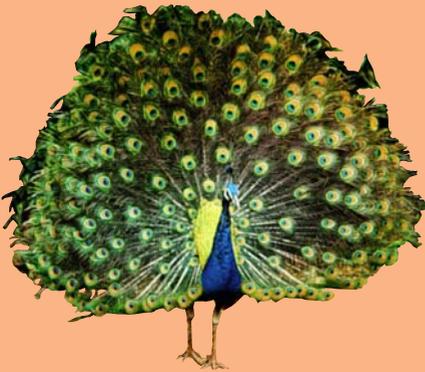


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Advertising and its Audience:



A Game of Two Halves

Advertising Association 1998 President's Lecture
Jeremy Bullmore



The Advertising Association 1998 President's Lecture

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Advertising and its Audience:
A Game of Two Halves

Thank you, President, for your introduction; and thank you, too, for having invited me to give this lecture.

I thought at the time, back in April, that you were taking something of a risk in asking me. And the more I brooded and the more time passed, the greater the risk I realised you'd taken.

I've spent almost exactly 44 years in and around advertising. And although I've never, I think, been obsessed by it, I've practised it, read about it, written about it, talked about it: and even occasionally been listened to about it. And yet much of it, I'm absolutely delighted to say, continues to mystify me.

Here are just a few of the things I have found advertising to be:

An industry that cannot, by any accepted criteria, be called an industry. A profession that demands no formal qualifications of its practitioners. A multi-billion pound activity whose precise function has yet to be agreed by those who practise it and whose value is openly doubted by many of those who pay for it. An occupation that may require you, in the course of a single morning, to have some familiarity with Article 10 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights – *and* an opinion as to whether the letters F C U K are more or less rude with or without full stops.

On the afternoon of the very same day, advertising may expect you to know the chemical structure of aspirin, Ridley Scott's agent's telephone number, the proportion of single parents who read the Daily Mirror and six robust reasons why economists are wrong to claim that advertising constitutes a barrier to entry.

The more you learn about it, the more mysterious it becomes. It touches everyone in the land, which is why everyone you meet knows more about it than you do. It fascinates both academics and art students, though rarely for the same reasons. It troubles both sociologists and financial directors: the former because they

think it works, the latter because they think it doesn't. It is a force for change and it inhibits progress. It carries a huge cost which must naturally be met by the consumer while simultaneously keeping down consumer prices. It is common knowledge that the people who work in it manipulate the values and aspirations of the entire nation, yet twice as many people work in McDonald's (UK) as in all British advertising agencies put together. On more than one occasion, it has sought to defend itself on the grounds that it doesn't really work. And politicians are united on it: in both their scepticism about its value and their blind belief in its necessity three weeks before a general election.

With subject matter as rich and diverse as that, you may begin to see, President, the scale of the risk you have undertaken.

You have provided me, quite literally, with a platform; with a captive audience of people who know at least as much about it all as I do (but who are obliged, at least to start with, to remain silent); with a topic of infinite interest and complexity; and with an instruction to speak for a very long time. (It has taken me a while to grasp the distinction between a speech and a lecture – but it is simply this: it is universally accepted that speeches should be short.)

To my opening catalogue of paradoxes and absurdities, I would add one more: and one which will form the nearest thing I've got to a theme this evening.

For all our piety about being consumer-orientated, I believe we share with many other communicators a reluctance to understand our audience, to listen to our audience, to trust our audience. I once wrote, in light-hearted mode, "But then people have always understood marketing better than marketing people." And after I'd written it, I thought to my surprise that it was probably true. I believe the same may be even more true of advertising.

So if I have a thesis this evening, it is this:
people have always understood advertising better than advertising people.

I'd like to put down two immediate markers. I share with almost everybody I know a great unease about, and indeed distaste for, the word consumer. David Puttnam gave this Lecture nine years ago and made the point well: to call people consumers is to imply that this somehow describes their only purpose in life. Further: when we think of people as consumers, we underplay their other roles and functions.

So I will avoid the word consumer as much as I can tonight. I will talk about people and audience and receivers and shoppers and choosers and respondents; and I'll also talk about 'us', because I think we often forget to be subjective: to remember that we, too, are receivers and choosers and consumers.

And my second marker is this. I've often been critical of commentators who use the word advertising as if it were one great homogeneous activity; as if all advertising, all advertisements, worked in the same way and towards the same purpose. This evening, I want to be specific. I want to concentrate almost exclusively on that sub-category of advertising that is thought to be the most common and which commentators find the most baffling; so let me define that now.

I have found it simplifies things a lot to recognise that, at root, there are really only two kinds of advertising.

There is advertising that we, as people, go looking for.

And there is advertising that goes looking for us, as people.

As with any incipient relationship, the key question to ask is: who makes the first move?

Let's start with that branch of advertising that, inexplicably, we continue to call classified. Classified advertising is a confident character; it knows full well it doesn't have to make the first move. It can sit there, page after page of it, hardly bothering to draw attention to itself, knowing that we'll search it out. If we want a job or a flat or a film or a friend or even a second-hand electric riding camel, we'll go looking. Much of the information on the Internet, though by no means all, is advertising that we, knowingly and voluntarily, go looking for. The amount of money spent on this form of advertising is quite enormous but is different from the other kind in at least two important respects.

First, the clients, the advertisers, the people who buy the space, are very seldom substantial corporations. They will be estate agents, small and middle-sized firms – and millions of ordinary, everyday individuals who would normally be called consumers.

And the second distinctive feature of this kind of advertising is that its purpose is transparently easy to understand and has never provoked challenge or controversy. Despite its size, it is tacitly, anyway, recognised to perform an almost perfect function. It pre-dates the concept of re-cycling, yet that's what most of it does. It benefits the buyer and the seller; and indeed the medium it uses and all the other users of that medium. It minimises waste.

Advertising that you and I go looking for is neither mysterious nor suspect. It is valued by all and resented by none. And whether we find it on the worldwide web or in the Yellow Pages, in AutoTrader or the newsagent's window, it will continue – untroubled by controversy or academics – to be a wonderfully effective and invisible force for good.

No – it is the other kind of advertising that I shall talk about mostly: advertising that goes out looking for people; advertising that seeks to ambush us as we turn the pages of a magazine or the corner of a street. This is advertising that desperately needs

to draw attention to itself because we'd never, voluntarily, go looking for it. And even within this group, I shall concentrate mostly on a sub-section.

Nobody – much – questions the value of advertising for a new product or an improved product. Nobody – much – questions the good sense in advertising the kind of goods and services that we buy very infrequently.

For at least the last 45 years, the category of advertising that has attracted virtually all the comment, all the discussion, all the odium and all the academic skirmishes, has been that significant amount of advertising money spent on long-established, frequently-purchased products in mature markets.

Why, people ask – in tones ranging from mild perplexity to home counties outrage – why do you bother to spend all that money telling people about something that they already know about, have almost certainly tried, and quite probably have in the house at the moment?

It's not the only question that continues to bug the advertising business but it's undoubtedly one of the best. And I believe that any difficulty we may have in answering it has much to do with our inadequate understanding of people.

In beginning to explore that thesis, I want to take us on a fast re-wind back to 1955.

I have absolutely no doubt, and I'm talking specifically about Britain now, that 1955 was and still is much the most significant advertising year we have ever experienced.

Quite a lot of things happened that year; or began to happen; or began to become apparent: though none of us, I think, connected them up at the time.

It was, for this country, the first, true post-war year: it was the year that finally saw the end of food rationing. And the reason that rationing could come to an end was, of course, that the long-standing relationship of production and consumption was finally undergoing a 180 degree realignment.

In both America and here, for a great many years, mass-market producers had only to produce; and pent-up consumer demand took care of the rest. World War Two protracted this period by some 15 years. Not many people had money and even fewer choice.

But by 1955, there was a little more money and a lot more choice. It was the beginning of the age of abundance; and, almost imperceptibly, the balance of responsibility changed. It was no longer the responsibility of production to satisfy demand; it became the responsibility of demand to absorb production.

We, the people – the consumers – took a long time to notice: but a major consequence of this realignment meant that, for the first time in our lives, we were becoming important.

It seemed unnerving at first. We'd become used to being unimportant; to being grateful for more or less anything we could find in the shops. We were used to being nice to shopkeepers and hoping to become their favourites. We felt deference for manufacturers – and found the great names of commerce remote and dignified and noble.

When the Post Office finally agreed to put us on a waiting list for a telephone, we counted ourselves lucky to get a half-promise of a party line at some unspecified time between Christmas and Easter.

In other words, we knew our place.

So it came as something of a shock, back in 1955, to find that we were suddenly becoming important. But the shock that we felt as consumers was as nothing to the shock felt by many producers. The mass-market manufacturers – those humble makers of soup and soap and tomato sauce – responded most quickly and most admirably: though few gave them credit for it.

By contrast, other suppliers, perhaps notably the financial institutions, found the thought of emergent consumer sovereignty at first implausible and then personally offensive. It took about 40 years – and it's not over yet – for producers and suppliers, who'd slept easy at night in the knowledge that they had what we wanted, to realise that the world had changed; and that from now on, it was we who had what they wanted.

If you want to be reminded of this remarkable transition – or to find evidence of it for the first time – I recommend a kind of urban archaeology. Pick your site carefully, then walk into one of the bigger branches of the bigger High Street banks – and look very carefully at the interior.

First, you will notice many admirable efforts to make the place friendly and approachable. Staff will wear name badges. There will be information kiosks, often manned by human beings. Not everyone will be fierce-faced and fiercely guarded. The decor will be very nearly modern and many cheerful posters will invite you to become an even more important customer by availing yourself of other friendly bank services.

Then look again. Look, literally, behind the decor and the pinboard and the posters: and you'll find what you were looking for. You'll find marble.

The interiors of high streets banks were once magnificently designed to make sure that we, their customers, knew our place: that we never forgot the nature of our relationship.

While we were small, they were big. While we were poor, they were rich. In no way should we confuse a bank with a shop. Shops were humble, vulgar places staffed by tradesmen. Banks were of a higher order altogether and staffed by professionals. We knew that banks were important – so we were touchingly grateful when they opened their doors as early as ten in the morning and didn't close until as late as three in the afternoon.

There are still some such bank interiors left and I urge you to find one. There is no better reminder of a world that once was than a glimpse of that intimidating marble – now hidden away from visitors like some incontinent relative.

A second significant happening in 1955 was, of course, the arrival of independent television. Not, please note, *commercial* television: commercial was a word that had been hijacked by the opposition because commercial was a dirty word. The clean word was independent. The Television Bill had occupied more Parliamentary time than had been devoted to any previous Bill this century and it had provoked fierce passions on both sides. The quietest voice was the voice of the public. When asked, the viewing public replied quite mildly that on the whole it would prefer a second television channel to be financed by advertising rather than have to pay for it themselves: but, in the spirit of the day, this sentiment was largely ignored. This was consistent with the prevailing view that the public, like children, was never going to know what was good for it. That was the function of their elders and betters.

The establishment was still some way from acknowledging that people had become important.

But ITV happened. And within five years or so, television had become much the most famous advertising medium. Within seven, it was national. And it brought cornflakes and jingles and indigestion remedies into even the grandest of people's drawing rooms. It was, in the very best of senses, irredeemably vulgar.

So, starting in 1955, we had a population that was beginning to have some real discretionary income and therefore some power; we had producers with surplus output who were increasingly aware of their need to compete for the people's custom; we had a new and intrusive advertising medium; and on both sides of the Atlantic, advertisers and their agencies, out of pure competitive need, started trying to find out more about these newly self-confident potential customers.

If the market was no longer captive and compliant – however distasteful it might seem to the producers – then the market would have to be wooed. And if it was to be wooed successfully, it must first be understood.

Advertisers' knowledge of their consumers was at that time almost totally dependent on structured, quantified market research surveys. People were asked why they chose certain brands – and people replied in the spirit of the question. They bought a washing-powder because it got their clothes clean, a soap because it got *them* clean, bread because it was fresh and toothpaste because it made their teeth white. Knowledge of this kind was a great deal better than nothing but was simultaneously hugely misleading.

This view of consumer choice supported the belief that people, being rational, thrifty individuals, chose between competing products on the exclusive basis of what those products *did*. And this in turn both encouraged and supported the then-current USP school of advertising. Not many people had read *Reality in Advertising* but they all thought they knew what it said: it said that all advertising campaigns should contain a clear and rational verbal proposition, unique to the product and compelling in its ability to convert consumers from exclusive use of Brand X to exclusive use of Brand Y.

I have said rather carefully that this is what people thought they knew. That definition does nothing like justice to the full Rosser

Reeves thesis; but is, I think, a reasonable reflection of what most practitioners believed it to mean. And it certainly led to much repetitive, insensitive advertising that bore little common-sense relationship to real life. However, it seemed rationally-based – which meant it could be easily argued through; and much of it coincided with market success – so the doubters were reduced to plaintive mutterings from the side-lines.

I remember even then wondering why grown men, who were alleged to need a simple, unique and rational reason for selecting a beer, found no such need when selecting a wife. (And the same for women, of course; though I hope you saw the incomparable Mrs Merton on television last year. When interviewing the wife of Paul Daniels, she said: “And tell me, Debbie, what first attracted you to the multi-millionaire?” That’s what I call a USP.)

The new competitive need to learn more about the consuming public led to growing doubts, not about the value of quantified research but about its comprehensiveness. Qualitative research began proving its worth. New and important questions began to be asked – and new theories tentatively proposed.

Still in 1955, the March-April edition of the Harvard Business Review carried a paper that deserves to be even more famous than it is. It was called *The Product and the Brand*, it was written by Burleigh B. Gardner and Sidney J. Levy – and here are just a few of the thoughts it contained:

“Basic to many of the problems of advertising and selling is the question . . . of the consumers’ . . . conception of the brand.”
“The quantitative approach, which we used to have to rely on, only brings us part way to finding the kind of answers we need; now we can take a distinct step forward.” “The consumer, who generally believes that well-known brands will quite adequately perform their intended functions, gets a glazed feeling at the scholarly astuteness required to distinguish between insistently repetitive claims.”

When examining the way that people form judgments about competitive objects in their heads, the authors write: “The net result is a public image, a character or personality that may be more important for the overall status (and sales) of the brand than many technical facts about the product. Conceiving of a brand in this way calls for a re-thinking of brand advertising.” And they finish with this thought: “. . . it is more profitable to think of an advertisement as a contribution to the complex symbol which is the brand image – as part of the *long-term investment in the reputation of the brand.*”

All this, back in 1955, was remarkable stuff. David Ogilvy seized on the paper – and in a speech in Chicago later that year, quoted it approvingly. It endorsed and explained much of what his agency was already doing instinctively.

Even today, it’s good stuff – and well worth re-reading. It’s sensible, sensitive and practical. They didn’t pretend to have invented the concept of brands, of course. As Sir Michael Perry’s Lecture of four years ago reminded us, brands had already been developing, on both sides of the Atlantic, for some 60 years. But brands, though brought into this world by manufacturers, are then adopted and developed by their users. So by 1955, many of those users had a far better understanding of those brands than their owners. What Burleigh and Levy did was to help the rest of us catch up.

By shedding light on the relationship between brands and buyers, they helped advertisers and their agencies think about brands and brand advertising in a way that related far more accurately to real life; and in doing so, it protected the buying, choosing public from much strident, repetitive and irrelevant salesmanship.

That coincidence of interest between advertisers and their audience should have been hailed as one of the better defining moments in the history of our trade.

Instead, by an extraordinarily savage twist of fate, indirectly and quite undeservedly, it heralded the loudest, longest and most hostile challenge to advertising that advertising had ever experienced.

Burleigh B. Gardner and Sidney J. Levy were practising members of a new consultancy industry called Motivational Research: and it was, of course, Motivational Researchers who, only 18 months later, Vance Packard demonised so successfully in *The Hidden Persuaders*.

Very few people actually read *The Hidden Persuaders* – but everybody knew what it was about. Everybody knew it was about advertising. The fact that they were wrong was irrelevant: because they thought it was about advertising it became to be about advertising.

The key word was manipulate. In Packard's book, consumers were being reduced to mindless slaves of consumerism, exposed to invisible psycho-seductive techniques which impelled them to spend money they didn't have on goods they didn't want.

Many of the Motivational Researchers had sinister, eastern European names which of course greatly contributed to the shiver-factor. And you only had to read about the Minnesota multiphasic personality inventory to know that the end of self-determination was in sight.

Because the book appeared at exactly the same time as commentators were struggling to come to terms with the new materialism and the effects of affluence, it attracted the support of some respected names. Advertising was suddenly undisputed demon king.

If this was all pretty depressing stuff, so was much of the advertising trade's response.

The towering scale of the accusations made was more than matched by the counter-claims for advertising's virtues. Without advertising, it seemed, there could be no liberty for the individual, no free enterprise system, no economic growth, no democracy. Depending on which side of the Atlantic you happened to be on, to criticise advertising was to be either treasonable or unconstitutional. I fear the defence made no new friends for advertising.

I remind you of all this not to fight old battles; but because, yet again the people had been forgotten.

There were voices directed *at* the people; and there were voices claiming to speak *for* the people; but it was a very long time before anyone thought to find out *from* the people whether or not they minded being exposed to all this psycho-seduction and what had happened to them as a result.

In 1968, Harvard University published *Advertising in America: The Consumer View*. It reported the results of a large-scale national survey conducted by the Harvard Business School and this is what it found: that many Americans were irritated by certain specific advertisements; that their view of advertising was generally benign; that most of them valued it; that it came very low down on their hierarchy of concerns; and that they'd been largely unaware of all the shrapnel that had been flying over their heads on their behalf.

But by 1968, of course, it had already become a lot more peaceful on the Western Front.

Once again, the superior voices, in voicing concern for the peasants, had neglected to ask the peasants what they thought.

I have more faith in the peasants, just as I have in Adam Smith's hidden hand. Given freedom from poverty and access to choice, the peasants generally get things right. And since we're all part

of the peasantry ourselves, I hope you agree.

Quite recently, entirely by chance, I stumbled on some deeply unscientific support for this belief.

Three of us, idly, one lunchtime, were wondering if there could be such things as highly successful products that were also universally unpopular. There were to be no subjective judgments here; no middle-class sneers about Blue Nun or flying ducks. We were looking for things which sold in their millions and which nobody liked.

The first candidate to emerge was the TetraPak. I have yet to meet anyone who can open a TetraPak. Encouraged, we then came up with portion-control butter. Then electric hand-drying machines. And finally, triumphantly, wire coat hangers.

You may remember that wire coat hangers featured in one of Frank Muir's Great Universal Truths. It went like this: "It is a universal truth that wire coat hangers, if left alone in a dark cupboard, breed."

As any hotelier will confirm, good coat hangers get stolen. Wire coat hangers multiply.

And then of course we realised what this ill-assorted list had in common: other, of course, than selling in their millions and being universally unpopular.

None of them is a primary consumer choice; they all exist for the convenience and profit of an intermediary.

How many of your friends have electric hand-dryers in their downstairs cloakrooms or serve portion-control butter when you drop round for tea? These dismal objects are like the old bank opening hours: there for the convenience not of the user but the provider.

(I was tempted at this stage to include in the list, for exactly that reason, our existing voting system for Westminster. But I decided that would have been a gross abuse of the occasion, so I'll just say this: I'd rather have a wire coat hanger any day.)

Advertising's response to attack was almost guiltily extreme. And it was odd that we were so slow to consult the people. I think it possible that we thought then, and still to some extent think now, that our relationship with our audience is an adversarial one: that it's part of our job to overcome their caginess, their inertia, their parsimony, their loyalty to others; that we are not so much in competition with others for the public's custom as in competition with the public itself.

My evidence for this suspicion is flimsy, but I'll advance it anyway. The language of advertising, as many have pointed out before me, is often military in origin. We run advertising campaigns; we prefer the rifle shot to the blunderbuss; we talk of target groups. If the job of advertising is to present competitive brands attractively – to woo the choosers – then it seems odd that we should adopt the words of warfare.

But to me, the real give-away is our preoccupation with what we persistently refer to as 'increasing consumer sophistication.' It seems to me that every marketing document and every advertising brief for the last 44 years has alluded to the increasing sophistication of our consumers. Where, I sometimes wonder, will it all end? Just how sophisticated can our consumers become before disappearing up their own cigarette holders?

But that's not what we mean at all, of course. What I suspect we mean is that it's getting harder; that you can't get away with it so easily any more; that the public's wising up.

I would not dispute for a moment that people's ability to decode advertising has changed. So has their ability to decode television programmes, news items and comic strips. It is a constantly evolving relationship: and certainly not on the single dimension of sophistication. (And how, I sometimes wonder, do we reconcile our stated belief in the constantly increasing sophistication of the consumer with our equal conviction that all we see everywhere is evidence of dumbing down?)

The J Walter Thompson agency in Warsaw, JWTP, has recently published a fascinating study of the Polish consumer. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the markets opened up and Polish consumers underwent an accelerated learning process. In the next six years, as the study shows, they were confronted with marketing and advertising concepts that had taken their counterparts in Western Europe 40 years to digest and respond to.

But this was not a process that took them in six years from gullible innocents to streetwise sceptics: it was a natural and inevitable sequence that took them from the unknown through to the unfamiliar and then on to new loyalties; from no choice to some choice to, in some cases, bewildering choice.

If we are in competition not *with* our audience, but rather with our competitors *for* that audience, then any belief that it's all getting harder makes no sense at all. How can it be getting harder all the time for us – but never for our competitors?

The task for brand advertising, I believe, has changed very little over time: and has certainly changed less than some of the conflicting theories would suggest. And let me remind you – because it's a long time since I mentioned it – that I'm talking specifically here about brand advertising for established, fast-moving brands in mature consumer markets.

Again, I see a discrepancy between the theories of advertising and marketing people and the observable behaviour of real people.

Every year, thousands of brand marketing plans are written and agreed, and mostly they include some measurable ambition: to grow share or volume or margin. And every year, many are disappointed. In competitive markets, mostly mature, how could it be otherwise?

And yet, every year, on average, with external factors excluded, brand advertising support is relentlessly increased.

I do not have to remind this audience that all advertisers advertise reluctantly.

Agencies may be delighted when advertising expenditures increase year-on-year – and so may the media: but it gives no pleasure to the companies who are paying for it. If they could do as well with less or no expenditure, you can be sure they would. (And that's just one of the reasons that advertising will never qualify as an industry.)

So what's going on? Year after year of disappointment, and year after year of renewed and often enhanced expenditure.

Professor Andrew Ehrenberg, once of the London Business School and now of the South Bank University, has been consistent on this subject for a great many years. He continues to think and write with a wonderful rigour and his views are invariably based on his observations of what real people actually do rather than what marketing theorists think they ought to do.

He is not the only person to have made these points and I shall do them no justice by synthesising them: but these, in my words, not his, are some of the essentials.

In the kind of markets I have defined, the exclusive user – the solus user – is a very rare bird indeed. Advertisers who set out to convert people from choosing Brand A to choosing Brand B are likely to be disappointed.

Most people – most of us – find most competitive brands acceptable: that's why they're competitive. The concept of parity products doesn't worry consumers nearly as much as it worries marketing directors. Real people don't need to be fed tortuously contrived competitive claims in order to exercise brand preference.

Most of us have clusters of brands which we find perfectly satisfactory. We will allocate share of choice within this repertoire according to chance, promotions, advertising, availability, price, impulse or recommendation.

Brands may move in or out of that repertoire: but only infrequently. Brand shares tend to remain quite stable over time.

The bigger the size of a brand's user-base, the stronger the brand. (This is not as tautological as it may seem at first hearing.)

The most important characteristic a strong brand must possess is what Ehrenberg calls salience: it stands out; it is high on the list of candidate choices; it is thought about. For me, this implies a kind of fame.

The major role for advertising for brands such as this is not persuasion – in the sense of persuading people to change their behaviour or even their attitudes. The major role is to provide publicity for the brand; to spotlight the brand; to maintain and increase the brand's salience and celebrity. In this way, the brand will remain on people's mental choice-list; may even be chosen rather more frequently; but still only very seldom to the exclusion of all others.

This is more to do with brand maintenance than with brand building: but it is legitimate, indeed necessary, expenditure. A brand may enjoy a 20 per cent market share; but this means that 80 per cent of the market is against it. Given these circumstances, to defend brand share and maintain brand strength must be seen as success.

Many people in advertising find these views deeply depressing. To those of us who have addressed annual sales conferences, urging the troops to double their efforts and their market share by the end of the third quarter, Ehrenbergian realism can sound unheroic, unambitious, even defeatist. Real men don't set zero-growth targets. But realism it is.

It is based accurately on how real people behave. And so it is the only model that, retrospectively, explains market behaviour and marketing expenditure.

I referred at the beginning of this talk to that kind of advertising that inexplicably we call classified: the kind of advertising that people choose to go looking for.

The kind of publicity that brands need is, of course, the kind that has to go looking for people: the kind we still sometimes called display.

Because brand advertising has to draw attention to itself. If it's skilfully done, it will be at worst tolerated and at best warmly received; but it will never be an invited guest.

And it occurred to me only recently that to call such advertising 'Display' was not only inspired but inspirational.

In the world of zoology, display is what peacocks do when they're anxious to impress a peahen or two. Its dictionary definition is this: *Display*: 'A pattern of behaviour *by which the animal attracts attention while courting.*'

And of course, competitive publicity should always be in courting mode. From the early turn-of-the-century posters to present-day television extravaganzas, this is exactly what the best brand publicity does. It parades itself with pride and confidence: flattering the object of its desires; flaunting its multi-coloured magnificence; inviting comparison with its paler rivals. “Look at me,” it says. “Remember me. Choose me. I don’t just *do* something: I *am* something.”

There are many media capable of fulfilling this function. It was done perfectly well before the dominance of network television and it will survive if that medium fragments. Because the thing about brand publicity is that it is not dependent on conventional media advertising.

A consistent programme of product innovation allied to public relations can do it. Sponsorship can do it: and so can stunts and product placement and brand extensions and wholly-owned retail chains and editorial. The great fashion houses have been doing it this way for years.

Effective brand publicity is no easier to execute than effective brand persuasion. It still needs ideas – and probably bigger and broader ideas at that.

For all my enthusiasm for listening to the audience, listening is where it starts, not stops. I am not advocating marketing by focus group.

I want to know what people think; and I want to know what people do; but I do not expect them to tell us what we should do next. I’m advocating exposing our audience to new thoughts, new excitements, new ideas: of kinds that belong inseparably to the nature of their brands.

Such work will hold brand share, build brand strength, protect distribution and sustain good margins for the brand owners. And, because such an approach matches how real people think and choose and buy, it may also, I somewhat nervously suggest, be found to be both useful and agreeable by its audience.

By now, you will all have noticed an internal contradiction. I have spoken at inordinate length about the importance of audience: and have ignored you, my own audience, totally. Thank you very much for coming and for listening so patiently.

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International Journal of Advertising, Vol 14 No 3 1995

Jeremy Bullmore

Jeremy Bullmore was born in 1929. He went from school to National Service, then to Oxford where he spent two years not reading English. His first job, in 1954, was as a trainee copywriter with J Walter Thompson in London, and he stayed with that agency until his retirement in 1987. He became successively copywriter, writer/producer, creative group head and head of television; then from 1964 to 1975, head of the creative department and from 1976 to 1987, chairman, London. He was a member of the J Walter Thompson worldwide board and, from 1981 to 1987, chairman of the Advertising Association.

Since 1988 Jeremy Bullmore has been a non-executive director of the Guardian Media Group and WPP Group. He has continued to write and speak regularly about advertising and marketing (he is a columnist for *Marketing*, *Market Leader* and *Management Today*) and is currently President of NABS. He was awarded a CBE in 1985.

He is married to Pamela, a garden designer and writer. They have three grown-up children and live in London and Wiltshire.

The new, bumper edition of his book *Behind the Scenes in Advertising* was published in June 1998.

WPP Group plc

Advertising

Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide
J. Walter Thompson Company
Asatsu¹
Conquest
Cole & Weber
Batey¹
Equus¹

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MindShare
The Media Partnership¹
Portland Outdoor¹
CIA²

Information & consultancy

The Kantar Group:
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Millward Brown
Kantar Media Research
– AGB Italia
– BMRB International
– IBOPE Media Information¹
– Symmetrical Resources¹/Simmons¹
Goldfarb Consultants
IMRB International¹
Winona Group
Center Partners

Public relations & public affairs

Hill and Knowlton
Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide
Timmons and Company
The Wexler Group
Carl Byoir & Associates
Buchanan Communications
Chime Communications PLC¹

Specialist communications

Branding, identity & corporate consultancy
Addison
Banner McBride
BDG McColl
Brouillard
Coley Porter Bell
Enterprise IG
SBG Enterprise
JWT Specialized Communications
Scott Stern

Direct, promotion & relationship marketing

A. Eicoff & Co
Brierley & Partners¹
Credit Call Research¹
Einson Freeman
EWA
Mando Marketing
Oakley Young
OgilvyOne Worldwide
Primary Contact
Promotional Campaigns Group
RMG International
ROCQM
RTCdirect
Grass Roots Group¹
ThompsonConnect Worldwide

Strategic marketing consulting

The Futures Group¹
The Henley Centre
Management Ventures
MSI Consulting/Charles River
Strategies
Planners¹
Quadra Advisory¹

Sector marketing
Demographic marketing
The Geppetto Group
The Intuition Group
Mendoza Dillon & Asociados

Foodservice
The Food Group

Healthcare
CommonHealth

Investor relations
International Presentations¹

PR and sports marketing
PRISM Group

Real estate
Pace

Retail
Walker Group/CNI

Technology
Smith and Jones

Media and technology services
The Clever Group
Savatar
The Farm¹

New media investments
NewsEdge Corporation²
Media Technology Equity Partners³
Media Technology Ventures³
Peapod²
Syzygy²

¹Associate investment

²Minority investment

³Venture Fund

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www.wpp.com

WPP Group plc
27 Farm Street
London W1X 6RD

Tel 44-171 408-2204 Fax 44-171 493-6819

WPP Group USA Inc
309 West 49th Street
New York NY 10019-7399

Tel 1-212 632-2200 Fax 1-212 632-2222