

surprise as far as viewing is concerned. One of them was an extraordinary interest of the media and spectators in the ... Paralympic Games. It can be regarded as a social phenomenon, that about 80-100 thousand fans watched sports rivalry between the disabled. Over 11 million British people watched the opening ceremony of the Paralympics shown on Channel 4, and over 2 million tickets were sold for the contests. R.D. Putnam noticed “cementing social capital creates a certain kind of sociological superglue, whereas, linking social capital contains sociological spread” in local communities (Putnam 2008:41).

Great sporting events attract sponsors, especially global concerns, such as Coca-Cola (one of the oldest partners of the organizers of the Olympic Games), Pepsi, McDonalds, VISA, Omega, Hyundai, Samsung. Broadcasting a 30-second long commercial in Super Bowl prime time in 2013 amounted to 3.5 million dollars; in the following years much more (in 2015—4,5 million, 2016—5 million). It is interesting, that during gigantic sporting events advertising campaigns have significantly social commitment (Burnet 2015:385-390; Horne 2015:466-471; Jackson 2015:490-495). Attention is being drawn to diseases associated with the illnesses of civilization (obesity, old age), the disabled, positive and negative ways of spending leisure time. They encourage physical activity correlated with health, sensitized to social problems. The form of the transmission is puzzling for most of the analyzed commercials: they avoid didactics, moralizing, and educating, they use a sense of humor, surprising associations and well-known celebrities. Broadcasts of global sporting events are large, wall screens with millions of receivers, they are mouths of commentators speaking to “people

stands” with billions of spectators (Hare 1998:121-144; Smart 2007:113-134; Boyle 2010:1300-1313).

## Super Bowl

Super Bowl 2014 was held in the stadium first used in 2010 “It holds 83 thousand fans and cost 1.6 billion dollars. It isn’t roofed over. Sunday Super Bowl will be the first in history played at the opened stadium in frosty weather. During the Super Bowl, Americans spend 12.3 billion dollars—68.27 dollars per consumer on average. They buy occasional T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, as well as food, alcohol for the customary Super Bowl party which is organized with friends, to see a match together” (Kiedrowski 2014; vide Wałkuski 2012:38; Wałkuski 2014:200-206) and commercials. During the commercial break in 2014 the ones worth paying attention to are associated with the subject of physical activity, fitness, and health. In the H&M advertisement (H&M David Beckham Super Bowl Commercial 2014)<sup>1</sup> Beckham who finished his sports career appears in sexy underwear practicing parkour (city running), jumping on roofs and sliding down the rope as the hero of action films. In a McDonald’s commercial, huge American footballers preparing for the match say the names of the dishes from this restaurant in a funny context (McDonald’s Super Bowl 2014 Commercial – Lip Reading). Scarlett Johansson stirred up much controversy, when advertising the house device for making the soda water (healthier than, sweetened

<sup>1</sup> The key words are given in the text instead of traditional links. It allows the identifying and locating the described films on popular Internet sites. Due to frequent appearance and disappearance of films on the web this method should increase the possibility of watching the analyzed commercials. Commercials are read and spoken as cultural texts; *video* storytelling (Fog et al. 2011).

drinks), in the climactic moment said: "Sorry Coke and Pepsi" (Scarlett Johansson Banned Super Bowl Soda Stream 'sorry, Coke and Pepsi'). At both concerns' request this phrase was removed during the broadcasting of the commercial at the Super Bowl. Bruce Willis encouraged obtaining car insurance, while a man who was holding him imitated seat belts (Bruce Willis Super Bowl Commercial 2014 Honda).

A surprising commercial from 2013 shows an elderly man, riding an electric scooter for the disabled. He breaks into the stadium prepared for football practice and he charges through grass, treating the infrastructure as an obstacle course, getting into drift. The guard tries to catch the "intruder" who behaves as an extreme rider. After the fall he draws his paralyzed limbs up the scooter and continues the rally. In the end, intoxicated with speed and extremely happy, he puts both his hands up during the ride and finally topples over. The inscription concluding the commercial is "Buckle up." The date associated with the commercial, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013 (Super Bowl finals) and its context (American football stadium) let us read it as wordplay: seat yourself and ...eat, as it is an advertisement of the Taco Bell network and their products from "Live mas" line (Taco Bell Viva Mas 2013 Super Bowl Commercial).

The commercial with the energetic old man is one among many, broadcasted during the Super Bowl, creating stories and narrations. Similarly to yet another Taco Bell commercial, in which an old man, though tied up with a rope in bed and checked before sleep by the nurse, escapes from his retirement home, but not on the wheelchair which stands near

his room, but with the group of peers awaiting him outside. During the expedition to the city the residents romp as teenagers: they swim in someone's pool, visit night clubs drinking and dancing on the floor until dawn, devote themselves to inappropriate passions, have tattoos done, eat hamburgers lying on the bonnet of a car. They do all this in order to finally get back "home" in the morning.

Hyundai broadcasted a commercial demonstrating the effort of socially excluded boys who, after improving morally and physically, are able to oppose stronger peers (Official Super Bowl Commercial 2013 Hyundai Santa Fe). Advertising slogans said: "New thinking. New possibilities" and "Pick Your Team." Pepsi released a number of commercials featuring deaf fans with ... captions for the deaf. In one of the films, fans drive the car to a friend's to watch the event together, but they do not remember where he lives. Not being able to ask anybody, they sound the horn until the lights in all the houses in the street come on except one—the right one (Super Bowl Pepsi Commercial at Bob's House). It is emphasized at the beginning and at the end of the film that it was created for the disabled and with their involvement: "Creating an inclusive environment for people with different abilities." In other commercials fans wearing club colors discuss in sign language the superiority of their preferred football teams. During breaks they eat hot-dogs and hamburgers washed down with Pepsi (Pepsi Super Bowl Deaf Comedy Smack Talk). In video clips advertising Doritos crisps careless people become disabled (Doritos Super Bowl 2014 Commercial). Commercials of this type and the presence of the disabled at Super Bowl is not only an element of political correctness but also multiplying profits

through pragmatic occupying by major concerns of the niches with so far marginalized “human resources.” All over the world there are 15-20% of people with different disabilities ([http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report/en](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en)). They are all consumers: they eat (crisps, hamburgers, hot-dogs), drink (Cola, Pepsi, beer), buy club gadgets and cars, watch and practice sport. They constitute a gigantic market and, from an economic and social point of view, it’s impossible to ignore them.

## Euro—The European Football Championship

Unlike Americans, in advertisements which summarize and reinforce an expansive, consumer lifestyle, the Europeans propagate commerce and consumption, concentrating more firmly on social matters, presenting it in a deeper and more engaged way. The Euro Organizer, UEFA (Union of European Football Associations), wants its image to be positively correlated with social responsibility. One of the signs of this philosophy are commercial clips encouraging greater physical activity (Get Active: TV-campaign to get out of your chair). In this grotesque clip obese men try to play a football match at the stadium without getting out of their armchairs, in which they usually *watch* the matches. Slightly greater activity of some of them resulted only in falling off the armchairs. Due to being overweight they were incapable of a wider motor spectrum. Their motor activity was poorer than the people’s in wheelchairs.

UEFA makes the Euro organisers care for the needs of disabled fans. Stadiums in Poland and in the

Ukraine, where matches were played during Euro 2012, were adapted to the needs of the people with different kinds of disabilities (the blind, in wheelchairs). It was accompanied by a huge social media campaign with many local cooperation partners called “Respect.” It was a sign of social responsibility, going beyond the world of sport, but directly connected with it. We find relevant information concerning other socially committed firms (“socially responsible business”), on UEFA websites (<http://pl.uefa.com>) and on those devoted to the Euro itself (<http://www.euro2012.com>).

The four elements of the “Respect” campaign are: “Respect Diversity,” “Respect Fan Culture,” “Respect Inclusion” and “Respect Your Health.” When realizing the first of them, UEFA cooperated with an international association “Football Against Racism in Europe” (FARE, <http://www.farenet.org>), fighting racism and chauvinism at stadiums and with a Polish association “Never Again” (<http://www.nigdywiecej.org>), opposing xenophobia and intolerance. The second element of the campaign was created with the help of “Football Supporters Europe” (FSE, <http://www.fanseurope.org>), building football fans’ embassies in eight host cities of Euro 2012. The realization of the third element, which concerned disabled fans, was supported by “Centre for Access to Football in Europe” (CAFE, <http://www.cafefootball.eu>). The fourth element was based on directives of the “World Health Organization” (WHO).

The emblem of the campaign was pictured on the T-shirts of athletes, judges (including the famous Pierluigi Collina), stewards, and volunteers. During television transmissions friendly T-shirt exchanges

between people with different skin colors, sex, age, and social roles were shown (UEFA Respect—TV Ad—Official Euro 2012). In this campaign football, and more widely sport, were introduced in the context of the global, platform, common ground for the interpersonal, legible and universal language of communication of the residents of the “global village.” The author of this expression—Marshall McLuhan—was right claiming, that “the medium is the message.” In the case of Euro rather a holiday, than war; a festival of joy and vitality. An anthropologist, Herman Bausinger, wrote that football prevailed above such holidays, like Christmas or Easter. Christmas tree or colorfully painted eggs seem monotonous compared with the endless number of variants of a football match. The match is an unforgettable performance for the spectator, continuously shown in different variations by television (Bausinger 2005:272-273).

Activists, fans, judges, and competitors participate in the media process. This way the important sports-social events such as Euro bear fruit with an uncountable number of advertisements in European countries alone. In most of those advertisements we find faint tracks of cultural presence of the hosts of the competition, often Euro and UEFA emblems, rarely national colors. Sponsors advertise their products. Carlsberg, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s presented carnival mega-parties and behaviors of fan-consumers, which could take place *everywhere* during *every* bigger meeting. In UEFA advertisements there was a universal harbinger of the football feast. Hyundai, in many of their clips, offered different models of cars, and if in one film the action took place in Warsaw, it constituted the

background of the UEFA Cup carried around. In “Hyundai Euro 2012 Determination TV Commercial” we see the evolution from crawling child to high-value competitor.

Nike presented the vitality of football, but without Polish and Ukrainian accents. Those turned up in the controversial Spanish commercial (Coca-Cola and a Spanish ad offending Poles), where the main character is a poor Pole residing in Spain for 6 years. Every day he gets up at dawn to go to work on the site. Sitting in a local pub he looks sadly at his family photo and a poster announcing his homeland to be the organizer of Euro. He texts a code he found on the bottle to win a ticket for the match. Seeing it, sympathizing Spaniards give him their empty Coca-Cola bottles so that he can have better chances of winning the trip. The Polish ambassador to Spain, Ryszard Schneps, spoke out publicly, trying to moderate voices of indignation.

How did we introduce ourselves in commercials associated with Euro 2012? What image did we build with the help of mass media? Partly the questions are answered in an advertisement not without reason called by Internet users “with the pervert” though on the Internet one should search it as “Poland Warsaw official promotional UEFA Euro 2012.” The clip pursued an unpredictable “career.” The new National Stadium, Warsaw, and the “Polish national identity” were represented through the actions of a couple of dynamic managers (a woman and a man), practicing jogging before a business meeting. They chase one another all over the deserted Polish capital, flying over the city, jumping over the Vistula river, climbing walls



of buildings, doing acrobatics in the cold scenery of concrete, metal, and glass. Occasionally they pass a handful of fans with faces painted in national colors, a group of Jews, a few boys playing ball. This commercial clip met with concentrated criticism. There's hardly any Poland in it, hardly any capital city status or Euro; but there is "Polish pride," the National Stadium built for 2 billion zlotys, on whose crown and grass carefree heroes dance energetically. There's little football, no known and recognized Poles (no artists, politicians, athletes), apart from Chopin's monument.

Patriotic and public aspects were more extensively exhibited in commercial advertisements. A chain of shops Biedronka repositioning itself in the social awareness, gambled on "Adamiakowie"—statistical "Kowalscy/Smiths"—who by playing football strengthened the representatives of Poland under the command of coach Franciszek Smuda. The advertising slogan said: "We are all the national team." Tesco broadcasted self-ironic clips appealing to the low level of the Polish national team. Global businesses earned profits on the event held by the Poles, broadcasting commercials which increased the sales of their products. Automotive companies and retail chains acted similarly, tempting their customers with gadgets, the possibility of winning tickets or trips to countries who were Euro participants. Media Markt provoked that "it doesn't sponsor football stars—it sponsors fans" (Fans are all that matters! Media Markt campaign). McDonald's promoted "children's player escorts" who accompanied footballers, and UEFA showed highlights of matches and the joy of fans waiting for their football feast.

## The World Cup—Football World Cup Competition

It seems risky to advertise consumer products with images of disabled people. The commercial effect could be opposite than planned by the producers of the advertisements. It's even more surprising that sportingly active Nick Vujicic, not having all four limbs since birth, became the "face" of the advertising campaign of Hyundai, promoting the World Cup in South Africa. Global sports events are associated with the fittest competitors, the best and the strongest athletes, with festive days for fans on all the continents. Meanwhile in the advertisement of the World Cup 2010 a man without hands and legs—tells about his life tragedy (Nick Vujicic—Copa FIFA World Cup 2010) which he forged into financial, social, and sports success. This brought him happiness, accessible also to other people, irrespective of their physical condition, ethnicity, or social origin. In the advertising spot a group of young people happily preparing for the World Cup constitute the background for the disabled man's talk. We can see Vujicic slide off his wheelchair physically (and metaphorically) jump up step-by-step to the top of high stairs; *per aspera ad astra*. He enthusiastically plays ball with some boys too. In the media world Vujicic is well-known not only for his distinguishing disability but he is also associated with sports activity, travelling, and breaking social barriers.

These are the cultural-social motifs with which "Fédération Internationale de Football Association" (FIFA), would like to be associated. The organization which invites countries neglected socially and industrially, such as Brazil—the organizer of the

World Cup in 2014—to the World Cup giving them the chance for development. On FIFA's website, under "our mission" we can read, that with such actions they are "(...) bringing hope to those less privileged. This is what we believe is the very essence of fair play and solidarity" (<http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/organisation/mission.html>). In FIFA advertising spots from the series "For the game. For the World," broadcasted during the breaks of the most important sports competition (not only football matches), there are enthusiasts and competitors from the most backward countries, including the physically disabled man, who while riding his archaic vehicle delivers calcium in a leaky bucket, marking out the touchlines. Nelson Mandela opened the first African World Cup moving in a wheelchair. In front of South Africa's National Stadium in Cape Town, almost identical to the one in Warsaw, people in wheelchairs protested, people for whom there were no places provided in the stadium (Sahaj 2012a; 2012b; 2013a).

The World Cups are a chance to present positive patterns of behavior, propagated in advertisements. In this respect advertising campaigns of VISA, an official FIFA partner, are truly representative. In "Visa Football Evolution TV Commercial" an obese boy sitting in the armchair in front of the TV, under the influence of sudden emotions triggered by a goal, runs out of the house and changes his life. Running through all continents, eating only fruit, he evolves. Thanks to "training" undergoes a transformation: he gets younger and becomes thinner. In the climactic moment he runs up the stadium during the match and triumphantly scores a goal. The advertising slogan goes: "Life flows better with

VISA." It is one among many VISA advertisements encouraging physical activity and lifestyle not restricted by anything. They are all based on a similar mechanism: fitness, skills, and health depend on the active subject, and it is possible to deal with the rest having a credit card and nothing more (Visa's Running Man Ad). A series of VISA commercials from the animated for years "flow" shows an amazing variety of people who get cheered up, revitalized, and are made happy by mobility. They experience the state of the flow of the positive energy, which the social psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls the "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1991). In the advertisement from 2009 the main character who walks on crutches, also rides and dances on his skateboard (VISA Commercial Flow 2009). In the advertisement from 2011 "ordinary people" torn away from their daily routine start in the urban marathon. In the spot from 2013 "Feel Faster Flow Faster" (New VISA 2013 Faster Flow Faster—Queen Don't Stop), an energetic old man who used to walk using a walking stick gets younger thanks to physical activity, and a man revitalized with running bypasses slow disabled people in wheelchairs. In eccentric trainers he visits the hospital to see his newborn grandson.

The commercials of the World Cup in football loving Brazil are particularly interesting. The event will be held, not without numerous voices of criticism and violent social protests, in 2014. In this World Cup's publicity twofold trends can be noticed: local and global. On the one hand we have commercials showing Brazilians and their temperament, manifesting itself in loud music, singing, sensual dance (including *capoeira*), and beloved football, practiced literally everywhere:

barefoot on the beach (famous Copacabana), on sandy squares, concrete courtyards, city streets, and in favelas (shown briefly and from a distance). In this way FIFA presents this region of the world, showing Rio de Janeiro with its characteristic Jesus figure, monumental stadiums and snapshots of beautiful goalmouth scrambles (FIFA World Cup 2014 Brazil). In social commercials colorful fans are shown (in particular beautiful women), having fun and playing loud music, enthusiastically reacting to acrobatics with the ball, something Brazilian competitors are famous for (FIFA World Cup Brazil 2014 Promo).

These kinds of advertising resemble the flawless travel agency brochure, whose offer should arouse only very positive associations. This image is even more strengthened in the Nike commercial (Nike Football Dare to the Brazilian), which is a collage of different forms and convention of depicting movement, a collage which does not lack animation or a comic book. The mechanism is simple: the footballers playing a match at the stadium filled up with people suddenly remember what their social roots are. The message is identical to the universal idea and the stereotypes associated with the provenance of the majority of Brazilian footballers: thanks to talent, work, and “fun with the ball,” they get out of poverty and get to the top, “bewitching” the ball in plain view of the audience. And if they don’t do it well and spectacularly enough, the action of the match is seized, like in the film, director of which—Oliver Stone—like a demanding coach, reprimands the players, urging them to play a more effective and gripping match—like in a good action film (Promo Directv Mundial Brazil 2014 Oliver Stone).

In the World Cup 2014 commercials offered by global concerns such as VISA, their versatility comes to the forefront, with Brazilian motifs (VISA World Welcome to the 2014 FIFA World Cup). The message of those commercials reads “we are everywhere, also here.” Sociologist Richard Giulianotti notices that sport is a perfect medium consolidating socially, what is global and regional in one glocal whole (Giulianotti 2013). Precisely thanks to football successes the Scottish defeating the British became well-known worldwide. Today high level football is associated with England, Brazil, Scotland, and also Catalonia (FC Barcelona), Spain (Real Madrid), Basque Country (Athletic Bilbao). Football became a distinguished discipline, and gaining the status of worldwide sport, changed into the engine accelerating subsequent markets, creating new products of the mass trade and services. One of the sectors feeding on football are mass media absorbing and redistributing information connected with sport (Giulianotti and Robertson 2004; 2009).

## **The Olympic Games—London 2012**

The London Olympic Games held in 2012 were a great logistic venture, involving a huge amount of financial resources, activating gigantic human and social capital (Armstrong, Giulianotti, and Hobbs 2017). While building impressive sports facilities, the British recultivated post-industrial areas. They made major investments in the cultural and social space. Huge responsibility rested with the organizers of the Olympics, resulting from the fact, that the infrastructure of sports facilities was also supposed to serve the needs of disabled competitors who were to take part in the Paralympic Games a few weeks

after the Olympics. But, also for this reason, that after turning full circle, disabled athletes' competitions went back to their roots. After World War II sir Ludwik Gutmann initiated sport for the disabled. The archery competition of war veterans at the hospital near London initiated the development of one of the biggest and most important sporting events in the 20th and the 21st century.

Preparations for the XXX Summer Olympic Games and the XIV Summer Paralympic Games, both being multimedia events, were accompanied by information and public campaigns, prepared ingeniously and with a flourish, without the pomp, but with the whiff of "black British humor." The BBC showed an interesting, as it was accompanied by classical music rather than pop music, six-and-a-half-minute television commercial spot, which referred to the Englishness—with the monarch playing the lead—Queen Elizabeth II and with... James Bond (James Bond and The Queen London 2012 Performance). The Queen accompanied by James Bond paces monumental corridors of Buckingham Palace, filled up with old furniture, paintings, and sculptures. Inside the helicopter they hover above London, above the heads of fans flying British flags and businessmen drinking champagne on the roof of one of the office blocks. In the film we can spot elements universally associated with Great Britain: soldiers parading in fur hats and famously unarmed British police officers ("Friendly Bobby") in characteristic helmets. From above one can see Big Ben, Piccadilly Circus, Buckingham Palace and the revived Winston Churchill monument. The helicopter flies above the Tower Bridge decorated with Olympic symbols and comes to a standstill above the Olympic stadium.

And something "never earlier seen" takes place: the elderly Queen wearing her formal dress...jumps out with a parachute painted in national colors. After a moment she appears in the arena of the stadium, to seat herself in a VIP box in the company of president Jacques Rogge, IOC president.

In commercial spots (also in their animated version: Wenlock tries the Olympic sports – London 2012; BBC London 2012 Olympic Games), celebrity figures came and went; Hugh Grant, Roger Moore, David Beckham, and many other actors and athletes. "British-ness in a nutshell" was shown in its entire cross section. The hit of the Olympics was a musical piece "Proud," in the film version "Sport at heart," performed by a black singer Heather Small (Heather Small Proud London 2012). It was presented in a few video clip variations with Olympic symbols in the background and with sports struggle of different discipline athletes in the foreground. A girl running in a tracksuit through London, inspiring those who encounter her to act, is a leitmotif. Top managers from London's financial center, heading for the offices in bowler hats (and like fencers fighting with umbrellas), supple secondary school pupils in uniforms, a hotel bellboy doing exercises on a suitcase, athletic youth, performing ballet figures, people holding a newspaper like a baton in a relay race into double-deckers and "hunchbacked" taxis.

But also black street cleaners (playing curling with their brooms), an emigrant working at a building site (doing high jump on a metal pipe), a corpulent mechanic who got himself dirty with grease (lifting a car axle together with the wheels like heavy

weights), stewardesses wearing close-fitting uniforms trying to overtake a pedestrian on a zebra crossing, muscular rowers on the Thames. Elderly people of both sexes swimming in it, a man with a leg prosthesis jogging happily, and an Oriental disabled person in a wheelchair, playing basketball with multiracial friends on municipal courts. The purpose of showing those commercial spots was a presentation of the architecture and material culture of the Olympic host city, as well as presenting physical activity available to representatives of all classes and social layers; not only during the Olympics. Sports were vivid sociology, which, unlike evaluating philosophy, doesn't assess presented social facts but draws attention to them and encourages reflection. In the clips multicultural British community plays its everyday roles: Arabs, Indians, and Jews also sell Olympic gadgets at their stalls.

Samsung and VISA, the official partners of IOC and FIFA, backed ingenious advertising campaigns, the main theme of which is physical activity transforming heroes into "fit" characters, who succeed in sport, compete in urban marathons full of obstacles with the best competitors of the world. In an "Olympic" commercial advertising a smartphone (Samsung Galaxy S III Commercial—London 2012 Olympic Games), David Beckham kicks the ball from a distance precisely hitting the drum dragged down the pitch, thus giving the signal for the beginning of the competition. In the film we can see people from different continents joined in practicing sport (although of different sports disciplines); as one large family. The watchwords are: "Everyone's Olympic Games" and "Designed for humans."

An amiable and funny "London in 90 seconds" commercial (Usain Bolt stars in Olympic TV ad) presents the fastest sprinter in the world—the Jamaican, Usain Bolt—who while travelling from the airport to the Olympic stadium races a sports judge through the entire city, using unconventional means of transport. In one brief scene we can see sitting on the London bus a Polish Olympian and Paralympian—armless Natalia Partyka who, as a health ambassador shown in commercial spots produced by the consortium of Polish Universities of Physical Education, encourages physical activity (Health Ambassador Natalia Partyka). A well-known performance artist Kuba Wojewódzki invited Natalia Partyka to his program, but failed to provoke her to any excesses. After the successes of Polish competitors during Paralympic Games in London, where they won as many as 36 medals (the Olympic Games athletes got only 10), media interest in them grew considerably and we could see the first advertisements with their image.

## London Paralympics 2012

A commercial spot announcing London Paralympics was created after enjoying successful and great media and spectator interest in the Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008. Through the entire film (Paralympics London 2012), which shows sports facilities, fans, medals, and disabled competitors' aspirations to win, a nostalgic story spins: "Behind every athlete is a dream. Behind every dream is a challenge. Behind every challenge is the will to win. The heart of a nation. Our nation. The Paralympics are coming home." The story contains statistical data from Chinese competitions: 11 days of competition, 20 sports, 160 countries, over 4200 athletes, global

audience of 3.8 billion. The film was produced in cooperation with British Paralympics Association (BPA, <http://www.paralympics.org.uk>) and Channel 4—distinguished in showing disability issues. An Otto Bock company was a strategic partner. It specializes in producing technologically advanced prostheses; partner of the Paralympic Games since 1988. It was possible to understand the film in a lot of ways, also that best prepared, but empty sporting facilities, are worthless without of “human capital.”

The opening ceremony of the London Paralympic Games is truly worth our attention. Polish television, however, did not show the ceremony due to anxiety of low ratings and also “aesthetic unattractiveness of the transmission.” Entirely paralyzed, seventy-year-old Stephen Hawking inaugurated the Paralympics (London 2012 Paralympics Opening Ceremony, S. Hawking), one of the most recognizable physicists, starring in numerous commercial and public service ads. Severely affected by a neurodegenerative incurable illness he moves in an electric wheelchair equipped with a computer, a monitor and a speech synthesizer so that the professor can communicate. His speech read by a synthetic speaker was accompanied by an acrobatic-sports show with a disabled woman in a wheelchair hung on the long rope. The Queen of Great Britain sat in a VIP box. During the inauguration ceremony the chairman welcoming the disabled competitors “home,” spoke about numerous “borders to cross” and “barriers to crash”; actions which are possible thanks to sport.

Channel 4 issued an impressive commercial spot (Channel 4 Paralympics Meet the Superhumans).

The main characters are the disabled competitors, shown without hiding physical gaps and disabilities, sometimes crying with grief at the defeat, but fighting for victory without mercy. Their characters are shown as “heroes,” supermen in the convention of the “team for special assignments,” known from action movies and sensational series. The spot impresses with the dynamics of the action, vivid imagery and the music getting louder. You don’t see only body flaws and disability, but above all you see people in their sports struggle. Maria Grzegorzewska—a promoter of special needs education in Poland – claimed, that “there is no cripple – there is a man.” Man in his full existential dimension, independent of the number of limbs, kinds of dysfunction, and degrees of bodily losses. A script for Samsung commercial spot expresses it best (Paralympics—London 2012—Sport doesn’t care who you are). In the film the coaches of unrightful competitors of different sporting disciplines and sports (often also being disabled), enthusiastically train their charges leading them to victory. Innovative solutions were applied in the film: scenes from war episodes and car accidents. The fictional convention of the commercial spot was kept and for the Paralympics in Sochi in 2014 Samsung prepared a 3-episode series (What’s Your Problem? Sport Doesn’t Care. Sochi 2014. Paralympic Games) with disabled competitors; also with Poles.

During both the Olympic Games, as well as the Paralympics a famous legless competitor from the Republic of South Africa Oscar Pistorius appeared in London. He had to fight his way legally to be able to compete with able-bodied competitors. In order to participate actively in this prestigious competition

he had to get the Olympic minimum. Pistorius starred in many commercials where his lack of limbs is not hidden (he himself tells about the loss of his legs), but the focus is shifted onto his determination and a fighting spirit, strength and physical fitness. These are both commercials of sports supplements, such as Powerade drink (Pistorius Oscar—Bring it on), as well as of luxury goods (A Men by Thierry Mugler Fragrance—Oscar Pistorius), having his image on the package and on the bottle; a symbol corresponding with whom Oscar Pistorius became thanks to sport. On the Internet a film in which Pistorius races an Arabian horse in Qatar is often watched (Oscar Pistorius races a horse in Qatar), a country which will be the host of the first winter World Cup, played at the turn of 2022-2023, what is a sensation in the history of football.

Oscar Pistorius appeared in a series of Nike commercials. One of the most intriguing seems to be “The Human Chain” (Nike Presents—Human Chain) where multiplied, painful falls of athletes illustrate the fact that competitors don’t succeed every time. Still, thanks to stamina keeping up the spirit they get up and win (Pistorius being the best example). Nike’s commercial with a symptomatic title “My Body Is My Weapon,” where images can be associated with being “faster than a bullet,” was withdrawn from public circulation after Pistorius had shot his fiancée. The commercial is even more popular on the Internet. Pistorius isn’t the only disabled athlete in Nike campaigns. Another commercials’ hero is Rohan Maria Murphy, Paralympics athlete, wrestler with extraordinary motor abilities (Rohan Murphy Nike Commercial). He trains and competes with fully fit competitors too.

## Conclusion

The research of cultural phenomenon such as advertising campaigns and public service ads and socially involved adverts and commercial clips associated with global sports events, constitute rarity among theories about physical culture. The results of some research conducted by representatives of cultural and social sciences, haven’t been widely presented in sports periodicals up to now. The influence of mass media on social life is well-known and described in literature on the subject, however, it has only recently started to be used on a large scale for breaking barriers and stereotypes associated with disability via sports shows. It was exemplified in media’s great interest in the Paralympics, but only since Beijing in 2008. A crucial breakthrough in showing the disabled contestants sports struggle took place in London in 2012 and was connected with media uproar caused by Oscar Pistorius. Interest in sport of the disabled, backed up by commercials, was visible in Sochi in 2014, although it was reduced by Russian-Ukrainian conflict (vide: Radziwinowicz 2014) during the break between Olympic and Paralympics games.

Sociologist Steinley D. Eitzen said: “Sport reflects society. It suffers from the same complaints which consume the society in which it functions” (Eitzen 1981:412). Media constitute a mirror, where reality is reflected, however, in a culturally transformed way. Sometimes the reflection is astigmatic or fabricated, it often is an element of social engineering. The fact that the world is different to how it directly appears to our eyes, is known not only to philosophers – *esse est percipi*, as Georg Berkeley propagated—but also

to sports and television commentators (Gwózdź 2003; Goban-Klas 2011; Bauer and Chudziński 2012).

In the analyzed advertisements associated with global sports events, a three kinds of tendencies can be noticed. The first most emphatically manifests itself in the USA and is connected with disciplines to which Americans react most animatedly; above all with American football. Super Bowl finals direct and rivet the attention on consumption being a football fan's custom, making it almost compulsory. If crucial social issues appear in commercials broadcasted at that time, such as physical activity, disability or old age (but, what is symptomatic, not obesity) and health, they are still connected with commerce. With commerce "dressed" in patriotic and socially responsible "robes," but despite everything with consumption, imputed as an "American lifestyle." In the USA commercials presenting "cultic" sports, such as baseball, American football, basketball, and ice hockey, strengthen the real or imaginary image of the "real American," a tough guy who knows, what is good and how to get it.

The second type of commercials are those broadcasted during global sports events—such as the Euro, the World Cup, the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games—by world concerns and such supranational organizations as UEFA, FIFA, IOC. Those commercials are marked by supranationalism and universalism, which are manifested in images and the way of their transmission. They are "glocal" (global and local) in a sense that they administer and present supranational values locally, using social actors recognizable worldwide such as celebrities (David Beckham), disabled sportsmen

(Nick Vujicic, Oscar Pistorius, Stephen Hawking), important social figures (Nobel Peace Prizes winners, famous sports judges). Although the main purpose of each commercial is to increase the consumption (concerns and institutions are fixed on multiplying profits) they also strike tender strings to which the spectators are sensitive. Local flavor (colors of the host country, flags, characteristic objects such as national stadiums) is conveyed in them like a chorus, however, they avoid deeper commitment, references to conflicts or social issues. In the World Cup 2014 commercials there's no poverty, favelas, corruption, crime, though these problems persist in Brazil in street demonstrations brutally dispersed by the police. The world presented in these commercials is an ideal one, festive, Utopian: a timeless party of light-hearted and happy people prevails. These advertisements could be shown everywhere and always, not only during sporting events but also other important social events, for instance anniversaries and public holidays.

The third type of commercials, including the commercial ones, constitute the socially involved. They are "vivid sociology": focused on problems of physical activity, diseases of civilization, fitness, old age, health. Those socially sensitive adverts carry out the "mission" and are a certificate of social responsibility of concerns and organizations which broadcast them. Irony, humor and jokes are used there; the spectators are knowingly "winked at," they are sent a message of what they are and what they should be like. VISA commercials are an example of this. They show how, under the influence of physical activity (and credit cards), it is possible to change the life for better; in spite of illnesses,



excess weight, disability, old age. A similar mechanism of content transmission runs through UEFA and FIFA campaigns. Many countries apply this type of commercials—which teach through fun and play—as part of their governmental programs. The commercials are used with the help of mass media, including interactive internet media. Mass media, reaching a huge amount of spectators, are a powerful means of communication and transmission. They give a chance to change the way we spend leisure time and push us in the direction of the desirable, healthy lifestyle. Psychologist Wiesław Łukaszewski, summarizing the strategies of escapes from death through the compulsive sports activity, seems to be right when he writes: “(...) interest in one’s appearance becomes a civil duty in a way. Beauty constitutes a part of personal, and in a way also social, capital” (Łukaszewski 2014: 24; Łukaszewski 2011; Łuszczynska 2011; Sahaj 2010; 2013b; 2017).

Non-commercial actions, campaigns and socially responsible commercials appoint a set category which shows the given country and its society. Global sports events focusing the attention of billions of spectators from the entire world, are able to show both the culture and the cross section of the given society. Many totalitarian countries—China, Korea, or Russia—wish to organize very costly global sporting events, hoping that thanks to them it will show their “human face” to the world and thus they will be able to change negative and stereotyped ideas associated with them. Russia is a special example, a country which with a sense of the world power status during the Olympics or after them invades weaker countries; as it did in 2014.

In 2012 Great Britain appeared as a modern country, but with traditions, in which people of all races and faiths can live freely. While revolutionizing transmission concerning the disabled, it changed current standards. During Paralympic Games in Sochi Samsung made another paradigmatic turn-about, “demythologizing” Paralympic sportsmen and giving them the human, existential dimension. Samsung kept to this convention during the next Paralympic Games, for example, in PyeongChang 2018, and Toyota deepened it and extended with autobiographical motifs of disabled athletes in the campaign “Start Your Impossible.” Thanks to such actions, social groups which are discriminated and pushed back to the margin of the social life, have a chance of the increased participation in sport. Sociologist Klaus Heinemann was right when he wrote at the end of the 20th century that in post-modernist European societies “(...) elderly people, women, representatives of lower social classes, of ethnic minorities, foreign workers, disabled people” will definitely appear in sport (Heinemann 1999:81).

In a short time mass media reaches billions of people worldwide, they not only broadcast but also design, as well as change the world. Thus a heavy social responsibility rests with public media and sports organizations. They can get the discriminated or marginalized social actors out of non-existence and ensure their “visibility.” They can help to break barriers and widespread stereotypes. Sport on every level—both amateur and professional—becomes a universal surface of integration and the interpersonal communication, helping in crossing borders and breaking cultural and social barriers.

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## Aktywność fizyczna, sprawność i zdrowie w reklamach największych imprez sportowych świata

**Abstrakt:** Celem artykułu jest prezentacja internetowych i telewizyjnych kampanii reklamowych oraz spotów społecznych emitowanych podczas globalnych imprez sportowych, takich jak: Super Bowl w USA, igrzyska olimpijskie i igrzyska paraolimpijskie oraz mistrzostwa świata i mistrzostwa Europy rozgrywane w piłce nożnej. W badaniu fenomenu reklam zastosowano metodę jakościową w postaci analizy zawartości/treści filmów, traktowanych jako specyficzne teksty kultury współczesnej będące elementem szerszego dyskursu związanego ze sportem – ważnym składnikiem ponowoczesnej rzeczywistości społecznej. Masowe media są dziś uniwersalnym językiem komunikacji globalnego świata. Ciężą na nich również, przynajmniej na części z nich, pewne obowiązki społeczne, czego przejawem jest emisja reklam dotyczących niepełnosprawności, mobilizujących do aktywnego, zdrowego stylu życia i ucieczki przed chorobami cywilizacyjnymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** aktywność fizyczna, media masowe, niepełnosprawność, reklama, sport, zdrowie