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Book reviews

Sinclair, J. (2012). *Advertising, the media, and globalization: A world in motion*. Abingdon: Routledge. 168 pp.

Many people, laypersons and academics alike, like to think of advertising as the root of all evil, whether it is the ever-increasing problem of obesity in the Western world, the commercialization of culture, or modern consumerism. The book *Advertising, the media, and globalization: A world in motion* by John Sinclair puts such thoughts into perspective by describing recent and current developments in the advertising and media industry across the globe.

The focus of the book is not on advertising effectiveness, but on advertising as an industry and on its (changing) relationship with agencies and the media in an increasingly globalized, interconnected world. The author takes a social science perspective and provides historical overviews and empirical evidence regarding (theoretical positions on) the role of advertising, globalization, and destabilization of the manufacturing/marketing/media complex, as it is referred to throughout the book. The scholarly perspective makes the book a breath of fresh air, and a counterweight to the many ‘guru books’ that ride without much critical reflection on the waves of new trends in, for example, social media and claim that the world will never be the same while failing to look back in history to see if this claim is warranted. This book, in contrast, examines trends in an analytical way.

The book does an excellent job of describing how the relatively comfortable relationship between advertising, agencies, and media throughout the golden age of mass media, and the meaning of advertising are changing with the rise of new media and globalizing markets. By providing a detailed description of relevant developments in advertising, in the advertising industry, in the media, and in different cultures over the last decades, it becomes clear how changes in advertising go hand in hand with changes in media, society, and research. For instance, the book describes that when advertising was mostly about advertisements (in the eighties), research focused on advertising as promoting ‘commodity fetishism’, ‘imperialization of the psyche’, and ‘mass consumption’. In the heydays of advertising – in the nineties – that have recently regained attention due to the popular *Mad Men* TV series, research also shifted to ‘informal cultures and subjective identities of advertising practitioners’. The helicopter view the author provides to readers makes the book stand out by allowing readers to form their own opinion about ‘good or bad’ aspects of advertising and advertising research.

Readers also get a good grasp of current developments in the advertising industry, the main focus of the book. The chapter ‘Advertising and the media in motion’, for example, describes how different parties are struggling to adjust to a changing media landscape. With the rise of the internet, and Google as key player in the field of search engines, several functions originally ‘owned’ by advertising agencies – who traditionally mediate between advertisers and media – have become obsolete; ‘old’ media are looking for new ways to maintain ‘control’ over and monetize content. Sinclair also points to the fact that the changing media landscape has empowered consumers in some ways, for instance, by enabling them expressing complaints on social media, but also by increasing the opportunity for advertisers to ‘enslave’ consumers and exploit personal information online, for example, by making consumers voice their opinions in the production process (in co-creation processes), by expressing personal identities through brands, or by ‘liking’ brands online. This chapter is perhaps the most exciting chapter of the book. It reads well, and it nicely describes interdependencies between advertisers, agencies, media, and consumers. It shows the author knows the field like the back of his hand.

Other chapters read a bit more like an encyclopedia. The second chapter, for example, outlines the stages by which advertising came to be a global industry in terms of clients, media and agencies. It also describes the rise of ‘mega groups’, and demonstrates how the globalization of the media played a major role in this process. Although this chapter is needed to put recent trends into context, I found it less exciting than other chapters. The chapter on globalization gives an empirical overview of key players on different continents and in different nations, and may be best used to look up relevant facts.

The book is relevant for any academic working in the domains of advertising and media, but will probably be well received especially among readers with an interest in cultural and sociological factors involved in the advertising and media industry. It may also be what smart students have been craving for: a book that does a nice job of incorporating recent developments that already constitute such a great part of their daily lives.

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Chouliaraki, L. (2013). *The ironic spectator: Solidarity in the age of post-humanitarianism*. Cambridge: Polity. 238 pp.

It might be premature to identify something as grand and deliberate as a ‘moral turn’ in the analysis of the media. But it is possible to identify a constellation of concerns focusing on how the media influence – or don’t – the relationship