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**IMPACT OF NEGATIVE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS
ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION
(COGNITION, EMOTIONS AND VOTING BEHAVIOR)**

Abstract:

Negative political advertising and its effectiveness has always been the concern of not only political scientists, but also sociologists and marketing experts. This specific form of advertising is also increasingly used in the Czech political environment. The author focused on the answers to such questions as: what are the effects of this form of political advertising from the perspective of persuasive linear models, which are actually based on cognition, emotion and conative/voting behavior. Based both on international research carried out in this area and facts from Czech republic, he notes that voters perceive this form of advertising as one that offers them more information, attracts a greater degree of attention and more trust than in the case of positive advertising. Taking into account emotional effects, this form of political advertising is often followed by disgust, fear and other negative reactions. These are, however, strong incentives that subsequently bring some negative effects in voter`s conative/behavioral activities. These include in particular the reluctance to vote, negative public sentiment and escalating political cynicism. In the evaluation of the effectiveness of negative political campaigns what should also be taken into account is their cultural environment. What could be effective in the US may not be very effective in countries with different cultural values shaped their historical development and by existing cultural dimensions of these countries.

Key words:

political campaign, negative political campaign, political advertising, negative advertising

Introduction

Marketing communications affect almost all areas of our life - economic, social, educational, cultural, and last but not least, the political one. Political advertising is a very specific area of marketing communications. It uses all the theoretical concepts of advertising (persuasion, engagement, repetition, etc., and also uses some strategies and tactics of comparative advertising) but has its distinctive characteristics. In many cases political advertising could be characterized as specific form of comparative advertising. For example, this particular ad form emphasizes the superiority of one brand over another, in political advertising one candidate over his challenger. On the other hand, the main aim of negative advertising campaign is to dissuade potential voters from voting for a rival candidate, to a lesser extent this approach concerns comparison, and certainly not positively tuned information (Merrit 1984: 27-37).

The **main objective** of this article is to evaluate the impact of negative political campaigns on three basic categories of linear persuasion models used in advertising theory to express effectiveness of advertising, e.g. cognitive, affective and conative aspects of communication. Besides this main objective an additional **goal** has been set, and this includes defining possible impact of these campaigns on society, especially in the field of voting, but also confidence in politics as such. These goals are based on the analysis of already published facts and results relevant to the topic (both Czech and foreign) research in the field of marketing communications. Their summarization was aimed at the creation of more or less critical look at the effectiveness of negative political campaigns. The paper is based on a descriptive research focused on a deeper and more detailed look at the issue from the perspective of three basic categories of measuring advertising effectiveness, i.e. the cognitive, affective and conative components. Given the theoretical nature of the paper more or less theoretical methods have been used, i.e. the analysis and synthesis of findings from research of secondary sources, induction and deduction, generalization and comparison of the situation of negative political advertising in Czech Republic and abroad.

The issue of elections and political advertising is a very specific area of marketing and marketing communications. In political marketing the “seller” is a political party, and respectively, its candidates. “Customers” are represented by the voters. Voters buy the product that political party offers. The main tool used by political parties before the elections is advertising, in this case the election campaign. Czech voter had many opportunities to see both on domestic and foreign political scene (recently there have been two prominent cases - Brexit and presidential elections in the US), the ever-increasing use of various forms

of negative political campaigns. Efforts to reduce the credibility of political opponents in the form of insults, of pointing out opponents real or virtual weaknesses, both in terms of his/her abilities and professional performance, as well as in personal and moral matters, is as old as elections themselves. However, today, unfortunately, this specific form has become a normal part of the political struggle, where “negativity” in the form of direct attacks on political opponents and the presentation of false arguments and facts is a growing trend that has become more sophisticated.

Negative political advertising, like the comparative advertising and other advertising forms, are more or less an American “invention” and acceptance of these forms and tactics, not only in the US but also in Europe, including the Czech Republic shows a certain shift of political competition to more aggressive, individualistic and masculine approaches. The question is whether strategies and tactics, which can be successful in the US, can effectively operate in other, culturally different countries. The US is strongly individualist, masculine culture which can be characterized by direct, explicit communication. In Europe, this cannot be said about Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands but also about the countries of the former eastern bloc, for example Czech Republic. In the first two cases, the countries can be characterized as individualistic, but very feminine cultures, in case of post-soviets countries, these have undergone a very specific development in the second half of the 20th century and could be characterized as less individualistic and in case of the Czech Republic more feminine. In the US, any negative political publicity is controlled by an independent body and the name of real sponsor must be published and if it stays hidden, this has strongly negative consequences for the sponsor. There is a considerable benevolence in this area in Czech Republic, wording of the law in this area is very vague and more or less the law only appeals to a decent and correct behavior of political competition. In this article, the author does not intend to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of negative political campaigns from political science point of view.

Theoretical background

Research aimed at the effectiveness of negative political campaigns began over thirty years ago, i.e. in the mid 80s of the last century. Researchers who began to deal with these problems came most of all from the field of political science, communications, psychology and marketing. From the perspective of marketing communication what have been mainly studied were: recall of the ads, used appeals, intention to vote, boomerang effect, cynicism towards the political system (which are more or less the consequences), and other variables

like tactics used in a negative political campaign, its styles, etc. Gradually three basic classifications of negative political campaigns have been defined:

1. **Direct comparative advertising** comparing the candidates and their attitudes on current issues. This represents direct comparative advertising, (our goal is to create nonprofit hospitals, but you want to privatize them).
2. **Indirect comparative advertising**, which is not a direct negative confrontation. We can meet with them in the media or various TV or radio programs, talk shows etc., in which candidates explain and defend their attitudes towards various political issues. The principle is that in these discussions some sensitive issue can be set that can arise negative (from the perspective of voters) opinions and attitudes of candidates. As an example we can use a television debate of candidates on the rather sensitive issue of migration in Europe.
3. **Direct attack ad** in which one candidate (respectively his sponsor) directly attacks the rival, but the potential risk of this step is hidden in so called “boomerang effect” or “victim effect” as this form can backfire and hurt the sponsor or source of the information. The aim of such a campaign is scandalous mudslinging of political rival (Hartman 2000).

Negative political advertising can be targeted at either candidate’s image or to political issues and opinions. In the first case, the personal abilities and properties of the candidate are attacked, respectively, his/her personal qualities, ability to lead people or manage their performance, any other professional qualities, or his/her real or imaginary misdeeds, interests, respected values, public or private statements etc. In the latter case, personal views on current political issues, political attitudes - past and present, plans and visions, that candidate publicly had presented etc. (Chou & Lien 2010: 818). Discussion which concerns some controversial results of negative political advertising has been open recently. Most frequently mentioned consequences include particularly:

- a) **Boomerang effect** when the injured party is not so much an opponent stricken by negative advertising, but the attacking subject, and it does not matter if it would be candidate or candidate sponsor. Voters may not perceive these attacks very positively, they may be viewed as inappropriate, aggressive personal attacks on human personality. It can also be part of a culture that direct attack on any rival means unwanted conflict situation. In these cultures, direct, explicit communication is also considered unworthy and unwanted.
- b) **Victim syndrom** when voters sympathize with the victim of the attack, as negative publicity creates a feeling of compassion for the victim. For examples one can look at the case of Czech EU Commissioner

Vera Jourova. She was previously accused of an economic crime and convicted. She lost her family, during her prison her apartment had been burgled (by an unidentified burglar), her daughter became seriously ill. It has been proven that she was falsely accused. Subsequently rehabilitated, she entered politics and her fate was the best recommendation that ensured her a prompt political way up.

- c) **Double impairment** when the negative publicity raises equally negative attitudes both towards attacking and attacked subjects.
- d) **The effect of fulfilling the intention** of negative advertising, i.e. damage the rival candidate.
- e) **The effect of demobilization**, which reflects the view that negative political advertising can strongly foster distrust and consequently the apathy towards politicians and political parties and distrust of democracy as such, leading consequently to a high degree of cynicism and reluctance to vote (Bradová et al. 2008: 8; Chou & Lien 2010: 818).

There is also another direction of research. Especially academic research focuses on the main areas of the effects of political advertising. Such research is mainly based on a hierarchy of effects models based on persuasion as the main means of changes in attitudes. These areas of advertising research are thinking or **cognitive effects** of negative advertising, **affection** as its emotional component and **conative/behavioral** component.

Cognitive effects of negative political advertising

The cognitive component of persuasion is the first step, in accordance with the linear model of the effects of advertising, followed by affective/emotional part that comes from our thinking. We have to learn something, e.g. we must think about obtained information so that we can positively or negatively respond. A related recall of this information is given by the strength of the ad, which is influenced by many factors, for example, by attention of the recipient, his/her involvement in the issue of elections, power of its appeal, repetition of the ad, i.e. by so called ad pressure etc. Ignoring this cognitive component of attitudes ultimately means that we do not pay attention to the first and very important aspect of persuasive effect of negative political advertising. Its main aim is not to highlight the positive qualities of the candidate through the information contained in the advertisement, but to reduce the credibility of the rival. People get their information from many sources. These can be news in the media, discussions in pre-election programs, meetings, WOM, personal experience with some of the candidates and of course political advertising itself.

Research in this area is mostly focused on whether the negative publicity will give more information to recipients, i.e. whether it has stronger cognitive effects than positive publicity or media reports.

Patterson and McClure's research has shown that (in the case of the US presidential election) voters have learned from the ads roughly twice as much information related to electoral issues than from traditional reports (Patterson & McClure 1976). The research, which was conducted by Thorson et al. confirmed that exposure to political advertising increases in the target group the knowledge of political issues, but according to this research the positive publicity outweighs in the ability the negative one (Thorson et al. 2000: 16-27). Bradová by contrast (with reference to ten major foreign research projects conducted in the years 1991-2004) says that the opposite is true. She says that due to the fact that negative advertising is geared more programmatically, it gives voters more specific, factual information and, moreover, a better spreading one. Appeals of negative ads are more specific, TV commercials are more dynamic. On the other hand, (and the Czech election campaigns confirmed it) the positive claims in political ads are more or less vague, dull, too general, sometimes stupid and underestimate the intelligence of voters (Bradová et al. 2008: 38). Robideaux analyzed TV political commercials and says that viewers are skeptical to positive advertising, which is mostly based on extolling the advantages of the promoted candidate (Czech proverb says, that "Self praise stinks"). In the case of negative advertising the situation is different. Television viewers had more confidence in TV commercials. They are also increasingly confident that they provide more relevant information. On the other hand, they argue that such advertising leads simultaneously to a greater voter cynicism, and greater distrust in politicians. Voters cease to believe that the politicians are able to address and resolve their daily troubles, they believe that their interests are primarily self-centered as they try to achieve their own personal goals. What is more, they are ready to act unethically for the sake of achieving these goals. Not only Robideaux, but a number of other renowned sociologists speak today of a crisis of elites, their remoteness from common people, and even about the serious threat to the whole democratic system. Cynicism, according to him, has not yet reached saturation point, but we are already very close to it (Robideaux 2013: 74).

Another survey, which focused on the status of candidates and suitability of negative political advertising brought interesting results. Candidates were divided according to their position in the election into four basic categories: leaders vs. laggards, and incumbents vs. challengers. Leader has the great advantage due to the so-called bandwagon effect - the voters look more positively at him than at his opponents who do not yet have such support. What is important, however, the leader can afford to make use of negative political

advertising. In his case, voters are more tolerant than in the case of an outsider who does not have such support. Simultaneously, his claims do not give rise to strong reactions accompanied by counterarguments and do not cause such a negative response, as in the case of outsiders (in the current Czech circumstances it relates to ANO movement and its leader Babis). Furthermore, it was found that negative political advertising of incumbents is also seen in a less negative light and followed cognitive elaboration induces a stronger response than in the case of challenger. Furthermore, it was stated that if a candidate is both the leader and the incumbent, his negative advertising against opponents is perceived in a much more tolerant way (Chou & Lien 2010: 828-829). Current Czech president Zeman gets from this perspective a great advantage in relation to future rivals in the next presidential election.

Emotions and negative political advertising

Many experts, mostly with economic or technical education, agree that people behave rationally and pragmatically like “homo economicus”. Effective advertising is, according to them, primarily based on rational, cognitive processing of communication, which should include strong and rational arguments and facts. The conviction of a man deciding mainly on rational arguments was challenged in the late 80s of the last century due to new discoveries in the field of psychology and neurology. According to them, the fundamental base of our decision making is emotions, even though most people do not even consider it. The importance of emotions in advertising is increasingly researched and recognized and ultimately used. Generally speaking, people think and people feel. Thinking cannot be separated from emotions and vice versa. In the process of persuasion both thinking and emotions play an important part, even though at first glance they are scarcely compatible components. Petty & Cacioppo more or less confirmed this statement in their ELM model. Recipients of political advertising create a certain relationship to it, to its content, design etc. The quality and depth of this relationship is determined by the subjective state of the recipient of ad which reflects internal and external stimuli. These states are referred to as emotions and feelings. Emotions that arise as a result of human activity affect other activities, their organization and dynamics. This is valid even in the case of negative political advertising. Emotional system allows, inter alia, a better allocation of our attention. While positive emotions are used in advertising in order to increase the attractiveness and develop a positive attitude toward advertising and candidate, the aim of negative one is to create the impression of a big problem. Emotional response of consumers to the communication based on the influence of negative emotions then depends not only

on the content and form of relevant advertising message, but also on the extent to which this statement is or is not considered as a means of intentional manipulation. Response to the advertising message is influenced by a whole range of personal characteristics, such as the current mood. While the professional community is working on the assumption that positive appeal raises persuasive impact of the advertising message, in the case of negative emotions there has not been such a simple relationship proved in connection with the advertising.

For example, Tellis, in case of irritating ads, assumes the dual potential effect: either greater irritation leads to a higher resistance to advertising and therefore has an overall negative effect or **irritating advertising** (compared with neutral) leads to greater attention, better recall, or even distraction from possible arguments. The degree of irritation tends to be higher in the case of educated recipients with higher income, and in the case of men (Tellis 2004: 149-152). A specific category under the negative influence of emotions in relation to advertising is **disgust**. Expert's interest in disgust effects of advertising is rather sparse, but it can be identified in a broader context of irritating or controversial ads, or when one tries to describe the impact of negative emotions in advertising on recipients. The main justification for the use of shocking and irritating advertising content is to attract attention and subsequently to achieve a better recall. Disgust as emotion may not exist by itself, because it is closely connected with emotions of anger, contempt or fear. Shimp and Stuart identified some categories of ads that elicit disgust: disgusting ad showing disfigurement or grotesque scenes, sexually-oriented, respectively sexist campaigns, animal and human dung etc. Their list of revolting ads includes also negative political advertising (Shimp & Stuart 2004: 43-53). In terms of this kind of negative political advertising in Czech environment one could consider some billboards pointing to the corruption of politicians from traditional political parties, where the sponsor is new political movement ANO declaring that "all trying to steal."

Use of **fear** stems from the conviction that for behavioral change, the mere presentation of information is not a sufficient stimulus, that also a certain degree of stimulation and activation of the body is needed. Ads based on the effect of fear have the persuasive effect that evokes an emotional response to a threat that expresses or implies danger. The aim of such action is to change the attitude or behavior which would induce anxiety (for example, the recently used fear of terrorism-related immigration). Fear is a basic, very strong emotion with negative valence accompanied by high levels of arousal and neuro - vegetative manifestations. It represents our response to the presence or anticipation of danger or threat. Danger does not have to be real, but must be perceived by the recipient as such. Research has shown that when recipients are exposed to negative political advertising, what very often occurs simultaneously is the so called

startle response (startle effect). The effect we can feel while watching a film with drastic scenes of fighting animals and so on. This reaction is accompanied by physiological responses, for example involuntary blinking, sweating hands etc. It is not surprising that negative physiological reactions in turn lead to the avoidance of further exposure to these stimuli and in final form to the growth of apathy and to the cynicism which in real life is manifested for example in reluctance to participate in elections.

What impact can the above mentioned emotions have on the effectiveness of negative political ads? Bradley et al. (2008) found that negative political ads are better memorized but their details are not remembered as well as in the case of positive ads. Certainly, an interesting finding was the fact that recipients can better recall negative political advertisement as well as contained claims, even some claims that had not been contained in the ads. One of the reasons for better recall is called negativity bias, a tendency that people perceive negative information in a stronger way than positive one. It must be pointed out that recall is very individual and depends on a number of other variables like individual attention, his/her commitment etc. Bradley's research also showed a higher rate of affective arousal, accompanied by physiological negative arousal. It proved that the startle response is accompanied by a reflexive physiological responses showing the arousal of aversive recipient's incentive system that emerges in a situation where a person is exposed to an emergency situation and tries to avoid it.

Behavioral effects

The relationship between negative political advertising and voter behavior is complex and certainly should not be labeled as the only one, or the most important factor which decisively influences the behavior of voters. It is, however, one part of the complex and colorful mosaic shaping their behaviour. Bradley says that this advertising undoubtedly attracts attention or even the interest of the recipient, but does not affect too much of his/her final behavior. The resulting aversive motivation leads, with high probability, to a negative attitude towards such advertising (Aad), candidate, the opponent or even the entire political process (Bradley et al. 2008: 125). Accomplished researches of the behavior of voters are not entirely clear. Probably the best answers to these questions were given thanks to a research conducted by Thorson and her team (Thorson et al. 2000: 19). These American academics found that negative political advertising is an important factor of disinterest in the election, but it concerns most of all the group of voters with lower involvement, i.e. an interest in political issues. For voters with high involvement or senior voters this effect

had not been proven. Furthermore, they also studied the effect of the format and design of advertising on the public mood in terms of social emotions. The research confirmed the hypothesis that negative political advertising has resulted in the increase of negative public sentiment. The longer negative ads are in the air, the more negative mood of the public. And this concerns not only interest in voting, but the overall circumstances in the country. Similarly, the research also confirmed a direct impact such campaigns have on voters' cynicism in the sense of apathy and alienation from public issues (Thorson et al. 2000: 19). They lead to low confidence in democratic political processes and to increased preferences of parties and movements offering simple populist solutions. One can (with a certain degree of simplification) say that politicians of traditional parties, their decisions, action, behavior and communication influence and affect the overall voters disillusionment, bad mood in society and the disintegration of the traditional understanding of the functioning of a democratic society. The gradual decrease of interest of voters in the elections is shown by some simple statistics of turnout in the last three elections in the Czech Republic, despite more powerful (and more expensive) political campaigns of all parties.

Turnout in the last three elections in the Czech Republic:

Regional:	40% (2008)	37% (2012)	34% (2016)
Parliamentary:	64.5% (2006)	63% (2010)	59.5% (2013)

As mentioned in the introduction, cultural factors play one of the major roles in the acceptance of negative political advertising. Negative political advertising involves elements of comparative advertising, which is typical for an American advertising style. It is based on assertiveness and individualism. American culture can also (Hofstede's dimensions) be characterized as masculine, individualistic culture with low uncertainty avoidance (de Mooij 2010: 257-260). Czech society has undergone its specific development throughout the 20th century. This development shaped the cultural values of this society in a significant way. It is more feminine (in the sense of assertiveness, however, not in the sense of gender equality and differences), less individualistic, involving great effort to avoid any uncertainty. These values significantly differ from the cultural values of the American society. Direct conflict is in the Czech culture not well received. Also excessive praise for itself is inconsistent with the Czech values that emphasize rather frugality and egalitarianism. Negative political advertising rather invokes the Czechs backlash in the form of a boomerang effect or sympathy for the victims. Use of American advisors and experts in planning election campaigns by established parties in the past did not pay off very much.

Summary and discussion

Article describes, on the basis of international research and Czech reality, the effects of negative political campaigns, which recently the Czech voters can face more and more often. Negative political advertising is a very specific area of marketing communications. Its result may not always be just the tarnishing of the reputation of a political opponent and thus the gaining of an advantage at the polls. Among the risks for sponsors of such campaigns we can find the so-called boomerang effect, which damages the sponsor rather than the opponent. Another possible effect can be called victims' effect, when voters sympathize with contested subject, who gets more sympathy, which is actually the opposite outcome to the intentions of the sponsor. Another undesirable effect may be the fact that the campaign ultimately damages both parties, and according to the results of elections corresponds with the proverb "Two dogs fight for a bone, and a third runs away with it". The makers of political advertising campaigns try to avoid these adverse effects of negative advertising through anonymous ads or the sponsor known but mostly not associated with the candidate or his/her official sponsor. The author has, however, focused on the effects of negative political ads from hierarchical linear models of persuasion point of view and their recognized effects: cognitive, affective and conative/behavioral.

Research of cognitive effects showed that the negative political campaigns in comparison with the positive ones are perceived as those that give to the recipients more information, get a greater degree of attention and inspire greater confidence. Not surprisingly, positive campaigns often overly praise and extoll the qualities and achievements of the candidates, and this is often done in so foolish way that it seems that these ads rather underestimate the intelligence of the recipient. Especially in the Czech environment, which is rather suspicious towards exaggeration, praising him or herself and striving too much excel is not received positively, it rather brings distrust or even derision. The fact that these kinds of ads are better remembered is a result of the so-called negative bias, a tendency of people to perceive negative information more strongly than the positive ones. This perception is very individual and depends on many factors, exposure to the subject, his/her attention, sex, age, education, and many others variables, not only demographic characteristics. The position of the candidates must also be taken into account. It makes a difference whether the relevant candidate is a leader and is in a position of power/authority holder. These persons have an advantage over outsiders and challengers. Their use of negative political advertising against their political opponents is more easily tolerated and does not cause such a degree of negative backlash, as is in the case of challengers and outsiders.

Research in the sphere of psychology and neuroscience demonstrated, that people do not act on the basis of rational arguments, in fact the fundamental base of our decisions are our emotions. Emotional response to the communication based on negative emotions and its impact depends not only on the content and form of relevant message, but also on the extent to which this statement is or is not considered as a means of intentional manipulation. In case of negative ads that irritate recipients, it may indicate a twofold effect. The resistance to the negative ad in case of excessive irritation will appear or vice versa, some irritation can lead to greater attention and better recall. The degree of irritation tends to be higher in the case of educated recipients with higher income, and in the case of men. Negative advertising can also lead some recipients to disgust. These ads are better recalled, but on the other hand they can also lead to deep frustration resulting in effort to avoid similar things, such as elections and voting. Negative advertising can also cause fear. Fear is a basic, very strong emotion with negative valence accompanied by high levels of arousal and neurovegetative manifestations. Research has shown that in case of exposure to negative political advertising the recipients can often face the so called startle effect. This reaction is accompanied by physiological reactions, e.g. involuntary blinking, sweating hands or others.

Not surprisingly, the negative physiological reactions lead to the avoidance of further exposure to these stimuli and finally to the growth of apathy and cynicism which is manifested in reluctance to participate in the next elections. The resulting aversive motivation also leads, with high probability, to a negative attitude towards such advertising, candidate, opponent or even the entire political process. Negative political advertising is becoming an important factor of disinterest in the election, but it is mostly true for a group of voters with lower involvement, i.e. lower interest in politics. For voters with high involvement (for example, mostly seniors from the age point of view) this effect has not been proven. Furthermore, there are also studies which measure the effect of negative advertising on the public mood in terms of the social emotions. This research confirmed the hypothesis that negative political advertising has resulted in an increase in negative public sentiment. Negative political campaigns thus intensify the negative mood of the public and not only in relation to the elections, but to the overall political, social and economic situation in the country. Similarly, the research also confirmed a direct impact of negative campaigns to voters' cynicism. The fact how negative advertising influences the recipients is also culturally determined. Negative political advertising was invented in the US and conforms more or less to American cultural dimensions. That does not mean that what can work in one country, can work in the same way in another, for example in Czech Republic. Still, political parties hire for planning political

campaigns experts from the United States who are actually experts on negative political advertisements. This step seemed to be not very effective in the Czech Republic in the past, example of two formerly very powerful Czech political parties, the CSSD (left) and the ODS (right and conservative) can be used as good evidence for this assertion. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account the specific conditions of historical development.

Moreover, it is necessary to take into account the specific conditions of historical development. The development of civic society in Czech Republic in the last 25 years has been successful only to a lesser extent. This is for example reflected in the fact that people do not want to enter actively into the public sphere, even in the form of participation in the elections. Politics in the nation of cottagers and gardeners is being taken as something almost indecent and rude. "And politics and its general issues are business of professional politicians". These all also lead to a lower interest in public affairs and consequently a higher level of corruption in case of some politicians who feel that they are not under control of the public. This brings even deeper mistrust towards politics in general and the governance of public affairs and deepens the feeling of general disgust. Our society has a greater tendency to atomize due to low trust in others, to strangers and all unknown things. It is primarily the result of historical development in Czech lands from 1939 to 1989. This is quite cleverly utilized by some politicians and their activities and negative appeals inducing fear, disgust or vice versa enthusiasm for simple and "effective" solutions proposed by them. The result is an even greater atomization of our society with the phenomena of profound passivity, disillusionment with democratic organizations, with signs of the decline of decency and human virtues. Negative political advertising is only one small part of this negative trend but it supports it. One can say that politicians and traditional political parties with their negativity, which regales their political opponents, only deepen the current social crisis and dig themselves a grave. Every single election confirms this conclusion. Traditional parties gradually lose their former voters. So, overall evaluation of the effectiveness of negative advertising campaigns is therefore necessary to evaluate their overall impact on the development of society as a whole.

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