

AD VERTISING

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Weilbacher

advertising

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Preface

This is a book about advertising. Its study should be presented in an interesting, challenging and exciting way. Advertising is, after all, one of our common experiences. It is provocative, bold, colorful and lively: it is in many ways a reflection of the lives we lead. Texts about it should reflect all of this. But the subject is complicated by a variety of paradoxes. Advertising texts must deal with these paradoxes and try to unravel them.

For example, the student will have a wide experience of advertising before he or she begins its formal study. This prior experience is unique among business subjects. The student arrives in his first advertising class a seasoned observer of advertisements, with well-developed attitudes and viewpoints about them.

Let me illustrate the kind of background such students may have when they come to the introductory course. In January 1978 my daughter Elizabeth, age nine, was given the following assignment in her fourth-grade class:

Write a composition on *The Commercial I Dislike Most*.

Describe the commercial.

What happens in it?

How does the commercial try to get you to buy the product?

Does the commercial really tell the truth?

Do the actors treat you as though you can't think for yourself?

Have you ever bought something you saw in a commercial and then discovered it was not as good as you thought it would be?

Students' prior experiences with advertising have important implications for textbooks. In the first place, an advertising textbook must recognize that students' attitudes have been formed in a context that is personal and subjective (and, at least in some fourth-grade classes, downright hostile). Yet it is the responsibility of the text to portray a business tool that is acknowledged by businessmen to have profound usefulness in achieving the ends of commerce. In addition, it is the responsibility of such a text to describe the contribution that advertising increasingly makes to the achievement of the goals of government programs and of many of our social and nonprofit agencies. The attitudes, experiences and understandings that the student brings to the advertising classroom do not necessarily facilitate such study. Thus, the text must help the student to become objective and to

set aside whatever assumptions, prejudices and attitudes that a lifetime of living with advertising has generated.

A second paradox in the study of advertising is that there is a rather wide divergence between its practice and the literature that describes and analyzes it. Practitioners do not always act as the literature says they should, nor does the literature always deal thoroughly with issues that practitioners believe to be central to their craft.

A good example of this paradox is that practitioners believe that the essence of advertising may be found in its content: that is, in what advertisements say and show about the products and institutions that they represent. They are also deeply concerned with the strategic decisions and the creative processes that lead to the development of the advertisements to which consumers are exposed.

Yet the literature has, in general, shown little concern about the creative processes behind this aspect of business, and it is thus very hard to gain insight into the subject unless one actually works at the craft. Certainly, an advertising text has the responsibility of clarifying these neglected, yet critical issues.

A final paradox is that those who are most critical of advertising seem surest about its effectiveness. This perplexes practitioners, who know that not all advertisements are equally successful, and who struggle daily to achieve a level of success that is blithely assumed by their critics. Obviously, successful advertising depends upon great skill, genuine insight and hard work. And even this combination of ingredients does not always result in effective advertising. Once again, a relevant text must deal with the fact that not every effort succeeds; that advertising is hard to do; and that practitioners must continually search for excellence and effectiveness.

These paradoxes make it difficult to achieve a balanced view. The student must learn how to overcome his own experience. The student must gain insight into those aspects of commercial practice that define advertising as we experience it, yet have been ignored in the literature. Finally, the student must develop the bases of judgment that will permit him to sort out all of the issues and arguments that swirl continuously around the study and practice of this maligned and controversial subject.

In this book I have tried to unify the practitioner's view with the view of those who experience it without participating in its creation. I have striven to portray this unified whole in a way both meaningful and relevant to the student. I have respected the literature, but where it is inconsistent with practice, I have examined the issues that underlie the inconsistencies. Similarly, I have done my best to present the case of advertising's critics, as well as to present the point of view of the business community.

Advertising is, in practice, exciting and challenging, and I have tried to suggest why this is so. I have also tried to write a book that will give a student, whatever his preconceptions, an understanding of why a consensus has developed among advertisers that advertising is, at present, worth an expenditure to them, collectively, of \$33,720,000,000 per year.

When the student is finished with this book he or she will probably still have misgivings about some advertisements, as do I. But readers will also have a pretty

good idea about the essential viewpoints and issues from the standpoint of *both* the literature and the practitioner. The reader will also learn why advertising is used, the kinds of goals that are set for it, the ways in which advertising programs are developed to achieve those goals, and as much as is known about how and why advertising accomplishes its aims. Finally, the student will be exposed to the interaction of advertising and society and the implications which that interaction has for advertising in practice and the goals of society.

No one works in an industry for twenty-five years without meeting many people who teach him a great deal. I have been especially fortunate in my career to have come under the influence of several outstanding practitioners and teachers. Much of what is contained in the following pages I undoubtedly learned from them, even if I cannot now remember exactly when or how. These influences include the late Raymond A. Bauer; the late Lyndon O. Brown; Marion Harper, Jr., Donald L. Kanter; Richard S. Lessler; Darrell B. Lucas; David McCall; and Clifford H. Wolfe.

Many people helped me in preparing this book, and I am very grateful to them. Bob Coen at McCann Erickson Inc. helped me to understand the subtleties and sophistication of his estimates of advertising expenditures. Richard S. Rieder, partner of the Dunnington, Bartholow & Miller law firm, reviewed the treatment of the Federal Trade Commission in Chapter 23, and made my understanding of this body much more profound and precise than it had previously been. At Dancer Fitzgerald Sample, Don Klein, Jim Capossela, and Gene Ortiz volunteered to be the creative team for Perfection Control Floor Wax, and their product is to be found in the Case, part III. Ira Weinblatt and Michael Propper consulted with distinction on matters of media and media research.

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Marlene Gavagan played a major role in the preparation of the manuscript. She typed and retyped drafts and carefully attended to all of the details involved in an enterprise of this magnitude with high competence and an unfailing good humor. Her support was essential to the result, and I am very thankful to her for it.

The final responsibility for the text is mine.

W. M. W.

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