



The BRANDcasting on the example of advertorials

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Introduction

Brandcasting is an emerging, unprecedented process in media environment where the pull strategy prevails. It is based on commercial hybrid content that engages consumers by means of relevance, entertainment, and information. Commercial hybrid content includes native advertising, content marketing, brand journalism, sponsored content, advertorial (ADL) and many other terms coined to describe similar practices in the fields of advertising, digital marketing, PRs, entertainment, and infotainment. More than 60% of the surveyed American adults say sponsored content hurt the credibility of media outlets. Other studies showed that it was challenging for readers to recognize the persuasive nature of such advertisements (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). There are many legitimate concerns about the blending of design and content of advertorials with content pages.

An advertorial (advertisement and editorial) is defined as a paid messages in the press sponsored by organized interests to create and sustain a favorable environment to pursue their respective goals. It is an advertisement masquerading as a journalistic article, blurring the dividing line between editorial content and promotion. ADL looks congruent with the design, length, content, domain, and other general aspects of press content from an editorial point of view. This way ADL is perceived as primarily informative.

Therefore, a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of advertorials is needed to digest and deconstruct this controversial promotional tool. To accomplish this goal, this study conducted a content analysis of 657 advertorials of "Newsweek", "Politics" and "Time", the most widely circulated and read weekly newsmagazine in 2020/2021. The findings revealed the placement of ADL: proportions of commercial and non-commercial content (table 1), typologies of ADL (table 2), types of sponsors (table 3) and the visibility of sponsor disclosures (table 4).

Results

Business interests - "corporations" retain a privileged position in terms of advertorial (table 3). "All cause groups" (e.g. citizen and public interest groups, social welfare organizations, civil rights groups), and "Other Economic" organizations (e.g. trade associations) are more often represented in "Time" than in polish weeklies.

The results showed that more than half of the ADLs disclosed the sponsor but it was given secondary placement. A closer examination showed that sponsors were often mentioned as a source (91,3%). About one third of the sample cited three or more sources.

Most of the ADLs (60.1%) had a function-based association with the "journalistic" story and the connection was usually clear.

Prominent placement of sponsors in the headlines and/or leads occurred in 2.2% of the sample. ADLs often include a variety of brand-related information, such as advice, benefits or promises, sponsor/brand history, and its involvement in promoting a social cause.

A majority of ADLs in three weeklies were full-page (79.8%), also followed by full-page advertisements.

Table 2 provides data regarding the running of "image advertorials" (75-93,8%) which effort is to explain what an organized interest is (name identification), what it does (mission explanation), and generally to create a favorable public opinion environment in which the organized interest can operate now and in the future. "Advocacy advertorials" support for the interest's viewpoints on controversial issues of public values or policy (Brown & Herbert Waltzer, 2009). They are most often published in "Polityka", which is an polish opinion-forming weekly for the highly educated target.

Tab.1. Proportions of commercial and non-commercial content

Title of weeklies	Non-commercial editorial content (%)	Traditional advertisements	Advertisements adjacent to ADL	Contextual ADL	Single ADL
Newsweek	78.6	17	1.3	1.4	1.7
Politics	83	16	0.2	0.3	0.5
Time	64,7	34	0.3	0.3	0.7

Tab. 2. The number of image versus advocacy advertorials

Title	Image ADL (%)	Advocacy ADL (%)
Newsweek	93.8	6.2
Politics	75	25
Time	86	14

Tab. 3. Types of sponsors

Title	Corporation (%)	Other Economic	All Cause	Institution	Government
Newsweek	87,3	2,3	2,3	4,7	3,4
Politics	53,8	7,5	6,2	25,7	6,8
Time	62,1	13,5	17,6	3,5	3,3

Table 4. The placement of sponsor-funded content, prominence of and clarity of promotional meaning

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	no match
Clear visibility of sponsor/brand	2,2	87,8	10,0
The sponsor/brand does not appear directly - other references - e.g. the statement of the company's representative	91.3	3.8	4.9
No information about the sponsor (only advertisement adjacent to ADL)	56.4	17,6	26.0
Slogan was integrated with a title or lead of ADL	2.2	85.0	12.8
The message of company was clearly recognizable	60.1	32.8	7.1

Conclusion

The newspaper advertorial borrows, or just steals editorial credibility from the newspaper and pollutes reliable information. There, of course, might be a place for such kind of advertisements, but they should be more thoroughly distinguished form editorial content than is currently the case. As shown in the article, media do not place sponsor disclosures prominently.

According to disbelief, distrust, and suspicion are likely to be activated only when consumers are aware of the persuasion attempt of the persuasion agent (Martin & Smith 2008) as would be the case with a required disclosure. When either the attempt or the role of the agent is not evident, consumers are left to process concealed marketing efforts without the defense mechanisms. They will not be as likely to discredit the message or the source what is the aim of AVL. Purchase decisions may be based, in part on the perceived credibility of the message and source. Policy-makers should consider requiring disclosure when brand mention in editorials is sponsored or paid.

