

The Depiction of Advertising Industry in Novels and Their Incorporation in Education

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Abstract: While many quantitative methods are available to judge advertising profession, yet no or limited qualitative research is available. This study aims to do the latter with a unique approach analysing how various novels portray the advertising profession. The author of this article recommends that besides textbooks, novels based on the advertising industry should also be recommended to the students' attention. By reading these novels they may get a more exact and authentic representation, see the pros and cons of the advertising industry, and find out if they really have the motivation and persistence for this profession.

Keywords: advertising, novels, marketing education

1 Introduction

While many quantitative methods are available to judge advertising profession, yet no or limited qualitative research is available. This study aims to do the latter with a unique approach analysing how various novels portray the advertising profession. As we will see this picture is not as bright as our students usually think.

Several college and university students feel great desire to work in the advertising industry. On one hand, they are convinced that they could create better advertisements than the ones seen on TV, heard in the radio, or seen in newspapers. On the other hand, the image of the profession is definitely attractive for young people – there is no start in the early morning and no dress code, they can brainstorm wearing sneakers, colleagues are cool guys and hot chicks, and free invitations for all sorts of parties are available.

It is obvious that these stereotypes are often false and overly positive. Therefore the author of this article thinks that besides textbooks, novels based on the advertising industry should also be recommended to the students' attention. Such books include:

- Ferris, Joshua: Then We Came to the End
- Beaumont, Matt: E. The Novel of Liars, Lunch and Lost Knickers
- Beaumont, Matt: E Squared
- Pelevin, Victor: Generation P
- Beigbeder, Frédéric: 99 francs
- Burroughs, Augusten: Dry
- Rejtő, Jenő: [Quarantine at the Grand Hotel] [Vesztégzár a Grand Hotelben]
- Horváth, Gergely: The Ways of the Heart [A szív útjai]
- Sálinger, Richárd: My Father Would Go Faint [Apám beájulna]
- Domokos, Gábor: On the Border of Advertising Country [Reklámország peremén]

As it turns out reading these books, the picture is not as bright as several students might think. By reading these novels they may get a more exact and authentic representation, see the pros and cons, and find out if they really have the motivation and persistence for this profession.

2 Qualitative methodology: The analysis of novels

The image of each profession and its workers is usually assessed using quantitative methods, for example the survey conducted by Gallup Institute [1] or the „Trust” index by GfK [2] – see the chapter „At the bottom of the hierarchy” for more information.

Nevertheless, qualitative surveys provide us with more subtle and detailed conclusions. These tests include – although not very common yet – the analysis of depictions appearing in movies or novels. These resources, that is, films and books are also great tools to stimulate (or turn down) the students’ desire to join the advertising industry.

The author of this study published his first article on the depiction of the advertising profession in novels in 2009; it was published in *Magyar Reklám*, the paper of the Hungarian Advertising Association. The article was titled „Nyári olvasmányok – Reklámos szépirodalom” [*Summer Readings – Advertising Literature*] and it was co-authored by András R. Nagy, the CEO of Próbakő Kommunikáció, a Hungarian PR agency. [3]

Later on, in January 2010, the author of this study published an individual article in the professional journal *Marketing&Media*, titled „Reklámregények” [*Advertising Novels*]. [4]

Maybe as a result of this, also proving the importance of the topic, the April 2010 issue of the professional journal *Kreatív* published a more in-depth article. Its authors, Attila Bátorfy and Noémi Hatala did not only examine novels, but also other books by advertising professionals (e.g. Toscani, Oliviero: „La pub est une

charogne qui nous sourit”, and Ogilvy, David: „Confessions of an Advertising Man”, and even movies. As they concluded „Hollywood has always portrayed advertising industry as a medium for careerist and sneaking people, for whom money and professional success is more important than anything else.” [5]

But let us see how advertising industry and agency life are depicted specifically in novels! To perform the analysis, the study analyses four pieces penned by Hungarian authors and six by non-Hungarian authors.

3 A profession in crisis

Let us see first a book by *Joshua Ferris*, which seems to have a topic current in an era of crisis. It is simply titled „*Then We Came to the End*”. [6] It is clear that this end is not that end, that is, not the global crisis, but as the subtitle suggests, „*The rise and fall of an advertising agency*”. Although we only find out at the half of the book that the story is set in 2001, and it is unclear why everyone is fired from that specific agency one after the other (mostly because of the dot-com bubble), we certainly get an insider’s view of the advertising profession.

Let us see an almost perfect description below: „Our media buyers were usually short, lively, well-dressed gals, who let off intense perfume clouds and could easily socialize with anyone. ... For their work they got presents and bonus tickets to various sports events, which we all considered an orbital injustice, therefore we harboured a blind and wicked prejudice against them. ... We wholeheartedly believed that hell would have a separate round for them, that is, corrupt mayors, evil lobbyists and media buyers.” Copywriters are described in a somewhat shorter, but very apt form: „All copywriters are freaks.”

The way the author characterizes the work process after „the client has dumbified our advertisement, and bleached out everything that could have made it at least a little exciting” is not very positive, either. As he mentioned, this is the time when copywriter and art director get the task of „polishing shit”.

The public opinion about the profession is also interesting, and it is represented in the novel by the uncle of an advertising professional: „So you are the creative creatives creating creative creative? ... Such an outrageous use of the language! It is not even worth mentioning.”

It is also revealing to see that as soon as a colleague is fired, the remaining staff steal their stuff immediately. Except for two things: „The only things we did not carry away were unused tampons and marketing books.” This suggests that agency professionals rarely read – and they certainly do not read books.

Last, but not least, the following lines hit the nail on the head, and let us admit that they will be familiar to anyone who has ever worked in advertising: „We

considered the idea that we should go to India, maybe it is better, or perhaps we should enrol in a nursing school. ... Of course no one ever gave in to such impulses, no matter if they possessed us day by day, sometimes in every hour. Instead we had meetings in conference rooms, discussing our daily duties.” [6]

4 Ad agency life in e-mails

Another novel providing an insight to agency life – this time in London – is „E” written by *Matt Beumont*. [7] This story is so realistic that when Advertising Age, the magazine of the advertising profession asked its readers in 2009 to vote for the all-time best books of marketing, advertising and media, „E” finished in the high-ranking 4th position. It was only beaten by „Positioning” written by Al Ries and Jack Trout, „Ogilvy on Advertising” by David Ogilvy himself, and „22 Immutable Laws of Branding” co-written by Al Ries and Laura Ries. [8]

Besides an almost perfect depiction of advertising agency life, the high rank may also have been the result of the fact that the book is also brilliant as a literary piece: it only consists of emails. The story is built up of these messages, with attention to who the senders and recipients are: the general manager, customer relations staff, creatives, the client, the system administrator, the maintenance man and all sorts of other characters. These emails make up a great story, although its picture about agency life is not very positive, either. The subtitle itself is very suggestive: „*The Novel of Liars, Lunch and Lost Knickers*”. We get plenty of the latter: there is sex in the office with the opposite and same sex, as if it was closely connected to the process of making advertisements.

The story begins with an email sent by the general manager, mentioning that the agency may take part in the Coca-Cola tender. As usual in this industry, the deadline is tight: they have only two weeks before the presentation. We can follow these two weeks, which is probably a „rushed” period; but we still get interesting character portrayals. These suggest that accounts can not write briefs (that is, provide creatives with really useful written instructions and inspiration): „Coke: the invigorating element – what the fuck does it mean?” Or we can see that creatives are weak: „It is the place where ideas are born, but you cannot sell 5 dkgs of baloney with what I have seen from them so far” – a secretary says. And the impression that a trainee has about advertising agencies: „To tell you the truth, it is so damn hip to be here. No one is doing anything. They are just chit-chatting about it.” [7]

We have a creative director repackaging ideas that had not worked at other clients, a sexmaniac art director, an accountant who wants to make friends with everyone, and a partner agency from the international network with lots of helpfulness and incredibly weak ideas. (Of course it is the latter’s dumb concept that the client finally prefers.) We have a film shooting on Mauritius with playmates, where all

the leaders of the agency must be present – they just can't miss it. And everything that can possibly go wrong during the shooting of an advertisement spot does so.

However, the best descriptions are the two exciting ones about the structure of agencies. One of them is written by accounts (customer relations staff), and the other by creatives. According to the first one the account director is the „power behind the throne, the attentive representative of clients”, while the latter says that „the account director position was created in order to compensate the morons who could never become general managers in their life.”

But the copywriters' opinion about creative directors is not much better, either. „All creative directors are useless bastards. No matter how good they had been before becoming creative directors (and no kidding, some of them were truly brilliant, indeed) as soon as they populate their rooms in the corner, they immediately slip into the skin of a useless bastard.”

By the way: according to the blurb of „*E*” its author, Matt Beaumont can „proudly declare that as a copywriter, he has been fired by several leading ad agencies in London”. [7]

5 The web 2.0 era: the picture has not improved

Although „*E*” is set in January 2000, its sequel „*E*² (*E Squared*)” is set in the period between late December 2008 and late January 2009. [9] And why does the title hit the nail on the head? Because in the latter book we do not only follow the life of advertising professionals through emails, but we also have messages sent from Blackberries and iPhones, SMSes, blogs, msn, not even mentioning videos uploaded to Youtube, MySpace applications or eBay purchases. Therefore the book also serves as a representation of social conditions: the mother uses email and SMS to communicate with her child who is listening to wild and loud music in the room next door, but this is also the only way for her to contact his husband working as an ad agency boss. The copywriter losing his money with online gambling is stealing various objects from the company (from post-it to the xerox machine) and advertises them on eBay. The „we all know he's gay, except for him” account guy is filmed by all his colleagues using phones with cameras while he is preparing to jump off the top of the building in a suicide attempt. Moreover, they are singing Van Halen's „Jump” as background music.

We can also see the return of old characters, just nine years older and somewhat burnt out. Or has the world of advertising changed? As a thirty-seven year old creative called Liam explains: „I have no idea any more what this work is about. They simply wouldn't let us make advertisements. Everything has to be viral - guerilla - out of the box.” These make the most peculiar things. For example, when they are looking for celebs for a perfume, the winner is not Keira Knightley,

the beautiful young actress, but Margaret Thatcher, the former British Prime Minister, also known as the Iron Lady. Or when they create a fake newspiece for the Winter Sun tanning cream, stating that Neo-Nazis beated up someone because they took him to be black, although he only used the above mentioned cream. [9]

6 The situation of the advertising industry in Russia

It is also worth to mention books that are not only (or not primarily) interesting because of their presentation of agency life, but also because of their aim to depict society.

The author of „*Generation P*” [10] is no other than *Victor Pelevin*, who was voted the most influential Russian intellectual by an online survey in late 2009, and is on the list of the world’s hundred most important contemporary writers. [11] The protagonist of this novel is Tatarsky, a young man graduated from a college of technology, who at the same time had written a few poems, thus at the beginning of the nineties the young tobacconist becomes an advertising professional in Moscow. „The meaning of his activity was to adjust Western advertisements to the mentality of Russian consumers.” [10] It is the best possible place and timing: „What do you want? In New York it takes half of your life to have lunch with the right people, but here ...” At the same time our protagonist uses the same books as people in New York, and his „little Bible” is the aforementioned „Positioning” by Ries and Trout.

The novel is interesting for four other major reasons. Firstly, it includes exciting ideas that can be especially useful in a given age: „A new perfume from Hugo Boss – Money has a smell”, „West cigarettes – Go West”, or in the case of a property: „Behind these walls you will never be exposed to the effects of cognitive dissonance. Therefore it is absolutely unnecessary to find out what it is”. Secondly, although the novel was published in 1999, we can see guerilla marketing initiatives in it: unknown callers announce that they would make criminal attempts with bombs, but bomb disposal staff only find Nescafé Gold in the strange packets. Thirdly, the story portrays contemporary Russian reality in detail: „advertisement, similarly to other forms of human activity, has become inseparable from black cash in the cold, endless Russian countryside.” The fourth reason is that hallucinogens greatly contribute to Tatarsky’s creative instinct [10] – although it is true that these appear in every book mentioned in this paper, further degrading the image of advertising professionals.

7 A “typical” American copywriter

Here we have, for example, “*Dry*” by *Augusten Burroughs*, which has become an international bestseller. [12] The 24-year-old protagonist of this book fights alcoholism while trying to repair his gay relationships and achieve as an ad agency copywriter. He presents himself on the first page like this: „At the age of thirteen my mental mother gave me to her insane psychiatrist who adopted me. I was living in immorality, under the same roof with pedofiles and an unlimited amount of pills while skipping school. When I finally got out, I called on an advertising agency as a self-taught, eccentric young talent, full of passion and ideas. ... This is the greatest thing in advertising industry. No one cares where you come from, or who your parents are. It just doesn’t matter. Even if you hide the bones of little girls under the floor of your kitchen, you can be in the team as long as you can come forward with a better dog food advertisement.”

At the same time the protagonist keeps on rebuking his own profession, that is, making advertisements: „In advertising we sometimes get a product that is a piece of shit, but we must act as if it is a fantastic thing necessarily required for quality life. For example once I had to make an advertisement for a hair conditioner. The strategy was the following: Sensible softness, visible hold. However, the product got pretty poor feedback in focus group surveys. In addition, it was smelly. It made your hair smell like as if it was rubbed with chewing gum and chlorox. Anyway, I had to make people believe that it was the best hair conditioner ever produced. I had to convince them that it was beautiful and sexy. Accessible and desirable.”

All in all, his summary says: „In advertising everything looks better than it actually is. ... An industry that is built on creating false expectations in people. ” Therefore the position of advertising professionals on the social ladder is below that of undertakers: „An undertaker feels superior and he is probably right. He is the cleaner of society. He provides service that we need. However, I make a living manipulating people, and by various tricks persuading them to spend lavishly. My activity can hardly be seen as useful.”

At the same time they have to work a lot: „In the advertising profession, going home at 5 PM is like leaving a normal workplace at 11 AM.” In the meanwhile they have to learn various expressions and use them to talk big: „I remember that my first day in advertising scared me to death, because I hardly understood a word that they said. As if I got a job in Antwerp: story board, VO (voiceover), label, brand, CA (computer animation), rep, meeting. What? My favourite expression was ‘Two B’s in a K’ meaning the standard advertising scheme: Two Bitches in a Kitchen.”

In addition, work is stressful. „Most people in America do not have a clue of how stressful it is to create an advertisement. They think that it is fun to be an advertising professional. They do not know that it is hell itself.”

The protagonist envies people with a different job, similarly to the examples of the other books mentioned in this writing: „I would do anything to become the guy on the river tug swimming a container full of rubbish up the river. I bet that his work involves much less stress. He is sitting at the wheel with the wind blowing his hair, and the sun tanning his face.”

The protagonist also mentions that he earns a lot of money in vain as he spends all of it almost immediately. „I might be making a lot of money, but I live month by month, and if I lose my job, I won't have a dime left.” Moreover: „I am not used to rules and organization, so it takes me great effort to avoid them switching off my telephone or electricity. ”

The reason of all that is not so much the advertising industry, but the alcoholism of the 24-year-old protagonist. It turns out that since he was 21, his daily portion has been „a liter of Dewar's Whiskey often accompanied by cocktails. Cocaine once a month”. But he says that the reason of his own alcoholism is the advertising industry: „Sometimes I drink a little too much. I work in advertising. Advertising people sometimes drink too much. Look at Ogilvy! They even have a bar in their buffet.”

It is interesting that his colleagues at the advertising agency represent a different perspective also related to advertising: „It just doesn't look well if we have a creative who is late from meetings, arrives drunken, or smells of alcohol. This is unacceptable ... You know well that in the world of advertising everything depends on your image.”

8 Self-destructing French creatives

The self-destruction of creatives is also typical in France, at least according to *Frédéric Beigbeder*, the author of *99 Francs*: „Everyone around here is alcoholic, depressed, or addicted to drugs. As we approach the afternoon, everyone is staggering, shouting, playing video games for hours, or getting high, based on their personal survival techniques.” [13]

But everything has its reason: „The work of the creative is like an article first corrected by a deputy editor, then the chief editor, then the editorial director, followed by a read-through and corrections by all the characters in the story, and a reading up in front of a panel representing the reading public, and modifications, again. Plus there is a ninety percent chance that the article will not be published in the end. (...) The most important client of our agency is the dustbin.”

According to Beigbeder's description the clients' risk taking is minimal in France – by the way, it is also low in all the other books mentioned, whatever country we think of. As Beigbeder explains: „A creative director is like a cabinet maker who is required by the client to make a wobbling table, under the pretext that the client

pays the bill. Advertisers do not even notice that by way of precaution most of their money is spent on making their advertisements invisible.” [13]

All this has reshaped the whole advertising industry: „Let us see a comedy from the seventies in the TV, with Pierre Richard as an advertising professional. In those days you could laugh at advertisements. Today, noone is amused by them. Nowadays advertising is not an enjoyable adventure, but an almighty industry. Today, working for an advertising agency is just as exciting as being an accountant.”

At the same time, people on the agency side also get their share of rebuke. Accounts (client relationship staff) speaking in meaningless riddles („to consolidate our position in the margarine segment, optimalized through repositioning last year”), researchers overtesting, but especially prize-craving creatives who do not make advertisements for consumers, but for creative directors (in order to get employed), or the jury of the Cannes International Advertising Festival.

However though, the book is primarily a critique of society, suggesting that advertising industry is the king of the world. Its protagonist is introduced like this: „My first name is Octave and I wear APC stuff. I work in advertising: well, yeah, I pollute the universe. I am the one selling you shit. The one making you dream of things you will never get. Ever blue sky, never ugly girls, perfect happiness.” [13] These words are very similar to the way *Oliviero Toscani*, former Benetton photographer and maker of famous ads, tore the profession to pieces at the time in the very first passage of his book „*Pub est une charogne qui nous sourit*” [14]: „Halleluhah! You may enter the best of worlds, the paradise on earth, the realm of happiness, the home of certain success and eternal youth. In this wonderful country the sky is always blue, no air pollution destroys the vivid green of leaves, and not even the tiniest of spots appears on the girls’ candy-pink skin.”

Back to „*99 Francs*”, it is interesting to see what *Beigbeder* or the protagonist of his novel, Octave wants to achieve by all these descriptions: „I am writing this book to get fired.” [13] With reference to this, *Kreatív*, the magazine of the communications profession in Hungary, an Advertising Age partner, points out in its compilation: „It is especially remarkable that this book is a favourite of Hungarian creatives.” [5]

9 According to Hungarian novels, the situation is not that bad

We may also find references to advertising in a few Hungarian literary pieces. An early example of it is „*Quarantine at the Grand Hotel*” [„*Vesztetgár a Grand*

Hotelben”] by Jenő Rejtő. [15] One of the classic dialogues takes place between Wolfgang and King Nalaya like this:

„- Do you know what advertising is?”

- I haven't eaten it yet.

- It is not for eating. I'll explain what advertising is. People like to be delighted. I am a painter.

- I see. This is advertising.

- No. Advertising is if we talk people into believing that they will be delighted by something.” [15]

A nice definition, although we must admit that „talking people into believing” does not paint a favourable picture of advertising as an activity. But let us see what else we can find out about the Hungarian advertising profession if we read contemporary Hungarian novels.

In *“The Ways of the Heart”* [„*A szív útjai*”] by Gergely Horváth [16] the protagonist admittedly „manages the better of the two key creative teams in the company”. Horváth, an ex-copywriter (and former colleague of the author of this article) is today the editor and anchorman of MR2 - Petőfi Radio and provides an in-depth (and rather lengthy) summary of creatives' life. „Days do not form a mass because he hangs around in the office, but because he takes his ideas with himself everywhere in twenty-four hours of the day, thinks them over in the supermarket and the cinema while talking, so he gets into a feverish condition, dreaming awake; and it will remain like that until he finds out the solution, which makes him sleepless for days again, as the power of recognition drives him forward until exhaustion while devising details.” However, his most perfect definition is that of „a professional leisure party called Advertising Pub”, stating that „One has to be a part of the industry. All the people who matter are present. People who do not know yet that they do not matter are present Those who are not present, most probably matter.” And a classic remark is made by the creative director partying there: „If they let us work, the advertising industry in this country would be world class!” [16]

10 But it is not that good, either

Somewhat later the protagonist of the novel leaves the advertising industry, but the picture is not near as gloomy as in *“My Father Would Go Faint”* [„*Apám beájulna*”] by Richárd Salinger, which was later adapted for the screen, too. In this novel the young heroine works (or, to be exact, used to work) as a copywriter. „I worked as a creative at an agency – I said to Ádi, but I shouldn't have to. I did not leave advertising to show off with it later on. But it worked. I knew. It would always work. Ádi looked at me with interest. I struggle in vain saying that advertising is a piece of crap, and nobody believes me.” [17]

The latest book published in 2010 does not depict it more positively, either, although the author, *Gábor Domokos* (also) works as a copywriter. His book titled "*On the Border of Advertising Country*" [*„Reklámország peremén*"] [18] gives us an insight into the life of a freelance copywriter working in his home office. In his book using second person singular he expresses his opinion like this: „If you hurry up a little, you will get to work in time. Luckily it is not that far. Just five steps. From your bed.”

Although the protagonist of the story also shares some positive remarks about advertising, the greatest part of the book rebukes the profession: „Of course you get furious as usual if you see the third washing powder advertisement in two minutes. What makes them so similar? Why don't they invent something original? There you are, for example, with a heap of great ideas. You suddenly decide to quit being a permanent subcontractor and take a full time job as a copywriter. This profession deserves a better fate, but it is 'stomachly inferior' to everything; someone has to help to finally get it out of a bad mess. (...) Then there will be no more women with half of their hair covered with dandruff, and blue blood in their veins, if we can believe the realistic stains on their sanitary pads. There will be no more intelligent washing powder particles cleaning red wine stains by their vintage from the snow white tablecloth of Aunt Agnes; and there will be no more heart-friendly bugger all margarines decreasing your cholesterol level by exactly thirty-five point eight tenth of a percent within two weeks.”

However, the hero also confesses in a dialogue that the essence of advertising is to persuade people to buy something they do not even need:

„- Have they ever told you that your attitude has a little bit of ... fascist character?
- Why? I'm just helping to relieve that bunch of idiots of the burden of thinking.
- By persuading them to buy something they don't even need?
- My little-Niki! That's the essence of advertisement!”

For that very reason we find out again that advertising people are lying – and, consequently, the small type text marked with an asterisk gets its due: „What they are doing is really a nightmare. And not only in TV. Newspaper ads are no better, either. Moreover, stars (asterisks) get their meaning there. They fall there as the lies of our copywriter colleagues shake them off the sky. That's what they do. Just as you. I lie in the morning, at night and in the evening. But that bloody rotten asterisk after the most favourable phrase in the advertisement message still irritates you since you were a kid. (...) In fact we have to think of the conditions after the asterisk following the message of each advertisement. ... That's what you call a 'suckage clause'”.

Presenting the world of advertising the freelance protagonist mentions another thing he does not understand, that is, why everything has to be stuffed with English advertising terms: „In this profession – just as everywhere you can make more than forty thousand forints a month – they say everything in English nowadays. (...) You are also called 'copywriter' just to make sure nobody

understands it. Fortunately your TV and radio spot texts in Hungarian are accepted – after all, they are for Hungarians, aren't they?, - but you can be sure that that bunch of 'alternative sales managers' and 'account executives' are not happy about it at heart."

Just as he thinks it is unfair that international clients often just take adaptations even if he has a better idea: „Do not expect anything good. Probably the original German version will remain. But you know... That is the usual situation."

His copywriter colleagues also get their fair share of criticism: „One of the copywriters boasted the other day that he reads one book a year. You see? One!"

Last, but not least, we realize again that drinking and drugs are part of copywriting: „In order to do good work you must get drunk as a skunk. Booze is of course paid for by the client."

11 The overall picture is rough, but also exact in many senses

Interestingly, it almost does not matter if the author is someone with no work experience in advertising, or someone possessing decades of expertise. „The latter kind of authors also do not destructure, but build and enhance the picture people have about advertising in their mind. Readers have the intuition that authors of the advertising industry find great delight in playing the role of a burnt out, cynical, misunderstood, 'been there, done that' sort of a character with the soul of an artist, tired of life." [3]

All in all, the novels' depiction of the profession can be characterized by the following ideas:

- Advertising as a profession may seem great fun for outsiders, but being a part of it, one can see that it is not.
- You have to work a lot, stay up at night many times, and spend weekends with work.
- People who dream of realizing their ideas in this industry are wrong: clients will dumbify and overwrite even the brightest and most hopeful creations, as their willingness to take risk is minimal.
- Advertising is full of silly phrases such as „creative creatives creating creative creative".
- In addition, most of these expressions are in English, which are to be used in order to seem cool and make the profession look more unique.
- Customer relationship staff including accounts usually act as postmen, the bootlickers of clients, conveying even their most nonsensical requirements subserviently.

- Creatives are usually freaky or „jerks” – with the exception of the protagonist, of course.
- Advertising people do not want to improve: they read advertising literature very rarely, if they read any books at all.
- Consumers, humans are sheeps and you can make them swallow anything, so advertising people do not have to feel guilty because of their lying.
- However though, they often have bad conscience, and this is justified by their friends and acquaintances suggesting that they find a new, decent profession.
- Although they want to leave the whole advertising playground, actually they do not know what else could provide a living, and their desire for change is sometimes unreal.
- Self-destruction is an organic part of agency life: they smoke, drink, take drugs, gamble, and to say the least, they have wild sexual life.

Conclusions

As this research with a novel focus has pointed out, novelists unfortunately paint a mostly negative picture of the advertising industry. It is hard to explain if this is the consequence or the reason of the unfavourable image of advertising. Probably it is a bit of both.

The overall picture may be shocking, but there is no doubt that it is more realistic than the notion most college and university students have of the bright world of advertising. Therefore it may be extremely important to incorporate novels into education, providing a complete picture to students.

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