

***Perspectives on Advertising  
in the Interwar Magazine "Arta și tehnica grafică"***

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**Abstract**

The interwar magazine *Arta și tehnica grafică* [Art and Graphic Technique]: *Buletinul Imprimeriilor Statului* includes a variety of thematic topics related to: printing and book arts, history, literature, social life, culture and politics, being a magazine of high value with a definite graphic quality. The perspectives displayed by the review regarding advertising makes the approach interesting with strong connotations in the realities of the contemporary society and form the object of a concise analysis in the present study. The names of personalities and their studies in various specialties, published in this magazine, have contributed to its great value, although, constrained by historical circumstances, it ceased issuing very early. It enjoyed however a favourable reception by the Romanian intelligentsia owing to an interesting approach due to issues related to aspects with reference to book and print.

**Keywords:** interwar magazine *Arta și tehnica grafică*, printing technique, history of advertising

All-around us and even in our minds, everything is advertisement. In common words, publicity equals advertising. And advertising is everywhere. Advertising stopped to be the trade soul long ago, it moves and spins everything nowadays. It is present and is generating energy in all segments of life and human activity.

Present in the Romanian publishing environment during 1937-1939, the interwar magazine *Arta și tehnica grafică: Buletinul Imprimeriilor Statului* makes known its perspectives on the advertising in an interesting approach.. With strong connotations in the realities of the contemporary society, the illustrative comments of the concept of advertising make the object of a concise analysis in this study.

If we search for its origins, the advertising springs from the first forms of commercial life. Trade is based on the exchange of goods and the exchange of goods does not depend exclusively on what man produces, be they handicraft items or semi-products. That is why, from the beginning, advertising was connected to the primitive trade through crafts and their products.

For the same reason, the historical development of advertising is based on crafts and trade.

Advertising is a very dynamic aspect of human culture.

Numerous older or more recent archaeological researches are irrefutable evidence that trades and trading of goods constituted their inception, as human activities of a comparable importance.

As an incipient form of advertising, the ruins of certain cities are testimonies of peoples' culture, like the Assyrians and the Babylonians dating back for more than 4000 years ago, with such proofs as inscriptions on the gates of the houses inhabited by merchants and craftsmen. The discoveries made in ancient Ellada leave no doubt about the existence of certain types of advertising in the Greek world.

But, at the time, advertising was mainly shouted or spoken, the original form of what is now called "oral advertising".

The papyri written two thousand years before Christ proved beyond doubt that, in the land of the Pharaohs, craftsmen highly estimated the value of advertising.

The first written advertisement was found in the ancient Rome. It is represented by those "albums" from the Latin *ablus*, in most cases being the surface of a house wall or a board painted white on which, in coal, the daily news and obviously the advertising of the market were written.

The most common source of documentation on advertising for the Romans is to be found in the ruins of Pompeii, so tragically flooded by the lava of the Vesuvius. This lava has preserved for us, during nearly 2000 years, advertising inscriptions, proving how necessary the advertising was to the Romans. Among other things, there have been kept over 100 electoral placards which show that electoral fights are not innovations of the recent times.

Pompei municipal elections displayed many candidates to such dignities as councillors who made public their qualities as former or future householders on placards. A more informed candidate about voters' preferences signs a real curse and malediction for the person who touches the public wealth and goods. And one inscription has preserved evidence of the first ad painter who promoted himself by writing down: "Sciat AEmilius Celer singulus ad lunum" meaning: "Writing this, I am Emil Celer alone in the moonlight", or how it would say "at night, in overtime."

One aspect of the advertising during the Roman times is an emblem of the firms preserved until nowadays. Since then there remained Bacchus as emblem for pubs, a

snake or Aesculap for any pharmacy, a mercurial stick for trade and many others, which, in the Middle Ages, became common.

In between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, there was a break in the evolution of culture, strangled by invasions, this fact having a negative repercussion on advertising and trade and being completely annihilated by the barbarian invasions.

It was not until the eighth century, under Charlemagne, when commercial deals revived, offers abounded, and therefore, advertisement flourished. But the wars of Charlemagne's successors destroyed this new trade start.

At the end of the tenth century, fairs, navigation and trade caravans and craft corporations arose, which was crucial for the advertising of the epoch. Cities and medieval boroughs felt the productive work or corporations organized in guilds as, between urban walls, everything the diligence and emulation of the organized trades could produce was gathered.

In those days, the "advertising element" were the shouters and the trumpeters. In 1292 Paris, a new corporation was entered the guild register, that of the wine crieurs, counting 44 members. In London, hundreds of shouters lured passersby in front of stores.

Gutenberg's invention, the printing press, downplays the importance of these oral advertising carriers, without entirely making them disappear. Such advertising is in our practice as well, in some neighborhoods of the commercial cities and especially in the capital. In fact, these "advertisers" proved to be the creators of versified promotions, sometimes very spiritual, which drew attention.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, trades developed amazingly becoming even cultural factors and mastering mercantile and spiritual life of the time. And thus, advertising took a decent shape, winning dignity and prestige.

Railings, balconies, wrought iron gates are good reasons to serve advertising by introducing a very interesting craft heraldic. At the same time, guild emblems took concrete forms. King Henry III decided, by royal decree, that townsmen should hang a "shield" sign in front of the stand for the "people who is not from the place and did not know to read to be guided more quickly." Shield making began to take expensive decorative – artistic aspects. Thus, the blue emblem of the inn "At the Blue Heart" in Norfolk would have cost 1657 pounds in those days.

Gutenberg's invention, the printing press, in Mainz, gave a decisive boost to the trade through printed advertisement.

The first who took advantage of this kind of promotion were the publishers of books, who were themselves master printers, then the healers of health remedies, the charlatans, the so-called doctors, the ambulant circuses with their traders and clowns, menageries and, later, the lotteries and trade in general.

But printed ads opened prospects for an unsuspected future until newspapers issued.

It had exuberance and craftsmen excelled in exotic creations, for instance, in a cemetery in Paris, it was written on a cross: "Here rests, in eternal sleep, the wife of Jean Frasinet, master blacksmith. The railing of the tomb was made in the workshops of her afflicted spouse" (1), and in a cemetery in New York: "Here lies John Smidt. He shot himself with a Colt revolver that kills instantly. The best weapon for this purpose". (2)

At present, advertising dominates our present world, mastering all its economic activity.

It's a fearful factor in the commercial life and in the exchange of goods. It consumes fabulous sums, but it is a necessity of the economic life.

Advertising is a science, an art and a technique. In many countries there have been created faculties within important universities and such matters for the study of advertising, taking into account that the more successful the advertising, the greater its influence on the human psyche, determining the final decision of buying.

Recollection is the wheel.

In order to memorize certain aspects, in advertising three important ways are used: the intensity of the impression often caused by various means, such as, for example, a suggestive poster, then the association of ideas, as for instance, the objects used in advertising toilet objects and the most important factor: the repetition. Only through an obsessive repetition of the motif, can a commercial be accomplished.

With regard to advertising, on a banner made in 1937, Mac Constantinescu, Romanian sculptor, who dealt with decorative – monumental sculptures, but also of graphics, mentioned: "The evolution of the poster is still slow, too slow probably, and the pioneers of the modern poster still live in a heroic age / ... /.

It was not clearly understood that a poster meant solving an advertising problem briefly, imposed by the optics of the street: that, shaking off all the unnecessary elements, the poster theme must have a unique solution / ... /.

Our painters, before starting to draw a draft, should realize that the invention of a poster involves knowing perfectly all the advertising issues, which can be approached only by the holders of a developed sense of practice and reality (rare element among our contemplative artists).

The technique of printing in all its subtleties should also be perfectly known to those who create posters / ... /.

The most original vision is that which prevails in achieving a poster designed to lure the attention of a public on an increasing rush". (3)

Advertising is an aspect of human culture and civilization. Without advertising, many of the achievements and inventions would have never become popular.

When Stephenson, for example, built the first locomotive, the great scholars of the time argued on the "enormous" speed (30 miles per hour!), that would cause a high air pressure and no passenger would reach his/her destination alive. Only constant media advertising could make a popular means of locomotion out of the rail. The case of the aviation is similar. Thanks to tourism advertising, broad layers begin to see the plane not as a machine for acrobatics or a flying coffin, but a very useful means of locomotion.

However, advertising is not only available to the tradesmen, as individuals. It is therefore not only an auxiliary of the individual economy.

Advertising used in the interest of the community is an imperative ally to national economy. It is a tool that harmonizes the relationship between supply and demand. Commercials are present in the national economy and price control office because they create competition, are fair and, finally have given rise to a number of new professions, having in view advertising, graphic art and craft workshops professionals, illumination advertising, office decorators, industrial gift pros etc.

Advertising educates people and explanatory insertions in newspapers regarding certain plants, drugs or mechanisms to testify it; advertising provides a material independence for newspapers, publications and, at present, for radio and tv broadcasting at a certain extent.

Advertising has also indirect effects useful to the nation, promoting the art graphics and advertising industry, raising the standard of life with an audience accustomed with the latest achievements of civilization (radio - television etc.), it creates currents, fashions and forms habits. It procures opportunities to work, facilitates the exchange of goods and enhances the national production.

Commercials have beneficial indirect effects for the individual, because they facilitate orientation in pricing, thus avoiding profiteering, even reducing prices through public competition, give access to all benefits of civilization, avoid wastage of time in guiding the market.

Since the interwar period, advertising has proved to be an infinite fuss without limits, with no space, without rest and sometimes without scruples. Everything is used for advertising.

“Advertising is ubiquitous, on land and in the air, carried by the aircraft. Advertising is in neon tubing and played on the radio. It is on the chewing gum kits or on the bald people in the spectacle halls. It may be direct or indirect. You offer used cars to place shares etc ... You dress yourself in Indian costume to sell pins. Everything serves the ad and it pulses dizzily and spins the life-giving wheel for the trade.” (4)

Any artisan or merchant advertises. Although we do not always realize, politicians do their advertising as well, just like a castle builder when he builds the burgh to be protected from war enemies, and a reason of refuge in time of peace, just like dictators, when they announce that they possess a number of well equipped guns, planes and soldiers, like the young man, when he wears a mottled tie and walks on the boulevard on Sunday, like the beggar, who moans or displays his/her infirmities and the child in diapers, whose cries draw attention upon him and his needs.

In The German Mayers-Conversations Lexicon, the term is explained: "Advertising is called any attempt to draw attention to yourself and to your own interests using any means, permissible and impermissible". (5)

Referring to this definition, Virgil Molin, Bachelor of Graphic Arts, in 1939, said that it would be profoundly wrong. "At the beginning, it was a really false advertising. As, once, advertising meant lie and the liar with ... "reclamagiul [advertiser]". Nowadays (in 1939) advertising is no longer false, it does not even exaggerate. Advertising is photographic promotion, not drawn, not to distort the truth. Contemporary advertising will not try to insult the buyer, to force him buy the item by all means and the public consumer has evolved, claiming other pretensions from advertising.

In their complexity, advertising and publicity are secrets to be unveiled.

Our trade as well as the whole economic life cannot be separated from the advertising.

This century (the 20th) is the "Century of Advertising". (6)

Thus, the existence of commercials is justified at the end of most books of the magazine *Arta și tehnica grafică*, magazine issued between 1937-1940, and containing advertisements for various printing machines, inks, paper ...

In the West, advertising aroused opposite reactions. Analyzing the economic, social and psychological aspects of advertising, there are followers and critics. Proponents see it as an economic phenomenon that ensures "leakage" of production to customers and draw attention to quality products and services. Critics accuse it of accelerating obsolescence of products, developing artificial production areas and give false scale to the economic progress.

As a social phenomenon, the defenders' opinion is that advertising increases the integrity of individuals creating new ways of living, ensuring diversity in the community and facilitating the choice of suitable social roles. Critics consider that advertising causes frustration and resentment of those unable to procure popularized products, thus fueling social conflicts and false needs and causing confusion in assuming social roles.

With respect to psychological aspects, defenders bring the argument that advertising reinforces the feeling of well-being, develops consumers' optimism and confidence. Critics consider that advertising falsifies the hierarchy of values cultivating euphoria, hedonism, narcissism and individualism. But it can also disturb the majority of individuals, their connection to the environment offering them an illusory world. (7)

Unfortunately, both sides assume that advertising is the only factor that influences consumers' behavior. In reality, we know that there are a number of other factors which exert a major influence on them, such as experience, age, traditions, price, fashion etc.

In conclusion, we can understand the differences between the two concepts, as they are perceived today, although there are still controversies and confusions. While advertising is highly persuasive, is paid and is performed by a specialized agency, publicity is for informational purposes, it is unpaid and is created by the beneficiary organization. (8)

It is certain, however, that specific elements prove their perenniality no matter the period to which they relate, and the examples presented are undoubtedly arguments in this respect.

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