

Television Commercials in the Age of Multiplatform Publishing

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The 30-second commercial format is designed for television spots, and therefore the decline of linear television has brought new challenges for continuation of the format. At the same time, advertisers have found social media an increasingly important channel where audiovisual material can continue to reach audiences. Although new advertising trends have risen, also 30-second commercials are published in multiple platforms – such as complementing television broadcasts with YouTube presence, which adds social networking and participatory culture to the mix.

The advertisers sometimes broadcast their 30-second commercials as they are both on television and through social media channels, such as YouTube's pre-roll advertisements. However, pre-roll ads have more flexibility of length and format, and often television commercials are not the most suitable solution for this space. However, the traditional television commercials are also published on social media in additional spaces. Most often, the ads are published as part of the YouTube's video content instead of (or in addition to) paid commercial spots. This solution provides continuous online presence with low costs for potential visibility.

For example, several hospice care providers have uploaded their local television broadcast to YouTube in order to have accessible description of their services. Hospices have listed their videos under categories of "non-profit & activism", "people & blogs", and "education", which represent the videos in relation to public interests, instead of commercial activity. This reframing of commercials has its uses, even though videos have not been a success on social media. These videos remain rather unwatched, a large number of hospice commercials get under 20 views and in average, one commercial is viewed about 200 – 300 times. In addition, extremely rarely videos get any likes, dislikes, or comments. Thus, small businesses without national brand to support them can find it difficult to utilize the commercial benefits of multiplatform publishing.

In comparison, similar strategy of adding television commercials into YouTube as a content has been relatively successful for the U.S. Army. They have gained increased visibility through trending, sharing and liking. On YouTube, their national television commercials have gained millions of views. However, they also face challenges in the networked context. When posting videos as social media content, they open the ads to networked responses and this strategy always includes risks related to managing brand images. The questions who shares, frames, comments, and remixes the contents are important, yet unpredictable. The U.S. Army publishes most (but not all) of their commercials that are available on social media, and through they own channels they can have some control over the material. However, the commentary section brings focus also on the negative responses to these commercials and often there are debates about the morality and usefulness of the U.S. Army. Thus, those who bring forward problems related to military service challenge the aimed positive and appealing image. In addition, U.S. Army campaigns have also inspired several parodies that circulate on social media with the same phrases than the official ones. Thus, the visibility brings along variety of

responses from the audiences. In other words, in multiplatform publishing, commercials have a potential to be openly part of popular digital culture, where the content is publically discussed and these discussions become part of the public and networked image and reputation of the advertiser.

In addition, the multiplatform publishing is potentially changing the aesthetical and narrative solutions in the commercials, not only on social media but by extension on television too. For example, the hospice commercials increasingly remind introductory or educational videos rather than narrative advertisements. This is understandable, because whereas these videos are not popular among general social media audience, they add new audiovisual element to hospices' internet pages where they serve not only as commercials, but also as introductory videos. In comparison, the U.S. Army has increasingly used narrative stories familiar from action narratives and reality television because these styles address the desired audience not only on television but also on social media. However, in both cases, the inclusion of affective strategies, such as confessions and personal experiences, attract the audience. The ability to appeal to viewers' embodiments and emotions (whether in positive or negative way), gives more visibility through networked connections which can complement the commercial campaigns.

All in all, multiplatform publishing can provide new context for the traditional 30-second television commercials. Social media can add to the visibility and can help the advertisers to find new audiences, even if the multiplatform publishing might require the advertisers to take into account the styles and requirements of several platforms at once.