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"Selling Themselves: Advertisers' Path to Professionalism"

Looking at advertising, a controversial issue has been whether or not advertising is a legitimate profession. On the one hand, some argue that advertising is an industry based on exploiting consumer's desires. It is often said that advertisements portray fictitious representations of lavish and exotic lifestyles in an attempt to persuade the consumer that the only way of attaining these luxuries is by buying their product. On the other hand, others argue that advertising is one of the driving forces of success for most, if not all, of major companies throughout America. In the words of Pamela Laird, by the turn of the 20th century advertising practitioners began to both "broaden their range of functions and to argue for a new basis of professional legitimations."¹ According to this view, advertisers had been fighting for the respect of their industry since the early 20th century. In sum, the issue is whether advertising is an unconventional or legitimate profession.

In this paper I will be arguing that advertising saw itself as a profession because of three crucial factors that occurred during the early 20th century. First the Truth-In-Advertising Movement. Second, the evolution of advertising during World War I. Third, the overall growth and expansion of the advertising industry between approximately 1890-1920. In all of these sections, I will use advertising trade journals that were popular at the time. Granted, there are other factors that played a role in the evolution of the advertising industry attaining professional status but these three factors are the most relevant.

¹ Pamela Laird, "From Success to Progress: The Professionalization and Legitimization of Advertising Practitioners, 1890-1920", *Business and Economic History* 21 (1992): 307.

What is a Profession?

Before continuing, we need to determine what exactly counts as a ‘profession’. Philip Elliott writes on the topic of profession in Britain and discusses the terms origin and significance. Originally, in 18th century Britain, professions were only affiliated with the Church. Rashdall is quoted saying that in northern Europe, “the church was simply a synonym for the professions.”² The Church was the elite class in 18th century society. Professions association with the elite is what gave professions such high status in society. This was due in part from the Reformation and its influence on the separation between Church and State. A century later and many occupational groups became to emerge and separate themselves from the Church. The occupations that became to emerge included teachers and physicians. Moreover, the separation from the Church led to occupations to develop separate from the religious orthodoxy, like legal professions. Elliot also states that professionalism in pre-industrial British society was less important as a method of organizing but more important as a means of “ensuring status and an appropriate lifestyle.”³ As other occupations began to emerge after separating from the Church, the split between what was an occupation and what was a profession grew. Elliott explains that the reason behind these new specialized occupations being different to the high-status professions is that these new occupations did not offer the “individual practitioner any opportunity for outstanding individual success and acclamation.” and that these new occupations did not adopt the Church mediated “theoretical knowledge” that was prevalent in 18th century British society.⁴ Elliott even gives a definition for the word occupation, saying that the word is commonly used as “an indicator of status and, perhaps with less theoretical justification, as an indicator of class membership, in all

² Philip Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) pg. 18. Also refer to Rashdall’s “The Medieval Universities”, 3 vols (Oxford, 1936).

³ Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, pg. 22.

⁴ Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, pg. 22.

sorts of sociological studies.”⁵ As time progressed from the 18th century to the 19th century, two other themes are found in professions through Elliott’s research. The first being that historically a profession had internal organizations created to help run itself and the other being that there needed to be a certain amount of education needed in order to attain the profession.

Elliott’s insight on professionalism in early British society helps better our definition of profession. In sum, Elliott’s analysis tells us that the title of “elite-status” is a synonym for “professional status”. Moreover, professions then are an organized body of people who had to receive a certain amount of education in order to get even get the profession. How does this ideology relate to the advertising industry’s search for professional recognition? The advertising industry is a branch of business and like the professions that branched off of the Church, advertising wanted to be represented as having the same professional recognition as their contemporaries.

Now that we have a better idea of where the prestige of the title profession came from, we can see why the advertising industry wanted to obtain professional status. Pamela Laird’s article focuses on the transformation that the advertising industry took in order to gain professional recognition. Laird states that between the years 1890 and 1920 the industry adapted to the rapidly changing business environment by changing their clients, their services, and their rhetoric. Laird claims that the advertising industry and their advocates began to argue for professional status since it was a “necessary contributor to national progress, both material and cultural”.⁶ Laird argues here that advertising by the 20th century was an integral part of business

⁵ Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, pg. 15.

⁶ Laird, “From Success to Progress: The Professionalization and Legitimization of Advertising Practitioners, 1890-1920”, 307.

practices for some of the largest firms in the United States and therefore, advertising should be recognized as a profession.

Due to 20th century manufacturers' desire to expand demand and generate high volume sales in both the domestic and international markets, new roles and responsibilities were adopted by the advertising industry. In the 20th century, manufacturers began to encounter challenges like added costs of product distribution to retailers and the threat of product substitution. In an attempt to resolve these issues, manufacturers strove for innovations in marketing and advertising. More importantly, manufacturers began to use advertising trademarks as the "key to controlling" the "market dynamics of consumer products".⁷ These trademarks were a method used by advertising to control the demand for a product, so if a consumer liked the product, they simply asked the retailer for more of that trademarked product. The advertising industry gradually saw their opportunity to integrate themselves with businesses because of manufacturers' needs, which led advertising agencies to hire copywriters, artists, and campaign planners. These specialists sought to bring maximum efficiency and effectiveness to advertisements. Laird's article demonstrates that the professional standards and specialized services adopted by advertising agencies were caused by manufacturers' new demands and that these new practices represented how advertisers wanted to be seen as an effective partner of business.

The Truth-In-Advertising Movement

⁷ Pamela Laird, "The Business of Progress: The Transformation of American Advertising, 1870-1920", *Business and Economic History* 22, no. 1 (1993): 14, 15.

The Truth-in-Advertising Movement emerged in the late 19th century and ended after 1938 with the Wheeler-Lea Amendment. During the 1870s and 1880s, advertisements were an occasional service performed by advertisers and the advertising industry was incredibly small compared to the following decade. Since the industry was so small and relevantly insignificant, it led most advertising journals at the time not to stress the importance for truth in advertisements. Due to the advertising industry's small size, advertising agents had less reason to be actively involved with the contents of their advertisements compared to their later counterparts.⁸ When advertising began to blossom at the turn of the 20th century, advertisers began to address the issue of false advertising, giving life to the Truth-in-Advertising Movement.

The main contributors of these false advertisements included; promotion of fake medicines, land frauds, selling worthless corporate stock, running a 'fake' marriage bureau, and selling a non-existent feature on a product.⁹ The promotion of fake medicines were the most common among false advertisements during the Gilded Age. An example of a fake medicine advertisement is found in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*. The advertisement, published in 1879, states that a medicine by the name "Constitution Water" had the ability of healing inflammation in the kidneys, stones in the bladder, and even offered the ludicrous curative powers of curing "childhood weaknesses."¹⁰ While humorous, these medicine promotions were taken seriously by 19th century consumers and as a result, these advertisements deeply hurt advertiser's credibility and legitimacy. Historian Daniel Pope explains that medicine makers were notoriously deceitful advertisers, since advertising their medicine honestly compelled them to admit that their drug

⁸ Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York: Basic Books 1983), 186.

⁹ Milton Handler, "False and Misleading Advertising", *The Yale Law Journal* 39, no. 1 (1929): 28.

¹⁰ "The Patent Medicine Industry: 19th Century Advertisements", <http://www.cincymuseum.org>, published July 7, 2017 and accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.cincymuseum.org/blog/patent-medicine-industry-19th-century-advertisements>. Also refer to *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 1879. Located within the CMC Newspaper Collection.

lacked certain curative powers.¹¹ In matters of uncertain personal health issues, consumers bought whatever medicine that was advertised as helping their ‘health issue’. Publishers during the Gilded Age received so many false ads about patent medicines that a scrapbook was created containing medicine ads that were turned down, this scrapbook was in turn named “Medical Advertisements Not Accepted”.¹²

These false advertisements not only hurt businesses and consumer loyalty but it destroyed the credibility of advertisers and the advertising industry. The importance of advertising credibility being tarnished by false advertisements is explained further by the Pope. He writes about the rotten apple theory of advertising. Simply put, one false statement in an advertisement could weaken its effect; one false advertisement might injure a seller’s credibility permanently; one discredited advertiser could harm the advertising of others. This domino effect of advertising’s credibility getting tarnished was occurring rapidly during the latter 19th century and led people to see that advertising as unprofessional.¹³ The reason behind there being so many false advertisements is because the advertising industry had no means of regulating and maintaining the honesty and truth in advertisements. When a consumer was lied to by an advertisement, he or she had no one to go to in order to be reimbursed or compensated for the product they were misled to buy. Only a few states had laws against the falsehoods in advertisements, but in court judges weren’t very supportive of consumers who bought the products that were falsely advertised. These judges argued, according to Milton Handler, “it was folly to rely up on glowing representations” and that a consumer “should have made a personal

¹¹ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 187

¹² Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 189. Also refer to “Medical Advertisements not Accepted”, v. 0-4, E.C. Allen Collection, Harvard Business School, Baker Library.

¹³ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 185, 191.

examination or relied upon the advice of competent, reliable and impartial persons”.¹⁴ Handler goes further to even state that “the courts can be of little utility in a campaign against false advertising”.¹⁵ Handler’s statement demonstrates how the court system was little help in compensating misled consumers and more importantly how there was a need for better regulation on how to conduct a false advertising case.

Legislation on false advertising had been asked for by the advertising industry since around the late 19th century, as false advertisements were frequently displayed throughout America. One of the biggest struggles for the Movement to get any form of legislation to fight against false advertisements turned on the issue of opinion. An advertisement exaggerates a product’s functionality to persuade a consumer to buy it instead of another. These exaggerations were usually the reason for consumers going to court for false advertising. A phrase like “these second hand tires are as good as new” from the court's perspective were a matter of opinion, and the purchaser was not eligible for compensation.¹⁶ For example, in the case of *Harrison v. United States*, a man purchased a hand-operated vacuum cleaner that was advertised as having “a constant and terrific suction” and for cleaning carpets “with little physical effort and that the device would remove housecleaning.” Although the purchaser was very displeased with the device’s performance the court stated that using phrases “terrific suction” and “remove housecleaning” cannot be thought of as criminal since the advertising merely “exaggerated the quality and extent of the work the machine would do”. Furthermore, the court concluded that “parties who have anything to sell have the habit of puffing [matters of opinion] their wares, and

¹⁴ Handler, “False and Misleading Advertising”, 24.

¹⁵ Handler, “False and Misleading Advertising”, 27.

¹⁶ Handler, “False and Misleading Advertising”, 26.

we are all familiar with the fact it is a very prevalent thing in the course of business to exaggerate the merits of goods people have to sell”.¹⁷

The Movement grew quickly during the turn of the 20th century and reflected the growth of the advertising industry. Growth in the industry saw advertising organizations and clubs start to form. The Associated Advertising Clubs of the World was an advertising organization that formed to take the first steps in policing these false advertisements. The A. A. C. W. was a world-wide coalition of all advertising clubs and was originally created in 1906 but changed its name to the A. A. C. W. in 1914 and, in the words of H.J. Donnelly, was an organization that patrolled “the avenues of paid publicity, keeping it free from the evils and nuisances that were creeping in, in the forms of untruths, exaggerations, and frauds.”¹⁸ The A. A. C. W. aimed to protect the advertising industry from false advertisements through a branch called the National Vigilance Committee. The A. A. C. W. also sponsored the creation of local branches called Better Business Bureaus. In 1924 there were 314 advertising clubs and twenty-five affiliated associations representing up to 30,000 advertising men. The creation of these clubs were very much needed since it was variously estimated that between \$600 million and \$1 billion was lost yearly by one million people through frauds of stock promotions, “something to nothing schemes”, and other various money making devices made in order to trick the public. In response, more than \$500,000 was being spent yearly for the sole purpose of protecting advertising, building up public confidence in advertising and in removing the frauds and fakers

¹⁷ Handler, “False and Misleading Advertising”, 29.

¹⁸ Herbert Hess, “History and Present Status of the “Truth-in-Advertising” Movement As Carried on by the Vigilance Committee of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 101 (1922): 214. H.J. Donnelly, “The Truth-in-Advertising Movement as It Affects the Wealth-Producing Factors in the Community”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 115 (1924): 162.

from advertising.¹⁹ As Donnelly argues, “if public confidence in advertising is destroyed or weakened by untruths, the whole industrial structure rests upon a shaky foundation”.²⁰ This helps us understand why the advertising industry wanted to protect their credibility by crafting a more professional image.

The Movement also grew dramatically thanks in part to advertising trade journals. One journal in particular, *Printers' Ink*, was at the forefront of the Movement and frequently published articles addressing the issue of false advertising. For example, George French, in 1920, reflected on advertising's past stating how “quality had little to do with advertising” and how older advertising was a “gamble and expedient”. French called on his readers to support the Movement, not just because of the falsehoods that were destroying advertising's credibility and consumer loyalty, but because of the financial stakes that were involved. Advertising was continuously growing into a powerful industry that aided the wealth of companies and firms throughout the country. If advertisements were all honest, then the consumer could rely on them to know which products were better than others, and businesses profited since their product wasn't being tarnished by the products that were being falsely advertised as being better. To be sure French stressed that the motive behind the Movement wasn't for the consumer but for the purpose of creating profits. French even says how the Movement wasn't meant to benefit the consumer at all.²¹ Thus, French's article demonstrates how the advertising industry aware of itself evolving into a financial powerhouse, especially for large corporations. Another article published by *Printers' Ink* in the same year titled “Honest Advertising to Aid American

¹⁹ Donnelly, “The Truth-in-Advertising Movement as It Affects the Wealth-Producing Factors in the Community”, 162, 165.

²⁰ Donnelly, “The Truth-in-Advertising Movement as It Affects the Wealth-Producing Factors in the Community”, 163.

²¹ French, “Truth, Advertising and Better Merchandise”, *Printers' Ink*, 158.

Products” discussed the need to strengthen advertising's credibility. This article, written by Roy Owens, stressed the importance of consumer loyalty. In order for the advertising industry to achieve credibility, advertisers needed to ensure that they showed an interest in the consumer. If they did not they were setting themselves up for failure. Owen writes that if you use honest advertising for American products, consumer confidence in advertising was a guarantee.²²

The Truth-in-Advertising Movement was still prevalent between the years 1910-1920. Even with advertisers attempting to regulate false advertisements, there still wasn't any official forum for defining a false advertisement, or means to those who falsely advertise of a product. And so Harry Nims, a New York lawyer, was hired by *Printers' Ink* to author a model statute on the legislation for false advertising. This model statute was an attempt to patch the holes of already existing state laws regarding false advertisements. It forbade any statement of fact in advertisements that was untrue, deceptive and or misleading. More importantly, it mandated punishable actions in the case of fraudulent advertising within this model law.²³ By 1913, the statute had been introduced in about fifteen states, Ohio being the first to enact the statute into law on February 26, 1913. A decade later and Nims statute had been implemented in 23 states by 1921. Unfortunately, only misrepresentations of fact were prohibited by the model act which led courts to exempt cases of puffing by regarding them as matters of opinion.²⁴ Until later regulation on false advertising, Nims statute was only enforced in court primarily when moral persuasion had failed, yet it still had a significance in establishing the advertising industry's seriousness in regards to retaining their credibility.²⁵

²² Roy Owens, “Honest Advertising to Aid American Products”, *Printers; Ink* 1920, 182.

²³ “On the Printers’ Ink Model Statute,” www.hoofnagle.berkeley.edu, last modified September 24, 2014. <https://hoofnagle.berkeley.edu/2014/09/24/on-the-printers-ink-model-statute/>.

²⁴ Handler, “False and Misleading Advertising”, 32, 34.

²⁵ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 206.

Nims law also influenced advertising organizations to take part in patrolling their profession. The Better Business Bureau was one organization that adopted Nims statute to help enforce the importance of the Movement. These Bureaus were established as a branch of the A. A. C. W. and located in the principal cities of the country to assume responsibility for enforcing Nims statute. There were two main divisions of the Bureau's investigative work: merchandise and financial advertising.²⁶ The Bureau's had massive success in regulating advertising truth, with the Trade Practice Conference of Periodical Publishers stating that the Bureaus were selected as "the machinery through which the industry [advertising] would do its own policing".²⁷ An example of the Bureau's success can be seen in the Minneapolis Vigilance Bureau. The Minneapolis Vigilance Bureau in 1916 investigated 192 complaints, finding 128 of these cases that the advertisement was in fact false or misleading.²⁸

Nims model law was soon backed by another organization called the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC was one of the first allies that was outside of the advertising industry that supported the Movement in an effort to obtain national legislation for regulation against false advertisements. The FTC became interested in the false advertising issue once the U.S. federal government enacted a law called the FTC Act in 1914, which gave the commission broad authority over various aspects of competition. This Act focused on the regulation of fair competition and, in the words of Hansen and Law, the FTC began to use its authority to "regulate unfair and deceptive selling practices" so that it improved competition within the market.²⁹ Both the advertising industry and the FTC shared the same interest of regulating false

²⁶ Handler, "False and Misleading Advertising", 45.

²⁷ Quote was within Handler's "False and Misleading Advertising", 46. Also refer to the Trade Practice Conference, October 9, 1928.

²⁸ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 209.

²⁹ Zeynep Hansen and Marc Law, "The Political Economy of Truth-in-Advertising Regulation during the Progressive Era," *The Journal of Law & Economics* 51, no. 2 (2008): 263.

advertising even though the FTC wasn't directly affiliated with the advertising industry. Joseph E. Davies, the chairman for the FTC, called for cooperation between "government and advertising men" a year after the FTC Act. The biggest effect the FTC had on the advertising industry was that it gave it an additional weapon of state-level enforcement toward truth-in-advertising regulation. Moreover, the FTC helped the Movement by granting the A.A.C.W. permission to bring in cases of advertising fraud to local authorities, regardless if the state adopted Nims model law or not.³⁰ The FTC Act was indeed a success as prior to the Act, authorities enforcing state laws were unsuccessful in imposing sanctions on national firms.³¹

The advertising industry got another buff to truth-in-advertising regulation when in March 1938, the United States passed a federal statute called the Wheeler-Lea Amendment. This amendment was the United States' first attempt to tackle the problem of false advertising. Up to 1938, the FTC had monitored false advertisements, but the Wheeler-Lea amendment simply reinforced their powers. This amendment built off of Nims statute forbidding the use of false advertisements in U.S. mail and the use of false advertisements in inducing the purchase of food, drugs, devices or cosmetics.³² Above all else though, the amendment gave more judicial power to the FTC. Before the amendment, false advertisers were only punished by the Commission after affirmance from the court, which in most cases was only granted on the grounds of proof. This form of proof meant that an advertisement had to break at least two violations, one before the issuance of the Commission's order and one after. This was not only cumbersome but it impaired the effectiveness of the penalties enforced on false advertisers.³³ With the amendment

³⁰ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 207.

³¹ Hansen and Law, "The Political Economy of Truth-in-Advertising Regulation during the Progressive Era," 263.

³² Milton Handler, "The Control of False Advertising under the Wheeler-Lea Act", *Law and Contemporary Problems* 6 no. 1, (1939): 92.

³³ Handler, "The Control of False Advertising under the Wheeler-Lea Act", 105.

in place, court cases continued for much longer periods than before, as an investigation had to be opened up before the Commission could issue a complaint on an advertisement and other jurisdictional requirements prolonged the trail. Most importantly though the amendment made fraudulent advertising a misdemeanor, punishable by no more than 6 months of imprisonment, or a fine up to \$10,000.³⁴ The Wheeler-Lea Amendment was a relative success in terms of penalizing false advertisers but it was a massive success for the advertising industry. The amendment saw the industry receive government recognition, in the form of legislation that was aimed to benefit the industry. The amendment gave advertising a better image. Advertisers wanted the public to trust them as it promoted their industries image and led businesses to use national advertising more.

The Significance of World War I

The second factor that promoted the evolution of advertising as a profession was World War I. During World War I advertisers helped promote nationalistic propaganda throughout the country. Some of advertising's biggest trade magazines and journals, including *Printers' Ink* and *Advertising and Selling*, addressed the importance of supporting the homefront to help support United States troops win the war. The U.S. Government established an entire advertising division just for the sole function of war propaganda. Advertising campaigns for Liberty Loans, war bonds, military enlistment, etc. spread expeditiously throughout the country. These advertisements were also a mechanism used by the Government to help educate the American population about the war and the service they would be providing for their country. Daniel Pope wrote an article that looks at World War I and how wartime conditions affected marketing

³⁴ Handler, "The Control of False Advertising under the Wheeler-Lea Act", 106.

conditions, the industry's structure, and advertising's relationship with the government and public. The war helped the advertising industry expand the scope of their services, and the industry began to pay more attention to ideas of product diversification, media planning, and national trademarks.³⁵ Pope doesn't discuss the significance of the industry's mission for recognition as a profession, however, his article does demonstrate the improvements the advertising industry made to strengthen their industry, providing evidence for advertising professionalism.

Advertising was beginning to take advantage of both domestic and foreign markets once the war began. Due to the war, exports from Europe were being cut, encouraging American businesses to advertise their products domestically. For example S. L. Allen and Company manufactured garden tools but found its exports cut off from the war, leading them to advertise domestically, capitalizing on the government's appeal for home gardens. A year after the American declaration of war, Allen and Company had a dramatic increase in orders.³⁶

Advertisers also began to put national trademarks on all exported products. In Pope's words, this was done "as part of the advertising industry's expansion to an international scale of its vigilance campaign against false advertising."³⁷ Not only was the industry evolving and adopting different strategies to increase the total amount of advertising to foreign markets, but the war helped uphold advertising's credibility.

Advertising professionalism gained a momentous boost in December 1917, when the U.S. government created a Division of Advertising within the Committee on Public Information. The editor of *Advertising and Selling*, J. George Frederick, stated that the creation of advertising

³⁵ Daniel Pope, "The Advertising Industry and World War I", *The Public Historian* 2, no. 3 (1980): 15

³⁶ Pope, "The Advertising Industry and World War I", 13. Also refer to *Printers' Ink*, 4 April 1918, p. 45-46

³⁷ Pope, "The Advertising Industry and World War I", 13. Also refer to *Advertising and Selling*, XXVIII, 6 (October 1918), p. 3

division meant that “an American advertising man can now again hold up his head.”³⁸ The division thus helped put advertisers and the advertising industry in its best light. The division showed how the government saw advertising as a crucial factor in winning the war. Advertising men now gained a new respect in Washington.

The war was a golden opportunity for advertisers to be involved with their country, gain professional credibility, and reap the economic advantages that came from the war. Many advertising journals acknowledged the importance of the war to the industry, leading to hundreds of articles being published relating to the war. Once the war in Europe began, a *Printers' Ink* headline read “War Should Mean Big Opportunities for American Advertising.”³⁹ Before the war, advertisers showed discontent with President Wilson and his policy on neutrality but still endorsed intervention in Europe. Local advertising clubs also displayed their patriotism. For example, New York ad men in 1916 began reserve officer training and a group called Advertising Men's Military Training Association held drills in a local armory.⁴⁰ Cases like this strengthened advertising's image to the public as a respectable service aiding the war effort.

The war gave advertisers an important selling point. The idea of helping your country by buying a certain product because it was patriotic fueled advertising rhetoric. For example when Germany began boycotting Kodak cameras around United States intervention, Lewis B. Jones, the advertising manager for Eastman Kodak, used this information to press American consumers to buy Kodak cameras as an act of patriotism. Moreover, an ad agency that worked with Dromedary Coconut wanted to publicize the fact that their charred coconut shells were used in gas masks, and that “the more American housewives use coconut products then more gas masks

³⁸ Pope, “The Advertising Industry and World War I”, 19

³⁹ Quote found within Daniel Pope, “The Advertising Industry and World War I”, *The Public Historian* 2, no. 3 (1980): 6. Also refer to *Printers' Ink*, 13 August 1914, p. 17

⁴⁰ Pope, “The Advertising Industry and World War I”, 8

can be produced.”⁴¹ Domestic products now had an added patriotic value to them and advertising agencies exploited this extensively.

At the fourteenth annual convention of the A. A. C. W., held in July 1918, advertisers discussed how they could do their utmost part in winning the war. They discussed that in order to achieve this goal, advertising clubs had to “increase their compactness, seriousness, and efficiency” so that they may “meet the problems of business today and especially after the war.”⁴² The convention demonstrates how the advertising industry was moving towards a professional identity since it began to restructure its internal operations for the purpose of bettering itself. Furthermore, Charles Schwab, Director General of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, appeared at the convention by order of President Wilson to honor the A.A.C.W for its valued service.⁴³

Advertisements also pushed for citizens to sign up for military service and be more involved with their country. Several advertising clubs conducted campaigns alongside other organizations, including the Y.M.C.A, to persuade the American people to serve their country. These campaigns were a huge success, with one week getting over 4,000 men to sign up for military service.⁴⁴ Advertisements also began to appear in banks around the country. Bank advertising aimed at educating the public on how to spend money toward the war effort. A quote within *Printers' Ink* states that bank advertising engaged in nationalistic propaganda because of

⁴¹ Quote found within Daniel Pope, “The Advertising Industry and World War I”, *The Public Historian* 2, no. 3 (1980): 21. Also refer to Division Chairman Johns writing to Carl Byoir, March 1918 and August 1918, National Archives.

⁴² “Advertising Is Pledged for War Service by A. A. C. of W.”, *Printers' Ink*, July 1918

⁴³ “Advertising Is Pledged for War Service by A. A. C. of W.”, *Printers' Ink*, July 1918

⁴⁴ “Advertising Wins Many Recruits for Y. M. C. A. War Service”. *Printers' Ink*, July 1918

the patriotic motive of “strengthening the hands of the Government, helping to win the war for world freedom.”⁴⁵

Advertisers frequently used the image of Uncle Sam in advertisements to add patriotic value to any product and he appears in hundreds of advertisements in trade journals, newspapers, and posters. Uncle Sam was even used for campaign slogans, as one trust company in Baltimore made their advertising slogan “Be a partner of Uncle Sam.”⁴⁶ Another example of Uncle Sam’s influence spreading throughout America is seen in the organization Uncle Sam’s Salesman. This group was created in Cleveland and consisted of travelling salesmen that promoted Thrift Stamps, War Savings Stamps, and War Bonds. The group's origins stem from the unorganized advertising club’s in Cleveland. This led to the maldistribution of war bonds and stamps to the outskirts of Cleveland. After the group's creation, these salesmen travelled from retailer to retailer to distribute “Uncle Sam’s goods”, as the General manager H. L. Rhode put it, in more efficient and productive manner. The campaign was an enormous success with the group growing to almost 2,500 members.⁴⁷

Bank advertising also promoted Government programs as they embarked on co-operative advertising campaigns to promote Government programs. Beforehand, banks never committed to advertising since they did not see a benefit in using it. However, bankers found themselves working along with their community in a way never seen before through advertising war funds. *Printers’ Ink* comments on bank advertising's success saying “the banking institutions of this country as a whole have done not only what might have been expected of them; they have done extraordinary things.”⁴⁸ Banks also added to efficiency in advertising copy, making

⁴⁵ Wilson, Edwin. “The Relation of Bank Advertising to War Finance”. *Printers’ Ink*, July 1918

⁴⁶ Wilson, Edwin. “The Relation of Bank Advertising to War Finance”. *Printers’ Ink*, July 1918

⁴⁷ “Uncle Sam’s Salesmen Prove Effective in Cleveland”. *Printers’ Ink*, August 1918

⁴⁸ Wilson, Edwin. “The Relation of Bank Advertising to War Finance”. *Printers’ Ink*, July 1918

advertisements more effective and useful since they were being broadcasted to a national audience. Advertising, therefore, acquired a new responsibility thanks to the promotion of the war effort. Advertising now had the job of educating the public on how to properly use their money effectively and how to use it to benefit their country.

World War I transformed advertising into a more versatile tool, in that advertising now had multiple options on what to advertise and how to do it. Advertising went from selling products to selling ideas, Government programs, and loans. Moreover, advertising went from educating the consumer about a certain product to educating the consumer on how to be involved with their community or country. The industry grew tremendously from the creation of the Division of Advertising because it taught advertisers how to effectively advertise to a national audience, aiding to the industry's fight for professional recognition. .

The Industry's Growth

The third and final factor that attributed to the evolution of advertising professional status is the notable growth of the advertising industry from 1890-1920. Large companies began to use national advertising during this period. Companies that advertised heavily had a significant advantage in profitability over smaller competitors.⁴⁹ In addition to these companies advertising heavily, cities within the United States were expanding exponentially. Between 1910 to 1920, 100 cities had grown more than 37.5%, leading to a much larger consumer market.⁵⁰ The industry was expanding at the rate equal to the consumerism in America during the 20th century.

⁴⁹ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 71

⁵⁰ Robert Brown, "City Growth and City Advertising", *The Scientific Monthly* 16, no. 1 (1923): 80

The consumer during the 1920s was offered a far wider array of branded, packaged, and nationally advertised goods that were unavailable a generation earlier.⁵¹

Through the industry's expansion, many new internal organizations were created to reshape the advertising industry. For example, the American Fair Trade League, established in 1913, took a stand on price chopping occurring to nationally advertised products. Price chopping was when retailers and other small businesses reduced the price of nationally advertised products so conscious consumers would go to their store instead of another's. While dealing with price chopping, retailers also were receiving payments from certain ad agencies to stress one brand or product, otherwise known as a called a PM. The American Fair Trade League purpose than was to address these issues of unfair competition and they provide another example of advertisers attempting to reshape their reputation. Another example is the American Association of Advertising Agencies (Four A's). The Four A's were formed in 1917 and it dramatically improved advertising business standards. They did this by influencing the advertising industry to move past the traditional advertising method of using space brokers to using advertising agents instead. The difference between the two was that a space broker simply bought space in newspaper columns to fill with advertisements while an ad agent played a more dynamic role of both advertisement creator and distributor. Ad agents used marketing strategies and research so that the advertisement or advertising campaign they were involved with would be more effective. The significance of all these organizations being created is summarized by Cynthia Meyers, who states that the expanding advertising industry had begun to organize itself into these

⁵¹ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 76

organizations in “an effort to have advertising recognized as a profession similar to medicine or law.”⁵²

In order to appreciate the significance of Meyers claim of the advertising industry organizing itself in an effort to be recognized as professions similar to medicine or law we need to reference back to Elliott’s research on professions. In Elliott’s research he discusses that the medical profession in 19th century Britain was split between three groups; apothecaries, surgeons, and physicians. Physicians were the ‘elite’ of the three, leading the latter to fight for their equal recognition as a profession during the 19th century. The apothecaries were the lowest tier of the three and made steps toward professionalism by first passing the Apothecaries Act of 1815, which allowed apothecaries to charge for medical advice. After the Act of 1815, the apothecaries pushed even further toward to professional recognition by establishing the Society of Apothecaries, which was the first medical organization to take seriously its responsibilities in professional medical training.⁵³ The creation of the Society Apothecaries is analogous to the advertising industry creating their internal organizations. Both the apothecaries and the advertising industry wanted professional recognition, so they took the necessary steps in unifying themselves and addressing their industry's biggest issues.

While the industry was growing and strengthening its image through these new organizations, advertising agencies were evolving into complex machines. Agencies now either performed advertising activities internally or they reached out to other independent parties. An agency might even mix the two options, doing some of the advertising activities internally and then contracting an outsider to finish the rest. At the same time, businesses were becoming more

⁵² Cynthia Meyers, “Godfrey Flury’s Billboard Advertising Business: An Austin Ad Man in the 1910s and 1920s”, *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 4 (1995): 571. Also refer to Daniel Pope *The Making of Modern Advertising*, p. 174.

⁵³ Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, pg. 34, 37.

committed to acquiring their advertising services from independent advertising firms. By 1917, 95% of national advertising was handled by ad agencies.⁵⁴ The evolution of ad agencies shows the monumental difference in how advertising was done a decade earlier and how advertising integrated itself into the business realm of early 20th century.

Advertising's growth can be seen through its internal expansion but also through advertisements themselves becoming more versatile. World War I was the first instance of advertisements selling not just products but more. The war taught advertisers how to educate the public on money spending and supporting the troops in Europe. After the war, advertisers were poised to advertise a new variety of goods and services. Nicole Cox writes about the advertising campaign launched to promote the state of Florida. In the 1920s, ads promoting Florida glorified women to build or add to Florida's 'title' of being both a lavish and beautiful environment. Since Florida was growing both in size and in popularity and becoming one of the country's hottest vacation spots, money was the only motive for businesses, so women and Florida's environment seduced investors around the country. In Cox words, advertisers "deliberately and repeatedly marketed Florida and its environment as a feminized paradise where alluring women cavorted among equally enchanting landscapes."⁵⁵ Moreover, promoters of Florida targeted men more than anybody else. They wanted Florida's image to be seen through a man's eyes as having beautiful women and beaches. To assist this fantasized image, keywords typically used in Florida's promotion included young, beautiful, active, and carefree. By the end of 1925 it was impossible to open a newspaper anywhere in the country without finding at least one reference to

⁵⁴ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 144.

⁵⁵ Nicole Cox, "Selling Seduction: Women and Feminine Nature in 1920s Florida Advertising", *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (2010): 189

Florida.⁵⁶ The Florida ad campaign also triggered a rivalry with another state, California over who held the title of best vacation spot in the United States. This rivalry is a great example of how these states mimic big businesses and their rivalries with one another.

Another instance of advertising's versatility came from an ad painter named Godfrey Flury. Flury revolutionized the advertising industry through outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising during the early 20th century was often an issue since it spurred debates over urban beautification, the public good, and the sanctity of public property.⁵⁷ Flury however was a revolutionary for the advertising industry as he employed a number of strategies to protect and increase his billboard business. In Meyer's words, these strategies included self-promotion, soliciting favorable local laws and regulations, gaining monopolistic control over certain public spaces, and contributing to urban beautification.⁵⁸ Flury claimed that his advertisements were that of professional-quality and that the strategies he used embodied qualities that of a professional. Flury gained a virtual monopoly on selling advertising space on country-approved road signs when he won a contract with the County Commissioners' Court.⁵⁹ This contract gave Flury exclusive advertising privileges on all the country highways and roads and all other signs and advertisements were to be removed. The advertiser had now begun the businessman, meaning that any business seeking to advertise on highway markers would have to hire Flury to make the advertising. Flury's strategy of soliciting laws and regulations to establish a monopoly on public space is further evidence of advertisers evolving into their business contemporaries, strengthening the argument of advertising moving toward professional status.

⁵⁶ Cox, "Selling Seduction: Women and Feminine Nature in 1920s Florida Advertising", 192, 193. Also refer to T.H. Weigall's *Boom in Paradise*, p. 136.

⁵⁷ Meyers, "Godfrey Flury's Billboard Advertising Business: An Austin Ad Man in the 1910s and 1920s", 569.

⁵⁸ Meyers, "Godfrey Flury's Billboard Advertising Business: An Austin Ad Man in the 1910s and 1920s", 570.

⁵⁹ Meyers, "Godfrey Flury's Billboard Advertising Business: An Austin Ad Man in the 1910s and 1920s", 572.

Is Advertising A 'Profession'?

Prior to the 20th century advertising was an unorganized industry, with a terrible reputation of being both unreliable and crude. 'Advertisers' were seen as just space jobbers who sold newspaper column space to businesses to place their advertisements. Moreover, advertisements weren't persuasive but more informative. Instead of selling a product by a unique feature it had or the design of it, an advertisement just displayed a product and its functionality. There was no uniform system to advertising until the turn of the century and the industry had many obstacles to overcome in order to achieve any form of professional recognition. The most relevant issue was advertising credibility. Thanks to false advertising in the latter 19th century, advertising had a reputation of being a shifty business. The industry attempted to heal its reputation by beginning to keep vigilance on the advertisements circulating throughout America, thus giving birth to the Truth-in-Advertising Movement. The Movement influenced the industry to ban together and create multiple organizations to oversee and resolve problems within the industry. The A. A. C. W. was at the forefront of the Movement, helping pave the way for false advertisement vigilance through its own branches. Along with the A. A. C. W., advertising trade journals, more importantly *Printers' Ink*, addressed false advertisements. By 1920 the advertising industry saw dramatic improvement in preventing the distribution of false advertisements and saw advertising gain crucial allies. One ally in particular was the FTC, who assisted in carrying out justice for those who used fraudulent advertising and overall made the Movement a much stronger force.

While advertisers were trying their hardest to cast themselves in a more professional light, World War I offered new opportunities. One opportunity was learning to sell patriotism.

The country experienced a nationalistic rush when the United States entered the war and advertising was seen as a crucial instrument for spreading information about how American citizens could help their troops overseas. Advertising proved to be so useful for educating the public on the war, a division of advertising was created within the United States Government to facilitate further nationalistic propaganda, promote government programs, and increase military recruitment. Banks also used advertising during the war period to spread knowledge to consumers about war funds and how to properly save money in times of war. Advertising experienced almost a golden period as they were heavily used and relied on.

Advertising was making remarkable strides reshaping their once tarnished reputation into a having professional image. The evidence of advertising achieving a new professional image is seen in 1926, when President Calvin Coolidge went on to say that advertising was all part of “the greater work of the regeneration and redemption of mankind.”⁶⁰ This Presidential address solidifies the respect that the advertising industry had achieved by the 1920s. The industry continued to build on its growing professional image by becoming more affiliated with the practice of businesses and manufacturers’. As businesses and corporations in America began to grow, advertising became a catalyst for competition and product diversification and businesses saw a true purpose in utilizing advertising. Businesses and firms hiring ad agencies led the advertising industry to reshape themselves once more, this time to become more efficient and effective in their advertisements. This ideology stems too from the Truth-in-Advertising Movement, as advertisements needed to be both trustworthy and effective so that both parties benefitted. Businesses profited more from national advertising and the advertising industry gained the respect of business men throughout the United States and soon globally.

⁶⁰ Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 112. Also refer to Frank Presbrey’s *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) p. 625, original published in 1929.

For a better representation of these three factors attributing to advertising gaining professional status, we look at John Keane's 15 criteria that define a profession. Keane created these criteria in 1974 and modelled his criteria from professions such as medicine and law. All though Keane's analysis is roughly 50 years later than the time period discussed in this paper, it provides evidence for advertising professionalism as there are some similarities found in Keane's criteria and 20th century advertising. The 15 criteria are as follows; Unique Theory, Specialized Training, Organization, Entry Qualifications, Legal Recognition, Work Discipline, Standards of Performance, Code of Ethics, Ethics Enforcement, Independence, Self-Appraisal, Integrity, Continuing Education, Commitment, and Social Responsibility.⁶¹ Among the 15 criteria; Legal Recognition and Integrity weren't found within the advertising industry until the Truth-In-Advertising Movement. The criteria Integrity especially, since that criteria refers to maximizing honesty within a profession, which was the primary objective of the Movement. Furthermore, Work Discipline, Organization, and Social Responsibility, which refers to understanding public interest, weren't found in the advertising industry until World War I. Keane's criteria is used here to provide insight on how the advertising industry evolved and attained some of these criteria based off of the three factors discussed in this paper.

Elliott's writing on the sociology of the professions has within it a very interesting quote, stating that "the fact that the first move towards examining professional competence should have come from the least prestigious branch of the profession is an indication of the developing importance of professional expertise as the basis of professional status."⁶² Parallel with Elliott's point is since advertising was among the least prestigious branch of the business realm, it gave the industry an incentive to pursue the same professional status that of their contemporaries.

⁶¹ John Keane, "On Professionalism in Advertising", *Journal of Advertising* 3, no. 4 (1974): 7,8.

⁶² Philip Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, pg. 37

Therefore, advertising received professional status thanks in large to the Truth-in-Advertising Movement, World War I, and the growth of the advertising industry.

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