

Advertising and the Development of Media: The Forgotten Connection

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ABSTRACT This study deals with the interaction between advertising and media which creates mass media. It analyses a long period of media development and tries to find common patterns. It deals also with the importance in this interaction of not damaging the confidence of the public in mass media, which can be a problem with forms of embedded marketing. All the same, without advertising, there will be less of mass media and media diversity.

KEY WORDS: Advertising, media development, commercial television, mass media, media diversity

Studying advertising three perspectives are applied: 1) the perspective of the advertisers, i.e. advertising as a marketing instrument, 2) the perspective of the media, i.e. advertising as a part of the media content and of the financing of the mass media, and 3) the perspective of the consumers, i.e. advertising as an integrated part of the media supply and as a support for buying decisions. The most common perspectives in research about media have so far been the perspective of either the advertisers or the consumers. Not so often is advertising and the development of mass media connected. Without going too far, we can talk of the forgotten connection. A quick glance at some of the most used textbooks on advertising should convince anyone of that.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

However, in media economics this dimension is a distinct element, as is demonstrated in the following example. In the textbook *The Economics and Financing of Media Companies* by Robert Picard (2002) one chapter is devoted to “Media, Advertisers, and Advertising”. The introduction of the chapter runs as follows:

Advertisers are critical to the success of commercial media because they provide the primary revenue stream that keeps most of them viable. Broadcasters, trade magazine publishers, and newspaper publishers exhibit the highest levels of dependence on advertising income among media firms. Advertisers, however, do not provide these financial resources in order to make media possible; they do so in order to pursue their own interest and purposes.

In a study I recently made on advertising the perspective of media is focused. The study, which was made for SNS, an independent center for business and policy studies, was published in Swedish. Here is an abridged version of the main issues aimed for an international audience.

The sources of the study are primary as well as secondary. Some ten leading representatives of the advertising industry in a broad sense have been interviewed. A hearing with another ten representatives was arranged by SNS. The secondary sources consist of government reports on media in the Scandinavian countries as well as in the U.K. Of particular value was a Danish study by Roy Langer and Anne-Dorte Bruun Nielsen on “hidden advertising”. Other Scandinavian references are Kent Asp, Hans Fredrik Dahl, and Mats Ekdahl.

The main encyclopedias in the field have been consulted: *International Encyclopedia of Communications* I-IV and *Encyclopedia of Advertising* 1-3. As the approach of the study is dynamic media development had to be analyzed in a long perspective. Only by clear pictures of media history you can understand the structure of today and evaluate the future, as old methods and phenomena have a tendency to return. A number of the references used should be mentioned. E. Barnouw’s comprehensive history on American radio and television, H. H. Wilson’s excellent study on the introduction of commercial television in the U.K., Leo Bogart’s *Commercial Culture*, and finally *People of Plenty* by David Potter. The latter study reminds us that relations on the masses and media development have been of interest of a number of mass society theorists. Three of them that have been used here are Alexis de Tocqueville, the first prophet of the mass society, Georges Sorel and José Ortega y Gasset. Finally, I have leaned with comfort against my professional experiences of almost forty years in the research part of the advertising and media industry.

MEDIA SYSTEMS FUNDED BY ADVERTISING

With a few exceptions – television in the United States and the free daily tabloid – there are no media which from their very beginning have not used advertising as a source of revenue. All others have had a shorter or longer period without advertising. In all cases, it was not self-evident that they sooner or later would be opened for advertising. All media that became advertising media have in common that they by this very connection developed into mass media. Their ambition to reach the public at large, the interest of which usually they tried to rouse by low prices, coincided with the ambitions of the advertisers to spread their messages to largest possible number of consumers and their readiness to pay substantially for that. Today, the funding of mass media by advertising is so important – the most important single source of revenue in most countries – that without advertising the media systems would break to pieces. Obviously, there is no other way of financing with an unaltered supply. Sweden will be used as an example of 2003.

Advertising in Sweden as a percentage of GDP, 0.6 per cent, is on the average level of Europe. The same percentage goes for Norway, France and Italy. The level is a little higher (0.7 %) in Finland, Denmark and Spain and much higher (1,1 %) in Great Britain. The total advertising revenue of the mass media in Sweden is about 17 billion crowns (about 1.6 billion euro). Including pure advertising media (direct mail, catalogues and so on) adds about 8 billion (about 750 million euro) to the total value of advertising. The total cost of using other communication channels (trade fairs, gifts, sponsoring, point-of-sales promotion etc.) is according to IRM (Institute for Advertising and Media Statistics) about 15 billion (about 1.4 billion euro). Summing up the costs for all communications channels and adding 10 billion for production, the amount will be close to 50 billion (4.7 billion euro). The advertising subsidy to mass media (the 17 billion) counted per household is equivalent to about 4,000 crowns (360 euro) a year. If you reflect on how the households would allocate that subsidy on mass media, if they themselves could decide, you would certainly arrive at another allocation to the present. There are many who have lost their favorite media them being not attractive enough for advertisers.

These numbers mean that about half of all advertising in a large sense make a financial support to the mass media. As an estimate, half of revenues of the mass media come from advertising.

Sweden and the northern Europe differ much from southern Europe regarding the distribution of advertising on mass media (see table 1). Sweden is a newspaper nation (at least 50 per cent for newspapers and about 20 per cent for television), just as Italy is a television nation (at least 50 per cent for television and about 20 per cent for newspapers). There is a small group which consists of newspaper and television nations (from UK to France). Like most of the countries in Eastern Europe, Poland is a television country.

Table 1: Advertising market shares 2003 (%)

| | Newspapers | Television | Magazines |
|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Ireland | 62 | 18 | 3 |
| Norway | 60 | 21 | 11 |
| Denmark | 57 | 22 | 13 |
| Finland | 56 | 20 | 17 |
| Sweden | 52 | 24 | 14 |
| Switzerland | 46 | 15 | 18 |
| Austria | 44 | 22 | 20 |
| Germany | 44 | 27 | 19 |
| UK | 41 | 31 | 15 |
| Belgium | 31 | 39 | 13 |
| Spain | 30 | 42 | 11 |
| France | 25 | 32 | 23 |
| Greece | 21 | 39 | 36 |
| Italy | 22 | 53 | 17 |
| Portugal | 23 | 54 | 11 |
| Poland | 11 | 61 | 14 |

Source: IRM. International advertising markets, December 2004.

Note: For Finland and Denmark free sheets are included in newspapers. If we do the same for Sweden the share of newspapers is 56 % and that of television 23 %.

One remark relating to the subject is that the percentage for cinema is strongly underestimating the advertising subsidy to the film industry. The mobile phone company Ericsson paid for eight scenes in a James Bond movie with its product in everyday use. No one has tried to estimate the value of product placement in movies. Basic information on the phenomenon is available on *brandchannel.com*.

Beside the dominant position of the newspapers on the advertising market, another characteristic of Sweden is the strong position of public service radio and television in media consumption. Leo Bogart maintains that in the U.S. 90 per cent of the time devoted to media concern media financed by advertising, mostly commercial television. In Sweden, the corresponding number is less than 50 per cent. It should be noted that Swedes in general have very low media consumption, about six hours a day. The daily reach on an average of public service radio and television is about 55 per cent, and their time share 37 per cent.

The main trend is an increasing role of advertising in media development. New media are depending on an advertising revenue stream, in Sweden particularly with the introduction of commercial television 1991 and commercial radio 1993 as well as the free tabloid *Metro* 1995. Commercial television seems to have increased the interest for brand advertising even in other mass media. At changes old media have accepted more advertising. In the beginning of the 20th century the big broadsheet newspapers made it a big issue to remove all ads from the first page. The front page should be devoted to the news of the paper, not of the advertisers. When the same papers changed from broadsheet to

tabloid format, ads were invited to the front page, although as a banner at the bottom of the page. Even magazines published by labor organizations open their columns for advertisers. For an average monthly organization magazine advertising pays for at least one issue per year.

Some places are by tradition free of advertising, schools for instance, even if there are programs for newspapers in education. A populist party in Norway suggested in vain that schoolbooks should be subsidized by advertising. In the U.S. the TV-channel *Channel One* was established with schools as the target group. School would receive 12 minutes a day (including two minutes advertising) in return for audio visual sets at a low rent.

The first newspapers were fully financed by the readers. With the introduction of the popular newspapers in the 19th century advertising became responsible for about two thirds of the total revenue. The news tabloids in the beginning of the 20th century took 75 per cent of the revenues from the readers. With the introduction the free tabloid the other extreme was reached: 100 per cent financed by advertising. What will come next? Will we as readers get paid for reading ads? Will we as reader again pay for all?

Davenport & Beck are sure about the answer. In their book on the future, *The Attention Economy*, they conclude: "In the future, many goods and services will be given away free in exchange for a few seconds or minutes of the user's attention." Anyhow it is quite obvious that *Metro* in its expansion follows the advertising and not the readers.

Some mass media are not at all financed by advertising. The gramophone record is an old example, and the pocket book a younger. At the introduction of video (VHS) many believed, politicians as well as big media firms, that a new advertising medium was born. In Sweden, where advertising in television at that time was forbidden, that law was extended to video, in order not to make the law pointless. Anyhow, the video medium was declared dead before it was used for anything else but obsolete promotion for other movies on video.

The pocket book made its way to the mass market along other roads. Its format was handy and the price was also small. It cost as much as a package of cigarettes. It was distributed outside the book seller system, particularly in kiosks at railway stations but also by Woolworths, the low price retail department store chain. The books were published in series, with a cover that was easy to recognize. When the pocket book today enjoys a new spring, we recognize the old marketing methods.

There are examples in the media history with advertising free media but the readers complain. They want information about products. The only well known publication without ads, and still an economic success, is the French satirical weekly *Le Canard enchaîné*, issued each Wednesday in Paris in more than 500 000 copies and feared by the establishment.

THE MASSES IN COMMON

The influence of advertising on the media development started during the 19th century with the popular newspapers. It was the common interest among media owners and advertisers to reach the masses that connected advertising and media and made them mass media and mass advertising.

The production techniques that were introduced in that century allowed mass circulations but it was impossible to conquer a large audience with the contents of the contemporary elite papers, expensive to buy and hard to read. The contents were changed and the prices were reduced. In order to make them very low, advertising was accepted as a second source of revenue. The papers were sold on the streets or home delivered anything that would bring the papers closer to the readers. In order not to discourage subscription, weekly subscription was introduced.

The low price newspapers for the masses came in waves – at intervals of about 30 years (one generation). For each wave the price was halved. The circulations were counted in millions. The first newspaper to reach a million is said to be the Parisian newspaper *Le Petit Journal* in 1886. The explanation of the name is that “La petite presse” means a mass press and “la grande presse” the press for the elites. The American equivalent to “la petite presse” was “the yellow press” which was preferred as a world wide expression.

The development of the mass magazine follows a similar pattern. Cheap, ten-cent magazines, opened up for advertising. The ads were allowed to move from the last pages, and were put together with the editorial texts. The editorial texts started to imitate the ads and the use of color on editorial pages increased. When *Life* started 1938 it was well prepared for an advertising rush. The publisher chose a big format to give space for the ads on editorial pages. *Life* was copied all over the world but the followers were not always as prepared for ads and had to make ad hoc solutions.

Gradually, from the beginning of the 20th century, compact size media were introduced: the tabloid format for newspapers, the pocket size for magazines and books. Later the miniaturization went on: the transistor radio, the PC, the CD-player, the mobile telephone, which eventually might become the last link in our TV-systems, a mass media kiosk in pocket size.

Readers Digest, the low price monthly in small size, was first published in 1922. It did not accept ads in its US-edition until 1955. Then its circulation was so large that the advertisers accepted the extra costs for the format.

Most of the compact media have in common the popular content, the low price, and an efficient distribution. The tabloid newspapers were sold in the streets, preferable in connection with tram and underground system. No surprise that these papers in some countries were called boulevard papers. The boulevards with all their cafés and boulevard

theatres were institutions of the mass. The tabloids search the masses and took its side. The masses were not only a market but also a mission: the tabloids as the advocate for the common man.

The future of radio was a long time uncertain. The earliest applications pointed in many directions, also in the U.S. Those who developed the daily and the magazines into mass media used the new technical opportunities and understood to introduce contents that suited a mass audience. The techniques were there but no market visions. Advertising was not even thought of as a source of revenue. On the agenda were donations, like Carnegie's gifts to libraries, gifts from the public, state money like the financing of museums and universities.

With these uncertainties it was easy for the advertising agencies to take the initiative, which ended up with their total control of the medium. The agencies produced programs and the advertisers paid.

To the annoyance of the agencies the president became interested in radio. Mr. Roosevelt made success with his "Fireside chats" with the nation. By the radio he could easily reach areas where republican newspaper owners were dominating. Even worse, he planned to restrict aggressive advertising of food and drugs responsible for about half of all radio advertising. The agencies fought the president and won.

Radio became an all advertising medium. The radio companies were distributors of programs made by agencies and sponsored by advertisers. There were no ad breaks. Programs and schedules were adjusted to sponsoring. There were no news programs, as news was regarded to be disturbing and too disquieting to the advertising messages.

When television was ready for the market the advertising agencies wanted a quick switch. The rules of commercial radio were moved to television. The agencies wanted to prevent a recurrence of the early radio days with amateurs, philanthropy, chats with the nation from the fireside and so on. Radio ended up in the shade of television and had to find new roles: local radio, niche radio and driving and working listeners.

With BBC in Great Britain as the model Europe chose public service for radio. When television came the politicians moved quickly to apply the public service model also for that medium.

INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL TELEVISION

Advertisers and advertising agencies, most strongly those from the U.S. were disappointed not being able to use television in Europe for commercial purposes. Along the European coasts, on international waters ships were equipped with radio stations transmitting entertainment and advertising in order to break the public service monopolies forbidden to take advertising and concentrating on serious programming. The public service monopolies made a successful response by introducing light entertainment, top lists and so on, which forced the

advertisers and their agencies to go head on and demand commercial television.

The breakthrough came in Great Britain in 1955, according to Erik Barnouw the very year of birth of the international commercial television, when commercial television was allowed alongside public service television. At the same time the interests of the advertisers for commercial radio more or less disappeared. It had done its duty. The campaigning for commercial television, studied in detail by Professor H. H. Wilson, was made by an alliance of the advertisers, the advertising agencies and a new generation Tories. The old generation once had introduced public service system and believed in that.

Again Britain became the model for Europe. Finland, France, Italy, Portugal and West Germany followed suit. Other countries in Europe opened their channels for American TV-series originally financed by advertising. Even in the U.S. the British model with commercial television companies in control of the programs and programming was adopted. The U.S. television companies exploited at large the disclosure of rigged TV-quizzes and blamed the old system for that.

In Sweden even the British campaigning was copied. All the same in Sweden it was more than three decades before commercial television was introduced.

INTEGRATED ADVERTISING

In the U.S. commercial radio advertising was well integrated with the programming. In the same way television started but later followed disintegration and advertising was put to place. What we now see is a new period of integration of advertising in television. In the trade press complaints from advertisers of old fashioned and boring commercial television are read. The advertisers are longing for integrated or embedded advertising. Product placement and sponsoring are regarded as less intrusive. Innovate thinking on the subject is promoted by all instruments there are easily to pick off TV-ads. In an interview in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Anne Sweeney as head of the TV-company maintained that sponsoring and product placement was the future of commercial television: "It's so beautifully integrated".

In 1998 some 50 big advertisers in the U.S. started a campaign for Family Friendly Programming. The spots would remain while the programs would be advertising friendly. A family friendly programmed is one that is able to attract viewers from all generations, i.e. the good old mass audience. "Family" is emphasized more than "friendly". Typical programs, channels and series in that genre are "Who wants to be a millionaire?", *The Discovery Channel*, and "The Cosby Show", regarded as the most family friendly series. So far the Family Friendly Programming Forum had a limited progress. According to its homepage,

still, some 70 percent of all grown up Americans maintains that television is less family friendly than five years ago.

SELF REGULATION

Among media as well as among advertisers there has been and is resistance to certain types of advertising. Media history knows many examples. The traditional newspapers of the 19th century did not accept ads for patent-medicines. Their new popular competitors had no scruples. Advertisers have always regarded comparative advertising as unfair, and so on.

What started as rules for one or a group of media companies developed into industry regulation, although, in the beginning more of economic reasons than of ethical. It was good for ad salesmen to refer to strict industry rules against favorable writings in editorial columns than to ethical obligations. All promotion in for instance newspapers should be in paid for ads. Gradually the ethical dimension came to the front. Self-promotion was also condemned, which arouse discussions of the principle of responsible editor. According to the law no one could take his responsibility or sovereignty. With public service and concessions for radio and television follows regulation also on ethical dimensions by the state.

To the discussion on state regulation and self-regulation should be added the question if the market would regulate itself. An important dimension of the value of any medium is confidence among the public. Public ratings of editorial contents as well as advertising content show that the higher the confidence the higher the ratings. There are differences in degree of confidence but the media do not seem to react on bad scores. In table 2 there is a ranking from below, starting with the worst cases. Two newspapers have the lowest confidence, the two tabloids, *Aftonbladet* the bigger one regarding circulation somewhat better than *Expressen*, the smaller one. Low confidence goes with the tabloid genre and does not prevent people from buying them. After the tabloids comes a commercial TV-channel (*TV3*) following the advertising rules of Britain and the biggest on Swedish docu-soaps and reality-TV. The commercial channel *TV4*, regulated by Swedish norms, has got a better reputation, but there is still a distance to public service *SVT*, with strict regulation, indicating that regulation might mean more for the rating than the way of financing. The best ratings are received by two metropolitan newspapers, *Göteborgs-Posten* and *Dagens Nyheter*, and the public service radio (*SR*). Thus market regulation will not meet the demands of the public of a separation of editorial, advertorial and advertising. There is a need for some sort of regulation.

Table 2: Ranking of Confidence of Swedish Mass Media

| Medium | 2004 (%) | 2004 (%) |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|
| <i>Expressen</i> | | 53 |
| <i>Aftonbladet</i> | | 46 |
| TV3 | | 42 |
| TV4 | | 16 |
| <i>Göteborgs-Posten</i> | | 11 |
| Sveriges Television (SVT) | | 10 |
| <i>Dagens Nyheter</i> | | 10 |
| Sveriges Radio (SR) | | 6 |

Source: MedieAkademin, Göteborg 2004

Note: Percentage fairly & very small confidence among those with opinion

ADVERTISING AND MEDIA IN INTERACTION

Advertising began to play an important role in media development during the 19th century. Then the initiative came from the media. Advertising and media were equal but media had the ideas about contents which would catch the masses. Newspapers and magazines took the lead, even if advertising played a larger role in the development of magazine publishing. During the beginning of the 20th century the initiative moved over to the advertising agencies. When the radio industry lacked visions about radio, a void was created which the advertising agencies quickly filled. Europe and The U.S. chose different ways. In Europe radio developed along its own conditions but had to respond to popular moves by radio pirates financed by advertising.

The two different radio models were applied to television, in the U.S. a radio financed by advertising and controlled by advertising agencies, and in Europe a radio financed by license fees and controlled by the state. The two systems converged when commercial television was introduced in Great Britain and became international.

It is obvious that without advertising there would not have been any mass media. The media would have been reserved for the elites. It is the interaction between advertising and media that creates mass media.

Although the mass media system will fall into pieces without advertising we cannot rely only on advertising for its future expansion. New TV-channels, which are supposed to be many and of niche type in digital television, would probably, have to find other sources of income than advertising, pay-TV being the most promising.

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