

## ADVERTISING BETWEEN RULES AND CREATIVITY

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*Where would the world be without advertising? Stuart Henderson Britt strongly believed in it. He said: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing, but she doesn't." The work reviews the evolution of advertising, highlighting the uncontested part played by it within organizations and society in general and it focuses on an essential element of it, that is the advertising print. The purpose of this paperwork is to highlight the necessary rules for the making of a quality print, with the help of a comparative study on prints of eight organizations. The print represents an exercise of writing and design, in words and images, for transmitting the advertising message. The fulfillment of this task depends on the perspicacity, imagination and the creativity of the maker.*

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### 1. Introduction

#### Advertising. Evolution and Tendencies

Advertising has brought about huge sales to many organizations, determining an unprecedented development. After advertising, companies such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Adidas, Xerox had a spectacular evolution, to such an extent that people mistake the name of these companies with products of that type. In certain circumstances, advertising can lower prices. Without advertising, your preferred magazine might cost around 400.000 lei, instead of 70.000 lei. Advertising has its history and a predictable development, in tight connection with traders' sales needs. Thus, the first forms of advertising have been certified from the times of Babylon and ancient Rome and they have consisted of different signs painted on buildings' walls. The beginnings of the outdoor advertising date back in ancient Egypt where tradesmen placed all along the road pieces of stone where they were describing their products. Probably the most efficient advertising method, in the absence of the press, has been the "shouted" one. Merchants hired citizens who would make known the quality of the products by shouting. Their correspondent in the modern world can be found in the person of the radio announcer or TV broadcaster.

In the same time with the invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in 1453, the promotion of products and services has acquired new dimensions. Advertisements and promotional flier have appeared – a promotional method successfully used also nowadays. The first advertisement appeared in 1472 and announced the sale of a prayer book, and in 1704 on the American ground, advertisements were published for the first time in a local newspaper (Boston News Letter). The predecessor of advertising agencies was the store of an American from Pennsylvania – Volney B. Palmer. His agents would contract advertising spaces in newspaper which were sold to customers at retail prices. The first agency to introduce commission for the performed services was that of Francis Ayer – N.W. Ayer & Son, agency that exists also nowadays.

In Romania, the first advertising agency was founded in 1880 by David Adania and carried his name. The first products that benefited from an intense promotion were medicines. The budgets spent for advertising reached the amount of 50,000 \$ a year. It is in this period that appears the concept of brand. A special example is Coca-Cola that promoted its products on fans, souvenirs, trays, calendars, becoming the most famous brand in the world nowadays.

In 1920, the format of advertising agency takes shape – marketing and copywriting strategies, market and demographical studies and a better personalized advertising for target appear then. At the end of the 20's the appearance of the radio creates new promotion opportunities. The first "star" used in a commercial was the Queen Maria of Romania who appeared in an advertisement for "Pond's Cold" cream in 1924. The queen was known in Europe due to her voluntary work on the battlefield of the World War I.

This type of advertising has proven in time one of the most trustworthy and efficient in the world. While television appeared, new means of spreading advertising have been created. Advertising slots have become in time more and more illustrative and more convincing, and people behind them, more and more inventive. But in the same time, buyers have become more pretentious, wanting not only quality but also exclusivity. For many of them it is not enough if a product is good, it must be personal too, in other words, the fewer the people to have access to it, the better, this determining the appearance of many premium products.

At the opposite, there are ordinary people who buy mass products. Many times the price makes the difference. Actually how good has advertising become? Till where can it go? Today it is able to convince people to buy a product that they do not need. But to make them believe it is essential to them?

At the end of the XX-th century, digital technology has taken possession of the way in which advertising slots are made. Computers print panels. The range of outdoor formats has diversified itself – bus stations, kiosks, airports, displays in big malls, and on taxis.

The new spreading channel of the third millennium commercials is the internet. Invented in 1990 by Tim Berners-Lee, World Wide Web has developed exponentially in the last 15 years, and on-line advertisements like they are visualized today have taken shape in 2002, when there were established some rules for them. As we see, advertising developed a lot the last years and became a true power. Without it many people from top 100 Forbes, of the richest people in the world, would not have exceeded 1 million \$.

## **2. Information**

### **Do Rules Destroy Creativity?**

Successful advertising is that whose goal is not "selling a product", but making consumers believe in it. "Advertising is the ability to sense, interpret ... to put the very heart throbs of a business into type, paper and ink." (Leo Burnett)

Advertising has as goal informing and persuading. Advertising's determining element is the message. The advertising message has the role to attract the audience, keep their attention, and raise interest. Fulfilling this task depends on the maker's perspicacity, imagination and creativity. In the case of prints, these represent an exercise of writing and design, in words and images necessitating considerable painter abilities. For example, in the case of the poster made by the "Agency of Investments and Business" (see annexes) the result is not quite praiseworthy. The poster represents a red "machinery", made of belts, wheels, and buttons, thrown in the middle of a magazine page. Connoisseurs would probably realize the use of this machinery, but the connection between this object and the services performed by that company is hard to imagine. Besides technology, industry, and eventually innovation, what else may an engine suggest, so to have the patience to decipher the note sent by the subordinate to the boss, which constitutes the body text of that ad?

Prints have strict rules of making and composition that must be respected, but they are flexible rules that must serve the purpose – of concentrating the message to transmit and to fit the personality, history, product's characteristics, character, idea to spread.

There has to be a tight connection between image and reality, the responsibility of those who create prints being enormous. That is why the first part of the text, situated at the boundary between truth and exaggeration, is at least awkward, the secretary announcing her boss that the first company to administrate business came out in Romania. KPMG has been offering the same services for many years but probably Aisa people have understood the importance of placing oneself as a road opener and they did not take into consideration the reality. The secretary takes her role much too seriously, she precipitates herself

and forgets grammar rules. What follows is that she sticks after parenthesis a confused “but”, the final result being something of the type: “the first company that administrates business, but doubles profit, production, sales, etc.”. The making of this poster should start with a clear establishing of the object. In this case, an obvious question would be: what is actually the object of this advertisement? Analyzing the number of used characters, the text, the language used in an advertisement of a company on whose hand you are supposed to leave your business entitles us to consider that there are no rules in advertising as long as we get the desired result. But what is the result?

The marketing responsible should ask from a creative product the building of a bridge between the brand and the consumer, and that bridge cannot be built but on deep truths resounding deeply in people’s heart. His role is to find an intuitive language to communicate those truths. The more the language is simple and vibrant, the more that bridge between brand and consumer becomes strong and the creative product disappears in a secondary plan.

There are situations when a company suffers more from execution details than from thinking errors.

Also one of the basic rules for a successful campaign has in view the use of a new concept, of a unique idea, not used by other companies, so that the final product should be different. The print campaign of the Romanian Post draws attention through graphic appearance, advertisements come out of the page, they are different from others but as a concept it is based on an idea taken from another company’s advertisements.

Posters represent the transposition of a classic character (M. Eminescu, I.L. Caragiale, G. Enescu) in a modern world. The first presents M. Eminescu standing next to a Ferrari. The contrast is powerful and the effect is preserved by the contrast between the melancholic look of the character and his attitude of a sly boots. The advertisement brings together two worlds excluding each other and mixes them in an original way. The most important good thing of this campaign is that it spreads the message in a simple and clear manner. Although one of the rules states the compulsoriness of the headline’s existence, in this case, even without, the image

says practically everything to be said. Another rule that must be strictly followed and the Romanian Post observes it, states the necessity of the existence of the company’s logo inside the print. The message is clear, direct, and simple, the idea is interesting, however something does not work. The originality of the pictures, the cold colors, lacking life, limited in range, due to poor technical possibilities of the printing machine have a negative impact on the general aspect.

Another print to get a small mark is that of the ASIBAN insurance company. This time we have a serious violation of a basic rule, namely the one regarding the message the company wants to spread by that print. The lack of a clear message, of elegance, the uninspired making are elements negatively reflecting over the respective brand. The first mistake is that people do not understand what the advertisement promotes. Obviously, it is not one of image, of the insurance company’s attitude. The advertisement is much too connected to car to be a generic insurance ad. And then the RCA and CASCO variants probably remain available. The essence of an advertisement consists in the idea behind it, of what communicates to the target public. The main idea, the theme of the message, the advertising concept is the central point of an advertising campaign. Advertising campaigns resist or not, depending on the power or weakness of the basic concept. The text is placed in a prominent position, probably because we do not understand all from a picture, and this has a negative impact on the composition of the image. The direct, informative advertising can attract people interested in the product or service offered by the organization. This is a happy case. Usually, the public do not search for ads but avoid them. That is why, it is important for an advertisement to draw attention, to come out in front, to have something relevant to say.

In the case of Romtelecom print, the composition is uninspired, with an unrealistic flavor, a blank wall, a dull carpet, a dull water cooler, a new basket panel, all like waiting for a picture. A photo lacking life due to the composition, to unrealistic shadows of the characters, to light, and used colors. The photo’s lack of life definitely kills the advertisement and obviously this thing will influence the target public.

“Home box office”. It was the perfect slogan for HBO. TVR2 comes out with the following headline: “Your little home box office” breaking the rule of differentiation, of novelty element, which surprises in a negative way not only through the closeness of another TV channel slogan, but also through the left-handiness of transposing it into ad. The authors blunder by overcharging the layout with all sort of secondary messages. This way, beside headline, we have other 4 messages, each written with different fonts, with other size, and another way. The first is so obvious that is redundant – “With TVR2, your TV set is a smaller cinema” – the second is a cliché – “The night movie is unique”, the third, an exaggeration – “The best films are on TVR2”. Quality print, lively colors, special paper, a coherent and interesting message, imaginative idea, logo, headline, and all other ingredients at superlative, however distorting the truth, do not save a doubtful product or service.

The two prints from the giant Lafarge Romcim have definitely men as target public, that is why they have chosen message containing erotic connotations. Another basic rule says that every action should harmonize with the communication platform of the organization and be in a direct connection with all the other elements of this one. That is why, to learn more about the communication platform of the organization we have analyzed its web site. We have noticed the coherence in color palette, and at the section regarding cement, we have found the following statement: “The product offer is based on three key words: innovation, quality, diversity”. If they are key words, then they are definitely representative for the whole campaign and we will find them in the whole communication platform. Innovative. Probably. But then the analogy with the slang connotation of “beton” (concrete) and

the remaking of the mythological gearing of Manole have no chance to build a lasting effect in consumers’ mind. Quality. Perhaps. But what about the quality and accuracy of the print? Diversity. Perhaps. But as far as we understood, we have one type of cement good at everything. The direction is good, but has an infantile approach.

### **3. Conclusions**

Advertising consumes a lot of time, effort, and money. That is why, all these must be justified through the effect acquired by the organization, which most of the times it is directly proportional with the impact on the target public. A complete advertising should theoretically contain a title, a subtitle or more, a language, a basic line usually used for the slogan, a logo, an illustration, the product or an image of it, a coupon, a phone number, fax, or web site, an address, and eventually a price. The design of a poster is usually simpler and in the same time, more exciting, a title, an audacious illustration, an idea and something extra. A powerful concept must also benefit from a competent execution. With a little common sense, balance, conciseness, simplicity, legibility, and the essential element – capture of attention, the advertisement should function. It must be seen, memorized, and transmit a true message with an intrinsic value, which would make it truly creative.

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