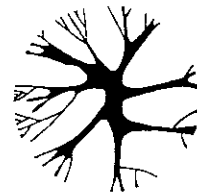


COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS



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Critical Views of Advertising

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a series of very influential thinkers began a strong movement of criticism of advertising. This questioning of advertising led to a deeper questioning of the 'cult of consumerism' which advertising propagates.

Vance Packard in his popular book, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1956) attacked advertising for using the techniques of depth psychology to raise 'subliminal anxieties' and manipulate desires for alcohol, cigarettes and other consumer items. John Kenneth Galbraith, in *The Affluent Society* (1958) pointed out that advertising was encouraging a wasteful consumerism which allowed a small portion of the world's people to use up scarce resources with profligate abandon and destroy the environment in the process. For Herbert Marcuse in *The One-Dimensional Man* (1964) advertising was the means by which a dehumanising technology reached into the inner space of our consciousness and destroyed our freedom.

The criticism of advertising continued to grow during the 1970s and has become a much broader attack on the style of life and worn-out political ideals of advanced industrial societies. The worldwide 'green movement' and peace movement are but two examples. It is also expressed in the desire to protect the non-Western, traditional cultures from the domination of North Atlantic industrial societies.

Currently, there is a new wave of thinking critical of advertising. Some of it attempts a more balanced, complex analysis; some of it is even more radical. This issue reviews some of the more recent, 'new criticism' of advertising.

REVIEW ARTICLE

I: Is Advertising a Conspiracy?

Ronald Berman. *Advertising and Social Change*. (Beverly Hills, CA: London: Sage Publications, 1981).

Ronald Berman and Michael Schudson have recently presented critical evaluations of Packard, Galbraith and Marcuse from the perspective of the 1980s. Both Berman and Schudson themselves question many aspects of advertising, but they are uneasy with facile theories that see big business and advertising as the conspiratorial, manipulative causes of consumerism. They also have doubts about equally facile proposals for rationalistic utopias that hope to reform the "cult of consumerism" by eliminating advertising.

Packard: Motivation Research in Advertising

Schudson points out that Packard was not attacking advertising for being generally untruthful, obnoxious or wasteful of resources, nor does he have a complaint against the institutions of marketing and advertising in a capitalistic society.¹ He was concerned with advertising that "sneaks up on us". Packard himself observed that most advertising does not rely on motivation research or depth psychology at all, but he warned that manipulative motivation research would spread not only in advertising but throughout our society.

Schudson argues, however, that if one studies the inside culture of the advertising world, the aim of research is not manipulation

1. Michael Schudson. "Criticizing the critics of advertising: towards a sociological view of marketing", in *Media, Culture and Society*, 1981, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.3-12.

but marketing. Advertising and marketing are not primarily interested in *creating* needs but in *detecting* consumer needs in order to fit the product, distribution, packaging and advertising to the consumers' self-defined desires.

It may be true that marketing is concerned only with needs that can be satisfied by a marketable product (automobiles rather than economical, efficient mass transit). Advertising's attempt to sell "social image" as well as the product may be repugnant to idealists, but in the marketing world-view this is part of what consumers want. Schudson suggests that if the critics wish to get to the bottom of this they should be less concerned with the symptoms such as manipulative psychological techniques and give more attention to the basic philosophy and practices of marketing.

Galbraith: Advertising Induces Unnecessary Needs

As an economist, Galbraith questioned advertising because it creates artificial demands and thereby throws into confusion the free market laws of supply and demand. When people's needs are spontaneous, original and urgent, they find what they want without the enormously wasteful expenditure to attract attention and persuade.

Schudson considers Galbraith's reasoning faulty because in a large complex market at least some advertising is *information* that a new product is available at a certain price and place. The cost is justified

in terms of saving people the time of search. Even when we know a product is available the repetition on television and other media still has a value such as telling people that this is a large and reliable firm and committing the firm to honor advertised product qualities under threat of consumer protection laws.

The fundamental fallacy of Galbraith, in Schudson's view, is the belief that we can distinguish between essential, subsistence needs and superfluous, culturally-induced needs. All goods come into existence with a cultural meaning and goods always have a function of defining the image and identity of people in that culture. One may believe that advertising is ugly or immoral, but it is difficult to argue that advertising is the prime agent of our wants and even our desires for social image. We must look at the broad historical process that generated Western capitalist culture and examine advertising as one more mechanism for reinforcing the values of that culture.

Berman's doubts about Galbraith are focussed on his proposals for an ideal rational state where there would be no unnecessary productivity and no wasteful spending on advertising. Consumers would be more rational, that is, they would give preference to spiritual, psychological satisfactions rather than materialistic satisfactions. There would also be conservation of resources and the environment and goods would be equitably distributed to meet real needs of all people. Berman heartily endorses this ideal as old as Plato's Republic. But he questions the pessimistic attitude of Galbraith regarding modern productivity and the personal Puritanism in the face of the human desire for progress and betterment symbolised by material goods. In Berman's view the rational society is, by definition, at odds with the real society with its plurality of tastes and interests.

Marcuse: Advertising as Psychological Coercion

Berman considers Galbraith and the philosopher, Marcuse, to be among the most influential American thinkers in the 1960s. Both contributed to the flood of criticism of technology, productivity, consumerism and advertising during the 1960s and early 1970s. For Marcuse, advertising is the means by which the complete mobilisation of a technological, industrial society reaches into the inner space of our consciousness and personal freedom to harness them to its goals. Advertising replaces the natural objects of deeper emotional satisfactions, such as love, with commodities. People find their love and their personal identities in their automobiles, hi-fi sets and kitchen equipment. In the pursuit of consumption, the capacity to be ourselves is snuffed out.

However, Berman questions whether advertising always has such irresistible powers and whether our failures in sexuality or other forms of self-realisation are due to the conspiracy of technological society.

Berman finds more realism in Christopher Lasch's critique of advertising in *The Culture of Narcissism*.² Lasch argues that advertising exploits our anxieties with the problems of aging, loneliness and sexual fulfilment with the false hope that commodities will give us "self-realisation". Instead of being a socially conservative force, as Marcuse would argue, advertising provokes a culture of exaggerated self-awareness, self-righteousness and momentary pleasures of self-assertion — a kind of mass narcissism — which destroys the bonds of basic human loyalties in the family, friend groups and in the community.

Advertising Comes With Modern Mass Culture

In Berman's view, proposals for the future rational ordering of consumption must start with consideration of some of the perennial realities of human existence. He points out that the fact of advertising has been with us in some form for millenia simply because it caters to human desires for health, comfort, beauty, leisure and relief from the bitterness and tedium of labour — the primal desire to keep death at a distance. With recent enormous advances in productivity it might seem preferable to measure human

progress in terms of spiritual qualities, but in fact, for most people, the increase in human welfare, participation in society and greater equality is measured literally in terms of distribution of goods and services.

Advertising as we know it today is about 100 years old, and it seems to have come in with the new mass marketplace, mass transportation, mass literacy, mass popular media and — most important — the formation of a mass popular culture. Mass advertising, which seeks to maximise its market to include literally everybody, becomes the central communication link in a mass society. In its myriad forms, from store window displays to television commercials, advertising provides the symbols which define the identity of the "average" person and family in a society — the appliances everybody should have in their homes, the styles of clothes, the books to read and the films to see. In a mass society with a great deal of social mobility, advertising is now the only way that most people can know all the "little morals" of social acceptability.

A criticism of advertising becomes a criticism of mass culture, and there is much to criticise according to one's view of mass culture: the vulgarity, hedonism and materialism; the trivialisation of love, friendship and family; the tendency to guide one's life according to passing fads, etc. But Berman prefers the view that, in a mass culture guided by the laws of cultural supply and demand, there is inevitably a pluralism of tastes and interests which are best tolerated for the sake of peace and freedom.

How Advertising Influences Cultures

The art of good advertising is precisely to motivate buyers by linking a product and the firm to existing values. Advertising not only sells the product but tells us *why* goods are produced, *whom* they benefit and *how* they fit into our lives. Thus, advertising helps to create and reinforce the great myths — the assumed "truths" that state the meaning of our life — that sustain the logic behind our marketplace culture. Every ad attempts to reassure us that technology works for the benefit of the largest number of people, that consumers are the reasons for production and consumption, and that the continual invention of new products is essential to modern life. Above all, advertising presents products as new — "Tide" soap has been new annually for about a generation — and ties products to the central myths of continual progress, increasing equality, greater personal liberation and greater realisation of our identity. Advertising speaks with the language of utopias, never of grim problems such as crime or unemployment.

Every ad is both conservative and progressive, a dialectic of old and new. The breakfast food ad portrays Grandma and Grandpa (safe, traditional values) out at the old homestead in pure country air (new ideals of environmentalism) serving breakfast to a bright, energetic grandson (new generation, change) and — of course! — all produced by eating the new product. Advertising reflects the ambiguity in our society by linking change to past utopias and, in so doing, undermining the tradition it extols.

Can Advertising Promote Social Justice?

Berman argues that advertising is so committed to the middle point of mass consumer interests that, at best, it can only reflect broader processes of change in society and negotiate between different popular beliefs. He sees contradictions in the demands of liberal reformers: asking that advertising should avoid stereotyping minorities in order to reflect social reality but at the same time project new images of minorities in order to change popular opinion. Berman fears that government regulation of public morality through legislation could be a new form of censorship.

In the end, Berman feels that, yes, sometimes advertising suggests that production and consumption are ultimate ends. This is not only immoral but not sensible. But increased productivity is also

² Christopher Lasch. *The Culture of Narcissism*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978).

a means to higher standards of living and greater freedom in use of time and labour. Advertising also contributes to this.

Both Berman and Schudson approach advertising as a much more complex, mixed cultural phenomenon than earlier critics. Berman

is resigned to taking the bad with the good. But critics who are more concerned with the social inequities and dehumanisation in a political-economic system are also advancing more complex arguments as we note in the rest of this review article.

II: Seeing Advertising as Part of a System

Stuart Ewen. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976).

Stuart Ewen would agree with Berman that the modern institution of advertising has come with the mass marketplace, mass consumption and mass culture. However, he contends that it is impossible to separate the emergence of mass culture from the *social reality* of the liberal model of industrialisation. By social reality Ewen means the structure of social power, the social controls that subject people to that power and the pattern of competitive, instrumental human relations that power implies. As a social historian, Ewen attempts to apply a method for analysing the *organic* linkages of advertising and consumer culture to the profound changes in the industrial structure in the early twentieth century. He also attempts to show how these industrial changes influenced virtually every institution of society: education, the family, child-rearing, the social roles of men and women, etc.

Firstly, Ewen introduces a method for analysing the *historical consequences* that are implied in the logic of an industrial structure. As Ewen sees it, the process starts with the new forms of mass, assembly-line production, symbolised and popularised by Ford's mass production of automobiles. This capacity to turn out a flood of consumer items led to demands by industrial leaders for mass markets. Then, in order to transform a nation of saving producers into consumers, it was necessary to provide higher wages and more leisure to consume. Advertising was seen as a central economic tool not only for creating mass markets, but also for creating a national culture which would see leisure and consumption as central in people's lives. In America this process began around 1910 and coincided with the rise of the new mass leisure media of film, radio and popular magazines. By 1920 the new consumer culture was beginning to be clearly evident.

Secondly, although many such as Berman assert that advertising carries the myths of a mass-consumer society, Ewen thinks it is important to examine the historical context and reasoning of the *opinion leaders* in America who began to create these myths in the 1910s and 1920s. He analyses the thought of consumer economists of the period, leading industrialists such as Henry Ford, the prophets of scientific management, the new behaviour psychology, the home economists designing the "new home"; political leaders like Calvin

Coolidge who proclaimed that 'advertising ministers to the spiritual side of trade'; educators who urged the need to train the young to be good and wise consumers; and, of course, leaders in the new advertising industry.

Advertising and Social Conflict

Thirdly, Ewen places this cultural analysis in the context of the *social conflict* in America from 1910-1930: the deep unrest of labour still being denied a right to organise and have a voice in the making of the new industrial order; the fear of the Bolshevik influence from Russia and the high tide of socialism in America during the 1920s; the fear that the flood of foreign immigrants would not be "Americanised". Ewen cites the views of leading thinkers of the period advocating that the demands of labour be calmed with access to more consumer goods and that the immigrants be assimilated by encouraging them to adopt a common American style of consumption.

Fourthly, and perhaps most important for Ewen's analysis, he brings in the factor of concentration of *social power* in the new model of corporation formed to take advantage of mass national and international markets. A major thesis is that while industrialists of the 19th century had to learn to mobilise labour for production, those of the 20th century had to go beyond the factory into the community and other institutions to create a consumer culture. Thus they had to learn to be "captains of consciousness".

Finally, Ewen examines the relationship of industrial structure and the *quality of human relationships*. The new consumer culture may have been successful in keeping America's industrial machine going, but it took a tragic toll in the weakening of family and community bonds, the obliteration of regional and ethnic subcultures, the denial of worker participation in the industrial process and a psychological concept of the self as inadequate.

Berman criticises Ewen's broad, organic analysis for attempting to attribute virtually all social problems to the corporation and advertising, and, in Schudson's view, Ewen sees too much direct manipulation by the "captains of consciousness". But undoubtedly Ewen has sketched an insightful research agenda for critical study of advertising.

III: Transnational Advertising in the Third World

Rafael Roncagliolo and Noreene Janus. "Advertising, Mass Media and Dependency" in *Development Dialogue*, 1979, No. 1, pp. 81-97 and "Advertising and the Democratisation of Communications" in *Development Dialogue*, 1981, No. 2, pp. 31-40.

Some of the most extensive research on the growth and effects of the transnational advertising corporations has been carried out at the Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales (Mexico) by Roncagliolo and Janus. They argue that if an ethos of image-advertising, consumerism and production for production's sake appears increasingly questionable in affluent industrial societies, then the high-pressure export of wasteful consumerism and North Atlantic symbols of identity to non-Western cultures and developing countries is even more harmful.

The basic research model used by Roncagliolo and Janus as well as Fred Fejes³ and much other critical research on international advertising is the following: 1) The linking of mass production and mass marketing with advertising and the mass media in order to build consumer habits was developed to perfection in the U.S. in the post-World War II period. 2) By 1960 the large U.S. and

European corporations had become first "North Atlantic" corporations and then transnational corporations. With the greatly improved transport and communication technology of the 1960s, these corporations were looking for global markets to take advantage of the efficiencies of the modern corporation and the economies of scale. 3) To build a uniform global market, the large multinational advertising firms were called in to synchronise a single global advertising campaign to bring consumer habits in developing and non-Western countries into line with those already developed in the North Atlantic countries. (4) Once branches of transnational advertising corporations are established in a Third World country, they work to shape local media along U.S. commercial lines so that these will be adequate marketing instruments.

Most of the research has been an attempt to test and develop this model and to determine the economic, political and cultural effects in developing countries.

3 Fred Fejes. "The Growth of Multinational Advertising Agencies in Latin America," in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 36-49.

Transnational Influence on Local Media

Studies show that as transnational ad agencies move into a country with enormous capital reserves, they quickly dominate space in newspapers, radio and television, and these media come to depend very largely on transnational advertising. Media ownership has tended to remain in local hands, but the key element of control is the message production through international news agencies; advertising agencies; distributors of films, records and cassettes; international magazines (*Readers Digest* and *Cosmopolitan*) and the introduction of U.S.-designed formats of journalism, radio and television, which are more compatible with advertising.

The research of Janus and others points out the sometimes dramatic acceptance of U.S. consumer habits in non-Western cultures. After a series of advertising campaigns, more than 50% of Japanese teenagers now prefer U.S. style dry breakfast foods instead of traditional rice, fish and seaweed.⁴ In Venezuela young mothers now prefer to give babies canned baby foods even though

4 Noreene Z. Janus, "Advertising and the mass media: transnational link between production and consumption," *Media, Culture and Society*, 1981, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 13-23.

traditional foods may be more nutritious and economical. Other research connects rapidly changing styles of life, personal image identity (for example, ideals of feminine beauty) and general Westernisation of culture to advertising campaigns.

A major criticism is pointed at harm to economic development: introduction of a model of consumer affluence in poor countries; diverting of scarce resources to non-essential items and to consumption rather than production investment; the dominance of consumer products industry by transnationals; and the concentration of economic power.

However, the recent research of Sergio Mattos argues that this model of transnationalisation cannot be generalised to every country. He cites evidence that Brazil has established government controls of transnational investment, that the local advertising industry is now gaining on the transnationals and that Brazil is not only increasing the local media product but exporting programmes to 52 countries.⁵

5 Sergio Mattos, "The Relationship of Mass Media and Advertising Development in Brazil," Unpublished Paper (Dissertation Proposal).

IV: Advertising as Ideology and Myth

Judith Williamson. *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*. (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, Ltd., 1978).

Judith Williamson suggests that advertising today has replaced the function traditionally filled by art and religion in that it determines the basic pattern of our world view.

The research of Williamson is one of the best recent examples of the application of semiological approaches to the analysis of advertising content to show how advertising communicates and how it leads us to integrate a product into our cultural value systems. She shows that every ad is like a puzzle that invites us to find the answer or solution, but in a way that predetermines the answer by the structure of the ad. Underlying the structure of the ad are a series of values that form the ideology — the unquestioned and generally presumed truths — of our liberal capitalist society: our freedom to choose a product, free competition, new products mean progress, etc. The ad itself contains two elements: the product and the visual or narrative value reference system — a scene which connotes rugged power and freedom, a liberated woman, national patriotism or job success — which the ad presupposes the target audience will understand. To solve the puzzle, the ad first invites us to identify with the "totemic" group of people symbolised in the ad ("The Pepsi People").

"The Sunsilk People") in a way that would make us deny our values if we say "no". The ad then invites us to create a new value by solving the puzzle of how this value reference system is related to this product.

Selling an Ideology

Like many Marxist approaches, a major thesis of Williamson is that advertising embodies an ideology propagated by dominant social classes. Ads want to sell products, but to do this they must get us to accept the series of assumptions on which a capitalist consumer society is built. These assumptions form an ideology in that everybody simply accepts them without proof. But in fact they envelope us in an imaginary, false world where our personal identity is established only by what we consume, products become a substitute for real emotions, and products supposedly give us power and influence in our society. All this obscures the fact that our life opportunities and influence depend on our position in a productive system, not on the products we consume or the fleeting images we buy with the product.

Having developed her method of analysis, Williamson then takes a series of accepted value systems in Western culture and demonstrates how ads get us to integrate the product and the

ideology behind the product into these value systems. The most frequent referent systems in ads are some variation of the values of unlocking the secrets and power of nature through science and technology, the desire to reunite ourselves with nature (environmentalism) and the desire to control and direct history. In virtually every ad there is some reference to our belief in magic, capitalising on our unconscious anxieties by suggesting that somehow the product will miraculously solve our problems.

Williamson argues that semiological approaches are important because ads pretend to simply represent reality — stating the qualities of the product — when in fact they are reinterpreting reality — attaching accepted values to a product. Semiological analysis reveals the hidden meaning.

Creating the Myths of a Consumer Society

Varda Lanholtz Leymore. *Hidden Myth: Structure and Symbolism in Advertising*. (London: Heineman Educational Books, Inc., 1975).

Varda Leymore also applies a semiological approach, but with less explicit reference to a Marxist framework. In her analysis of common English ads for butter and cheese, she found appeals to values as basic as peace over war (that is, identifying the product with peace), life over death, and soul over body. Like Williamson, she concluded that ads mediate between value systems and products, and that the real message is often hidden. But Leymore seeks a deeper explanation in claiming that ads are constructed like myths. Each raises one of the eternal dilemmas of history such as the problem of peace and war, scans the possible solutions and proves that the one predominant in society is the best. Thus, advertising, like myth, is a conservative force. Ads are also like myths in that they are anxiety-reducing mechanisms. They first raise or call our attention to problems that reach to the depths of human dilemmas and then present the product as the solution.

Finally, like myths, ads are an indicator of the typical mode of symbolic perception in certain types of societies. No society exists without some form of myth. It is not very surprising, says Leymore, "that a society which is based on the economy of mass production and mass consumption will evolve its own myth in the form of the commercial. Like myth it touches upon every facet of life, and as a myth it makes use of the fabulous in its application to the mundane. Yet in neither do people stop to say, 'but this is impossible'".

V: The Influence of Advertising on Media Content

Erik Barnouw. *The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Erik Barnouw, the noted historian of American broadcasting, maintains that the dependence of the American mass media on advertising has had a strong negative influence on the quality and diversity of programming and has inhibited the open debate of controversial national issues. It is true that the networks have introduced mechanisms to prevent programme sponsors from direct interference with programme writing and producing, such as offering sponsors time slots, not whole programmes. They also open up bidding for time slots only after a programme is prepared and scheduled.

Nevertheless, at least one major American network has stated as a policy that since they are supported by advertisers they must take into account the general objectives and desires of advertisers as a whole, even allowing advertisers and their agents to 'participate' in the creative process if they would request this. Moreover, the most significant influences are very indirect and subtle, at the level of overall patterns and structure of broadcast programming.

Indirect Pressures On Programming

Barnouw cites as one example of such indirect influence the increasing restiveness of sponsors with the famous drama programmes in the early 'golden years' of American television when plays such as 'Marty' and 'Requiem for a Heavyweight' were produced. These plays, which favoured psychological over physical confrontation and sometimes had wide social implications, won large audiences and critical acclaim. They also produced angry letter-writing campaigns. The contrast of these portrayals of deeper human emotions, interspersed with the jingles and hard sell commercials, often made the commercials seem fraudulent. Food, drug and cosmetic sponsors, which depend on constant and rapid

flow of products via supermarket shelves and form a major portion of television advertising, have generally been the most afraid of antagonising anyone. Sponsors strongly supported the move to less complicated episodic Westerns, sitcoms and adventure series with the set formulas that eliminate writer creativity.

A second example of sponsor influence is the resistance to controversial documentary and public affairs programming. Some networks have had the policy of distributing synopses of documentaries to potential sponsors. Programmes which are favourable to the interests of one or another sponsor tend to get support, but many ideas die for lack of sponsor support. Critical magazine programmes with an investigative 'muck-raking' format such as 'Sixty Minutes' of the CBS network tend to focus on individual malefactors rather than broad public affairs issues. Most serious, Barnouw notes, is that American networks will not accept independent opinion-influencing documentaries that are not produced by their in-house staff.

Barnouw lists numerous other examples of how advertising indirectly affects the structure of the media industry such as the fact that in the early 1970s members of the Screen Actors Guild in the U.S. were earning more from making commercials than from theatrical film and television combined.

James Curran, in his continuing studies of the influence of advertising in the British media, concludes that 'advertisers have played a central role in the shaping of the British media system'.⁶ Again, the influences have been indirect, especially the tendency to favour the interests of audiences that have greater buying power.

6 James Curran, "The impact of advertising on the British Mass Media", *Media, Culture and Society*, 1981, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 43-69.

VI: The History of Consumer Protection

Ivan L. Preston. *The Great American Blow-Up: Puffery in Advertising and Selling*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

Preston has provided an interesting analysis of the cultural-historical context that favours the rise of consumer protection.

He notes that in the Middle Ages, when a highly religious, comunitarian culture dominated, both the church and secular justice favoured the consumer over the seller. The theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, made clear that, if a seller knew of any defect, he was morally obligated to reveal this to the buyer; and if any seller made false statements, he had to make good the loss. The craft guilds drew up standards of size and quality, and craftsmen who violated these were fined or thrown out of the trade for repeated violations. The aim was not so much to favour the buyer, but to serve the entire community.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, however, power passed to the industrialists and traders, and, in England at least, the crown was anxious to gain the support of merchants. The courts gradually developed the legal philosophy of *caveat emptor*, "let the buyer beware". The culture of trade and advertising protected the seller enormously, and the courts established legal precedents which demanded that the buyer prove conclusively the deliberate intent of sellers to deceive.

However, the pendulum began to swing in the other direction in the late 19th and early 20th century with the rise of consumer movements. In the U.S. (as in many other countries) this movement was formalised by the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 1914, and the building of a tradition within the FTC favouring the consumer. Preston traces how the FTC first determined that any misrepresentation of a product in advertising — whether intentional or not — was illegal *without* the public taking any action and *before* any damage occurred. Over

the last 60 years the FTC has gradually swept away one deceptive practice after another. One of the last major deceptive practices remaining, in Preston's view, is "puffery", the tradition in advertising of deliberately exaggerating the qualities of the product on the pretext that these are just attention-getting and don't really deceive. He attempts to show how puffery inhibits information-giving and is harmful to the credibility of legitimate advertising.

Preston implies that world views and public morality regarding advertising are influenced by broad cultural movements of consumerism and that these, in turn, are influenced by still broader historical, structural changes in society.

The Roots of Consumer Movements

In their excellent book, *Advertising in Contemporary Society*, Rotzoll, Haefner and Sandage develop a formal structural explanation of how consumer movements have waxed and waned in American society.⁷ In their analysis, the beginnings of the American consumer movement in the late 19th and early 20th century were part of a general reaction to the concentration of economic power in great corporate monopolies and extreme abuses of consumers. Galbraith, consumer advocates such as Ralph Nader and political leaders such as Kennedy and Johnson are portrayed as part of a century-old societal movement.

But the question remains, "Are we defending the consumer today because of a new moral sense, or is consumer advocacy just one more manifestation that we now live in an age of "affluent consumerism"? The remedy may be part of the problem.

7 Kim B. Rotzoll, James E. Haefner, Charles H. Sandage. *Advertising in Contemporary Society: Perspectives Toward Understanding*. (Columbus, Ohio: Grid Publishers, Inc. 1976).

Current Research on the Social Effects of Advertising

AUSTRALIA

Grahame Dowling (The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, 2308) has recent publications on "Female Role Portrayal: An Exploratory Analysis of Australian Television Advertising", *Media Information Australia*, Vol. 17, (August 1980) and "A Comparative Analysis: Information Content in U.S. and Australian Television Advertising", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Fall, 1980), pp. 34-37.

John G. Sinclair (Lecturer in sociology, Footscray Institute of Technology, Ballarat Road, P.O. Box 64, Footscray, Victoria, 3011) is completing research on the history and structure of the broadcasting industries in Mexico including a questionnaire study of the attitudes and responses toward TV advertising which compares middle-class students and rural worker-peasants. The research also looks at the degree of taste transfer (junk food) due to advertising.

BRAZIL

Sergio Mattos c/o INTERCOM, Rua Augusta 555, 01305 São Paulo — until recently a doctoral student in the College of Communication, U. of Texas, Austin) is completing a study of the relationship of mass media and advertising development in Brazil. Also doing research on advertising in Brazil is **José Salomão Amorim** (Escola de Comunicação, Programa de Pós-graduação, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília — DF — 70.000).

CANADA

R. W. Poilay (Curator, The History of Advertising Archives, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, 2053 Main Mall, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Y8) is developing a methodology to measure social values in advertising and is doing research on the content categories of ads in major North American magazines from 1900-1980.

CHILE

Marcelo Didier (Escuela de Psicología, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile) is studying the influence of the mass media in the socialization of alcohol consumption.

DENMARK

Preben Sepstrup (Institute of Marketing, The Aarhus School of Business Administration and Economics, Rhyhhavevej 8, DK-8210 Aarhus V, Denmark) has been carrying out a content analysis of advertising in print media as part of a comprehensive project on "Advertising and Socialization". Recent publications include "Methodological Development in Content Analysis: Some Theoretical Reflections and an Empirical Example from Advertising" in Vol. 9 of the Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research, *Advances in Content Research*. Current research focusses on advertising's influence on mass media economy and content and the comparative value of old and new media as vehicles for advertising.

FRANCE

Guy Durandin (UER de Psychologie, Laboratoire de Psychologie Sociale, Université René Descartes, 28 rue Serpente, 75006 Paris V) has been studying social values and the ideological dimension in advertising. He has recently published *Les Mensonges en Propagande et en Publicité — Fallacies in Propaganda and in Advertising* — (Paris: P.U.F., Collection Le Psychologue, 1982) 256 pp. Recent publications include with **H. Feertchak**, **F. Cavé** and **B. Joyeux**, "Comparison entre les valeurs évoquées dans les annonces publicitaires et dans les éditoriaux" (Comparison Between the Values Evoked in the Advertising Announcements and in the Editorials), *Cahier de la Communication*, 1981, no 2, p. 206-221 and with **M. Dimodi Tongo** and **G. Moser**, "Modèles et valeurs dans la publicité destinée aux pays africains franco-phones (Models and Values in the Advertising Directed Toward the Francophone African Countries) in *Bulletin de Psychologie*, no 343, tome XXXIII, Nov-Dec. 1979, p. 81-86

Abraham A. Moles (Institut de Psychologie Sociale des Communications, Université Louis Pasteur, 12 rue Goethe, Strasbourg) the done research on the "micropsychology" of actions in daily life and how these are used in the creation of advertising images. He has published *Théorie de l'Information et Perception Esthétique*. 2ème éd. (Denël, 1975); *L'affiche dans la société urbaine* (Paris: Dunod, 1969); and *La caricature comme communication* (Mame, 1974).

GERMANY

Jürgen Pfifferling (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Rundfunkwerbung, Am Steinernen Stock 1, D-6000 Frankfurt/M. 1) is researching the effects of advertising with tracking studies and planned field experiments.

GREAT BRITAIN

James Curran (School of Communication, Polytechnic of Central London, 18-22 Riding House Street, London W1P 7PD) is continuing research on the influence of advertising on the media and publishing a series of essays on advertising as a socio-political system.

James Halloran (Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester, 104 Regent Road, Leicester LE1 7LT) is planning a research programme on the indirect effects of advertising, that is, how advertising raises consumer

expectations and accentuates problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and family conflict.

MEXICO

The Instituto de Estudios Transnacionales (IET, Apartado 85-025, México 20, D.F.) has a long-term project studying the influence of transnational companies on the advertising industry and mass media in Latin America under the direction of **Rafael Roncagliolo**. Current research is looking at the cultural and economic influences of transnational advertising and the position of different institutional sectors such as the church regarding advertising in Latin America. **Noreene Janus**, who has been associated with this programme, is preparing a book on the impact of transnational advertising in Third World countries to be published by Longman of New York.

NORWAY

Otto Ottesen (Rogaland Regional University, Box 2540, Ullandhaug, N-4001 Stavanger), formerly head of the Dept. of Marketing at the Copenhagen School of Economics has published "The Long-run Effects of Advertising: A Conceptual Discussion," *European Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, April 1981) and is planning research on the impact of advertising on conceptions of reality, values and norms.

SWEDEN

Gunnar Andren (Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Stockholm, S-106 91 Stockholm) is directing a long-term project on "The Ideology and Rhetoric of Sweden Advertising from 1935-1980". The data for the period 1950-1975 has been collected and will be published soon.

U.S.A.

Michael H. Anderson (Information Division, UNICEF, 866 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017) has completed research on advertising in Asia.

Stuart Ewen (Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, NY 10021) has published *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982).

Fred Fejes (Dept. of Mass Communications, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan 48202), specialising in international advertising, is preparing a book dealing with the ways that the U.S. government and business interests utilised advertising prior to and during World War II to establish North American dominance in Latin American communications and he has co-edited with **Jennifer Daryl Slack**, *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishers, 1983).

John J. Kochevar (17 Monument Square, Boston, MA 02129) Adjunct Assoc. Prof. of Liberal Studies at New York University, focussing on international advertising from a NWICO perspective, has written on "The Effects of Advertising in the Developing Nations" and is currently working on a case study of the effects of commercialisation of the press in Kenya. His article, "International Advertising: the Japanese and American Experience" has appeared in *KEIO Communication Review* (Institute for Communication Research, KEIO University, Mita, Minatoku, Tokyo).

Roland Marchand (U. of California-Davis, Davis, CA 95616) has recently completed a book-length manuscript, *Images: Advertising and American Society in the 1920s and 1930s*, and is preparing a second short book on corporate image advertising. Other articles in preparation deal with the evolution of the commercial in early radio and the techniques of promoting the consumer ethic in 1920s advertising.

Vincent Norris (School of Journalism, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802), specialising in the political economy of communication, is following up his study, "Consumer Magazine Prices and the Mythical Advertising Subsidy", showing that magazines not "subsidised" by advertising (for example, *Mad* magazine!) are no more expensive than those which carry advertising. He is also doing research which questions the "social value" of advertising as information and is attempting to show that a "social saving" could be realised if market information were provided by other means.

Kim B. Rotzoll (College of Communication, Dept. of Advertising, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801), following up his book with **James Haefner** and **Charles H. Sandage**, *Advertising in Contemporary Society*, is examining the current controversy over the social effects of advertising in terms of the clash of world views resulting in totally different perceptions of "advertising reality". He has also prepared a section on advertising ethics for the book, *Media Ethics: Case Studies in Moral Reasoning*, which he is co-authoring with **Clifford Christians** and **Mark Fackler** (New York: Longman, Inc., spring 1983). He is also editing with **Jack Graham** (Crain Communications, Chicago) and **Barrows Mussey** (Dusseldorf, Germany) a book on advertising critic, Howard Luck Gossage (University of Illinois Press).

Michael Schudson (Dept. of Communications, University of California-San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093) has completed *Advertising as Capitalist Realism* (forthcoming, 1983), which critically examines from a historical and anthropological

perspective various views of the social, cultural and economic consequences of advertising. Chapters take up the 19th century origins of advertising, the world view of advertising agencies today and the analysis of advertising as the capitalist equivalent of socialist realistic art.

Quentin J. Schultze (Dept. of Speech, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49506) is completing a book, *A Social History of the Advertising Business in America*, which traces the development of a professional ideology, ethical codes, university-level advertising instruction and social scientific methods. Also, he is writing several articles on the growth of commercial communications methods among church and para-church groups, especially video and radio evangelists.

Anna Lucia Zornosa (1129 Elizabeth St., No. 1, Madison, WI 53703 — graduate student at U. of Wisconsin-Madison) is studying how images of women, developed in U.S. advertising, are exported through transnational magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* to developing countries, with special focus on Latin America.

VENEZUELA

José Martínez Terrero (Centro de Comunicación Social, Apartado 20133, Caracas — Código Postal 1020-A) is studying the history of the relation between the media and advertising in Latin American with special attention to Venezuela. The focus is on the increasing vertical and horizontal integration of the media and the advertising industry and the social effect of this process.

DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Are the Critics Influencing Advertising?

Over the last 20-25 years there has been an increasing tide of research which is critical of advertising and which has advanced considerable evidence of various forms of harmful social effects flowing from advertising. This has developed parallel with strong consumer movements and broader movements such as environmentalism and alternative life styles. Yet it would be difficult to show that there has been any significant change in the institution of advertising. In fact, advertising has been able to capitalise on the symbols of environmentalism, racial and ethnic equality and feminist liberation for its own marketing purposes. Of course, an institution such as advertising responds to very deep structural conditions, and reform movements generally have little influence on these more fundamental political-economic conditions.

But the focus of the research may not have been particularly helpful. Much of the research has directed itself toward very specific abuses or goes to the other extreme and is concerned with social problems on a grand scale. The research taking up specific problems such as psychological manipulation, the social image of particular minority groups or something so specific as children's breakfast foods usually is addressed to the concerns of just one interest group and perhaps even to activists within that interest group. Working through official consumer-protection agencies, the courts or advertising self-regulation, it is usually possible to negotiate a settlement that eliminates at least the most notorious aspects of the abuse. But this leaves the overall pattern of advertising very much unchanged. Indeed, throughout the history of advertising, the advertisers themselves have been the champions of a certain amount of regulation to maintain the credibility of their subtle art of magical illusion.

At the other end of the spectrum of specificity, the grand schemes of analysis exemplified in the work of Galbraith, Marcuse and Ewen imply nothing less than a change in the socio-economic evolution of societies. The importance of these studies lies more in their influence on the world view of people. The critics of advertising often formulate an ideology for popular movements that have their origin in the general sense of irrationality of a consumer society.

Middle-Range Theories of Advertising

What is needed to fill a gap are more studies of the influence of advertising on key social institutions such as the family, health and dietary habits, education, child-rearing practices, the church and the religious imagination, and other major public institutions. Recent research has already developed much more sophisticated methodologies for studying various levels of advertising influence: analysis of the social history of advertising, semiological approaches

in the analysis of changing world views, the influence on the public media, and changing conceptions of social roles of women. For example, in the case of the family, one might study the influence of advertising on changing conceptions of the family or the way advertising raises ever higher consumer expectations in family members with consequent tensions and even disintegration in the family.

Some of the research that is being done on the influence of transnational advertising in non-Western and developing countries provides interesting methodological models of this middle-range research. First of all, it is possible to pinpoint the time when the transnational corporations began a major marketing campaign. The research can then begin to follow the chain of influences, firstly, in the media and in major economic institutions, then in changing consumption habits and finally the responses of other institutions to these basic changes. This research seems to be demonstrating significant and frequently very negative influences on youth cultures, the roles of women and professional careers. It also implies changes in much more basic institutions of society which touch on the sensitive areas of socialisation such as the family, the local neighbourhood, the school and the church.

Speaking to the Responsible People

At present most responsible people within these areas of socialisation have only a vague notion that something disintegrating is occurring. They would probably not be seriously concerned with advertising because, in their view, this is little more than a few noisy but harmless jingles on the radio or television. If, however, there was information publicly available which would indicate a line of causality with a high degree of plausibility between advertising and the socialisation process, then it is likely that there would be a broader public reaction. It might also lead to a greater critical awareness of the interrelation of advertising with more basic structural characteristics. If and when this occurs then there is more likelihood of a major shift of world view expressed in broad changes of attitude and broad social movements of an "awakening" or "revitalisation" nature.

In the end, the important result of research in the area of the human or cultural sciences is not the causal demonstration of harmful social influences to agencies with power of direct coercive action such as governments, but providing a new and/or alternative way of perceiving the world. This sort of critical awareness provides the basis for a free public debate and free public consensus on changes to be made.

ROBERT A. WHITE

Issue Editor

Additional Bibliography: Critical Analysis of Advertising

Selected General Books on Advertising

Dyer, Gillian. *Advertising as Communication*. (London and New York: Methuen, 1982). Excellent general text from the perspective of cultural analysis and semiological aspects of advertising. Has chapters on the expression of meaning in advertising; and on the semiotics, ideology, language, and rhetoric of advertising.

Kleppner, Otto. *Advertising Procedure*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979 — seventh edition). A practical "how to" text with sections on selection of media for a particular message or effect, specific advertising approaches in different media, advertising management and preparation of campaigns.

- Leigh, James H. & Claude R. Martin, Jr.**, eds. *Current Issues and Research in Advertising* (1980). (Ann Arbor, MI: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan, 1980). Presents recent thinking on a broad range of topics including deception in advertising, product puffery, and origins of consumer support for advertising regulation.
- Percy, Larry and John R. Rossiter.** *Advertising Strategy: A Communication Approach*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980). Discusses advertising in terms of five basic communication variables essential to persuasion and good advertising strategy.
- Ramond, Charles.** *Advertising Research: The State of the Art*. (New York: Association of National Advertisers, Inc., 1976). This book originated as an attempt to "elucidate" (sic) the FTC commissioners on advertising and research. Bibliography and review of literature is of value.
- Sandage C.H., Vernon Fryburger and Kim Rotzoll.** *Advertising Theory and Practice*. (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, Inc. 1979 — tenth edition). Classic textbook overview of advertising in the U.S.; good for reference on basic concepts and current thinking in the field of advertising.
- Tunstall, J.** *The Advertising Man in London Advertising Agencies*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1974). One of the few critical analyses of the role of the advertising professional.

Social Influence of Advertising

- Atwan, Robert, Donald McQuade and John W. Wright.** *Edsels, Luckies and Fridgidaire: Advertising the American Way*. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1979). Presents changing images of everyday American life through a century of advertising. Analyses how advertising portrays social roles (women, men, blacks) and material civilization, and discusses typical strategies of persuasion.
- Ballón, Eduardo**, et al. *La Publicidad: Porqueme gustapues* (Advertising: And Why I Like You) (Lima, Peru: Desco, 1976). A popularised Latin American perspective on how advertising influences our behaviour and how the individual can become more aware of the influence of advertising.
- Bowen, Lawrence.** *Advertising and the Poor*. (Journalism Monographs, No. 75, Published by the Association for Education in Journalism, 1982). One of the rare studies of how the poor respond to advertising, showing that the poor are much more perceptive and discriminating than is generally thought.
- Inglis, F.** *The Imagery of Power: A Critique of Advertising*. (London, Heineman Educational Books, Ltd., 1972).
- Martínez, José.** *La Publicidad en Venezuela* (Advertising in Venezuela). (Valencia, Ven.: Vadell Hermanos Editores, 1979). Examines the history, relations with media, economics, politics and ideological dimensions of advertising in Venezuela.
- Media Information Australia**, No. 17 (August 1980). Special issue on the advertising industry in Australia. This journal is edited by Henry Mayer and produced by the Australian Film and Television School, PO Box 305, North Ryde, NSW, 2113.
- Media, Culture and Society**, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 1981). Special issue on critical views of advertising. Issue editor, James Curran, School of Communication, Polytechnic of Central London. *Media, Culture and Society* is published by Academic Press, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DX and 111 Fifth Avenue, NY 10003.
- Price, Jonathan.** *The Best Thing on TV: Commercials*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1978). Analyses some of the most memorable of TV ads as a humorous side of American popular culture and reflects on why they have become a part of this culture.
- Rotzoll, Kim B.** *Advertising and the Public*. (Urbana, IL: Department of Advertising, University of Illinois, 1980). Seven papers contributed to the second Sandage Symposium describe how consumer interests might be better protected.
- Rotzoll, Kim B., James E. Haefner and Charles H. Sandage.** *Advertising in Contemporary Society: Perspectives Toward Understanding*. (Columbus, Ohio: Copyright Grid, Inc., 1976). Excellent, comprehensive review of major theories of advertising's role in society. Includes sections on consumer movements, responsibility of the press and consumer responsibility.
- Wright, John S. and John E. Mertes.** *Advertising's Role in Society*. (New York: West Publishing Co., 1974). Has particularly good sections on the ethics of advertising, how businessmen view advertising and a review of different arguments pro and con regarding the cultural and economic effects of advertising.
- von Stackelberg, Karl-Georg.** *Der ferngelenkte Mensch: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von Propaganda, Werbung und Sozialer Kommunikation*. Teleguided Men: Possibilities and Limits of Propaganda, Advertising and Social Communication). Presents model of public communication as dialogue between the state and the citizen and discusses how forms of propaganda and advertising can subvert this.

Content Analysis

- Andren, G., L.O. Ericsson, R. Ohlsson and T. Tännjö.** *Rhetoric and Ideology in Advertising*. (Stockholm, Sweden: AB Grafiska Gruppen, 1978). Analyses

major types of persuasion techniques and ideological dimensions (cultural values) expressed in American advertising.

- Brune, Francois.** *Le bonheur conforme: essai sur la normalization publicitaire* (The Happy Conformity: An Essay on the Norm-establishing of Advertising). (Editions Gallimard, 1981). An essay on the persuasion strategies and ideological dimensions of advertising in France.
- Delgado Senior, Igor.** *Tres mensajes publicitarios* (Three Advertising Messages). (Caracas, Ven.: Dirección de Cultura, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1979). Uses a semiotic approach to analyse advertising in three daily newspapers in Caracas.
- Goffman, E.** *Gender Advertisements*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).
- Holtz-Bonneau, Francoise.** *Dejouons la publicité: manuel illustré* (Outwitting Advertising: an illustrated manual). (Paris: Editions Economie et Humanisme/ Les Editions Ouvrières, 1979). Witty analysis of the language of advertising for developing more critical awareness of its influence.

Influence on Mass Media Content

- Wright, John W.**, ed. *The Commercial Connection: Advertising and the American Mass Media*. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1979). An anthology of previously published articles which analyse how advertising has influenced the development of American media from colonial times. Includes sections on how advertising tries to reach specific audiences, on corporate advertising and on how ads are constructed.

Deception in Advertising

- Jellinek, J. Stephan.** *The Inner Editor*. (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1977). Describes how mass education and mass communication can lead to a loss of personal integrity and a loss of touch with reality. He suggests ways of coping with these problems.
- Key, Wilson Bryan.** *Subliminal Seduction* (New York: New American Library, 1973) and *Media Sexploitation* (New York: New American Library, 1976). Popularization of the arguments that advertising uses depth psychology and hidden manipulation to sell products.
- Schrank, Jeffrey.** *Deception Detection: An Educator's Guide to the Art of Insight*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975). A book for classroom teachers on how to help students perceive deception in advertising; proposes 'Creativity Training' and visual awareness exercises to develop critical skills.
- Spero, Robert.** *The Duping of the American Voter: Dishonesty and Deception in Presidential Television Advertising*. (New York: Lippincott and Crowell Publishers, 1980). Popularly written study of methods used in constructing a misleading image of presidential candidates in the U.S. starting with Eisenhower. Presents proposals for introducing greater honesty in presidential campaigns.

Self-Regulation of Advertising

- Neelankavil, James P. and Albert B. Stridsberg.** *Advertising Self-Regulation: a Global Perspective*. (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1980).
- Zanot, Eric J.** *The National Advertising Review Board, 1971-1976*. Journalism Monographs, Published by the Association for Education in Journalism, 1982. Evaluates the success of the NARB in curtailing deceptive advertising.

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