The Emergence of Advertising and Promotion in the French Telecommunications Sector: 1952-2002

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Purpose – An historical study of the emergence and development of advertising and promotion in the French telecommunications sector between 1952 and 2002.

Methodology – Study of existing secondary sources and original source material to develop a comparison of three eras.

Findings – Initially, the advertising and promotional practices studied were introduced gradually (1952-1973). They subsequently became increasingly important and systematic (1974-1985) before finally becoming those of a modern organization (1986-2002) in the competitive sphere. We outline the increase in spending on publicity throughout the period. The increase accelerated at the start of the 1980s and again in the second half of the 1990s.

Implication/limitations – The French telecommunications sector was aware of the necessity to engage in advertising and promotional activities prior to the existence of competition, although the growth of the mobile sector and the new competitive environment strongly accelerated the adoption of such practices.

Originality – The first systematic study of the introduction of advertising and promotional practices in the French telecommunications sector.

Keywords – telecommunications, advertising and promotion, environment, organization

Paper Type – Research

Introduction

Telecommunication operators are among the largest advertisers today as their spending has grown with the rapid development of their new services linked to mobile and internet networks. Although today’s lists of top advertisers regularly include mobile phone and internet service providers, little research has been conducted in France on the emergence of advertising and promotion activities in this sector. Many of these operators were public monopolies for the major part of their existence while others only emerged with the new mobile and Internet networks in the 1980s and 1990s.

Griese’ (1977) analysis of the rationale behind AT&T’s institutional advertising campaign in 1907 has highlighted the specific role that advertising can play in an organization that is seeking to consolidate a monopoly at a particular point in time. This paper examines the development of advertising in France’s national telecommunications administration that became a privatized company, France Télécom, in 1997 and considers how and why communications practices in the industry have changed over the final five decades of the 20th century.

To examine the development of advertising within the public organization that operated as a monopoly for a significant amount of its history, three phases of development have been identified (Figure 1). The first period from 1952 to 1973 corresponds to the emergence of early forms of corporate branding and market research by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Following a number of regulatory and organizational changes, the telecommunications administration had managed to wrestle a far greater level of autonomy from the Ministry by 1974 and the second period covers the years between 1974 and 1985. In this period, we see significant modernization of commercial activities and the introduction of systematic advertising of telecommunications services in France. The final period from
1986 to 2002 represents the coming of age of advertising and promotion in this sector in France. In addition to widespread advertising of France’s unique videotex service, the Minitel, the French telecommunications administration was adopting the practices of advertising that had developed in the UK with the arrival of competition in the mobile sector. By the time that France Télécom was privatized in 1997, its use of advertising was widespread and adapted to multiple segments and it reflected both commercial and corporate objectives. The strong growth of spending on advertising and promotion in the 1990s corresponds to the development of new services, particularly in emerging and competitive segments such as Internet access and mobile telephony.

Figure 1: Spending on advertising and promotion as a percentage of turnover of French telephone administration (1961-1985) and France Télécom (1994-2002)


History of marketing practices and periodization

This research seeks to contribute to the history of marketing practice (Beard, 2016). Several major histories of marketing practices have been published both at the industry level (Hawkins, 2011, Branchik, 2014) and at the firm level (Tadajewski, 2008, Heller, 2016) in relation to different parts of the world and different time periods. Hawkins (2011), for example, has studied the communications practices in the legal profession in the US at the end of the 19th century. Based on analysis of New York Times archives from the time and focusing on a number of New York law firms, the study provides the first account of the emergence of the marketing of legal services in the US. Branchik (2014) has researched the history of marketing in the maritime passenger transport sector. He established a chronology and divided the 175 years studied into six periods. Other sectoral studies include that of Petty (1995) on the bicycle industry, Nielson (2009) on the tourism industry, Witkowski (2011) on the US arms industry and Gélinas and Baillargeon (2011) on the steel industry at the start of the 20th century. Our research on the French telecommunications sector is based on such a sectoral approach to the history of the adoption of marketing and marketing practices.

For the period studied (1952-2002), the main events are recalled and specific marketing practices are identified to compile evidence of the emergence of advertising and promotional practices. Three specific periods were identified in which marketing and, in particular, advertising and promotional activities are considered to have emerged in different ways and for different reasons. These three time periods represent a structure of historical events that facilitates our understanding and retention (Hollander et al., 2005). Despite the acknowledged risk of oversimplification or “reductionism”, we accept the “necessary evil” (Hollander, 2015) of such periodization and consider it “as a (necessary) constraint” (Scranton and Fridenson, 2013, p. 22).

The influences on advertising and promotional practices in the organization studied are both internal and external and the facts related to such influences are gathered as extensively as possible from the resources available. Internal influences include organizational evolution within the French
telecommunications administration and the broader Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (PTT) and, from 1997, the privatized firm, France Télécom. Such influences may also affect subsidiaries of the organization. External influences include political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and competitive factors. The three periods chosen to represent the overall period are considered to represent significantly different phases of the adoption of advertising and promotional practices within the organization (Luciano and Volle, 2015).

**Period 1: The slow emergence of advertising and promotion in the French telecommunications administration in the 1950s and 1960s**

At the beginning of the 1950s, the term marketing was not used in the telecommunications administration in France and no marketing function appears in the organizational chart. New products and services were being developed within the technical arm of the administration, the CNET. Promotional and advertising activities are sporadic and limited in the administration of the PTT overall and, in particular, in relation to telecommunications. The service for ‘External Relations’ was in charge of communicating to different groups about what was offered by the three branches of the PTT: the Post Office, the Financial Services branch and the Telecommunications service. Its communication was based on inserts in the telephone book published annually and brochures distributed to school.

An eight-page booklet entitled “Advice for telephone users” (Ministère des PTT, 1952a) was inserted in tome I of the telephone book in 1952 in several French departments (Figure 2). The booklet explains how to use the phone service and how prices are calculated. A number of specific services are also presented such as how to find out a subscriber’s telephone number (call 12), how to order a wake-up call (call 13), find out the time (call ODE 84-00). There is also information about how to reach the talking news and weather bulletin in the form of a three-minute summary (call INF 1) (Ministère des PTT, 1952a, p. 7).

Another 12-page booklet entitled “The PTT at your service” (Ministère des PTT, 1952b) outlined the activities of the telecommunications branch. It explained the modernization of the telephone network and gave up-to-date statistics on telephone subscriptions and use in France, the option to use and advance payment system to finance the installation of a phone line and the advantages of using the Telex system.

Figure 2: Front page of booklet Les PTT à votre service (1952)

Promotional material is made available to post offices in the form of posters or post-cards and pamphlets to be distributed or attached as information in public phone boxes. A graphic representation of the PTT service appears on the brochure for 1952-53 (Figure 3). It consists of a letter and a telephone handset with a stylized drawing of a bird in the background and represents the PTT’s first logo.
From 1955, the presentation of the PTT in the administration’s printed material changes and no longer has drawings to illustrate its activities (Watin-Augouard, 2012, p. 81) (Figure 4).

In the 1960s, the only trace of commercial activities or marketing appear as one figure for “publicity and propaganda” for the entire Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (Table I). While spending on publicity increased significantly from 1.6 million francs in 1961 to 13 million francs in 1971, the sums involved nonetheless represent a very insignificant part of the spendings of the Ministry, achieving a maximum of 0.11 percent in 1968 and 1999. No breakdown is given for the specific amounts spent on the activities of the telecommunications administration, the Post Office or the associated financial services activities of the Ministry.

Table I. Spending on ‘publicity and propaganda’ in the French Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, 1961 – 1971 (French francs, millions)

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<tr>
<td>Advertising &amp; propaganda</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>1.743</td>
<td>1.720</td>
<td>1.765</td>
<td>2.310</td>
<td>2.664</td>
<td>2.713</td>
<td>2.603</td>
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<td>As a %age of revenue</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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In August 1959, the Ministry changed its name from the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephones (PTT) to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, although the abbreviation PTT continued to be widely used as the shorter abbreviation resembles a French word that is considered rude. To illustrate its mission of communication by post and by telephone, the Ministry launched a call to develop a new logo. The proposal chosen (Figure 5) was by graphic artist, Guy Georget, who had previously designed the logo for Air France. It is a blue drawing of a bird that resembles an arrow and represents the
organization’s calling to transport material and immaterial matter in the form of letters and telephone calls as rapidly as possible. The logo became known as the “blue bird”, “the arrow” and “the rocket” (Musée de la Poste, 2011).

Figure 5: Logo of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (1960)


In 1961, Guy Georget also designed posters that were displayed in post offices throughout France. The posters presented the logo in yellow (Figure 6), the color that had been chosen to represent the administration in 1960 and used on post boxes and postal vans from 1962. The poster is designed to launch the new logo and states simply “when you see this logo, think of Post and Telecommunications” (Musée de la Poste, 2011, p. 4).

Figure 6: Poster for Ministry of Post et Telecommunications (1961)


In adopting this logo and designing a specific visual identity, the French Post and Telecommunications Ministry was the first French Ministry to engage in institutional communications. The Ministry claimed that this was necessary for the public to identify the public service and associate it with its role of rapid transport of information. It also stated that the administration required a brand identity as it was comparable to other large companies that had multiple sales outlets and points of interaction with the public (Musée de la Poste, 2011).
The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications was also the first administration to engage in a large-scale survey of users and personnel. The minister at the time, Jacques Marette, justified this effort to engage with users by explaining that the ‘public service’ motive of the administration was as important as the ‘profit’ motive for firms (Marette, 1965). In addition, he explained that providing the best service at the most suitable cost required a clear understanding of public aspirations for the service. He specified that almost half of French people went to the post office every week and that even more were in regular contact with the postal delivery service.

Three surveys of representative samples of French public service users were conducted (Marette, 1965). In March 1963, 2,040 individuals and 296 firms were interviewed and this was followed by a complementary survey of 1,996 personnel of the Ministry conducted in February 1964. In 1965, 1,471 users of the phone service were interviewed, along with 1,131 of those on the waiting list for a telephone. Overall, the results of the general survey in 1963 were positive for the Ministry, with 47% of respondents considering that it functioned very well and a further 46% replying well. This total of 93% of positive opinions compared well with 90% for the public electricity service, 75% for the railroad service and 53% for social security. Only one quarter of those surveyed, however, were able to identify the new logo of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications correctly. Forty five percent suggested another meaning for the logo such as an arrow, swallow, bird or a dart and twenty percent had no idea what the logo represented (IFOP, 1965).

In parallel to the timid emergence of a visual identity in the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, more significant changes were occurring in the area of data transmission services supplied by the telecommunications administration to businesses operating in France. Such services were growing in importance throughout the 1960s as businesses increasingly adopted information technologies as part of their day to day operations (Picard, 2015). During this period in France, the telecommunications administration was involved in projects involving the armed forces and certain large French firms such as the electricity and gas company, EDF-GDF, that was digitalizing its client database and Air France with its secure reservations network.

Large firms in France in the 1960s increasingly required dedicated telephone connections to access computing power located at a distance and the level of service and the price was not satisfactory. The research department of the Ministry, the CNET, was developing more sophisticated technological solutions and, in 1968, a new structure was created within the telecommunications administration to address the specific needs of large business. The structure was called “SD/TRS”, an acronym representing the French expression for the “sub-direction of telecomputing and specialized networks”. While the structure was part of the relatively technical department of “equipment and network management”, it was created with a view to engaging principally in marketing activities (Picard, 2015).

The areas of responsibility of the SD/TRS included the definition of product pricing strategies and the fixing of investment budgets and the piloting of the launching of new products in coordination with national economic actors, firms and international organizations such as the CEPT, the European body responsible for setting standards. The existence of such a marketing-oriented structure is particularly paradoxical, given the chronic shortage of supply of telephones in France. In relation to the general public, the administration’s concern was to manage the waiting list, which exceeded two years by the end of the 1960s and to lobby policy makers in order to develop the financial and organizational autonomy needed to address the shortage (Carpenter, 2011). In parallel, however, the administration’s proximity to large users of telecommunications services had highlighted the need to develop a specific set of organizational procedures to address their specific needs.

SD/TRS was also in close contact with a specific group of private and public users, the CIGREF, that was created in 1970. The CIGREF quickly became a formidable lobby whose voice was heard in both professional and mainstream media and by policy makers. To facilitate the development of data transmission services, SD/TRS was also in regular contact with providers of IT services and products, notably IBM with the highest market share but also other international and French actors such as Bull General Electric and CII. IBM opened a research center in La Gaule near Sophia-Antipolis in the south of France in the 1960s that specialized in telecommunications and joint research seminars were organized to discuss future data networks (Picard, 2015). One of the earliest initiatives of the SD/TRS structure was to develop “technical-commercial” brochures to introduce users to information technologies and telecommunications, as well as the new service available from the administration from the early 1970s, Caducée (Figure 7). This modem-based...
A specific commercial division, called ACTRS, was created within the SD/TRS group to focus on large clients and to coordinate with operation services during and after the roll-out of their leased lines. These services were progressively developed from analogue to digital and expanded from using the telex and telephone networks to dedicated data transfer networks. The pricing system for such new services was complex and required a delicate balance that avoided the threat of users developing their own services while also minimizing the risk of too much cannibalization of existing services.

In addition to the core market of data transfer for large business clients, SD/TRS was also involved in the development of a number of value-added services targeted at specific sectors. These included a private network service for large firms based on a pricing bundle for overall traffic, a telephone alarm for elderly people living at home alone and the printing of newspapers at a distance to save on the cost of delivery.

Faced with an ever-growing demand for IT and telecommunications-based solutions for businesses during this period, SD/TRS was a fertile training ground for the administration to learn about new service development (Profit and Picard, 2002). It can be considered to represent the telephone administration’s first truly commercial service that developed the first segmentation of clients across different sectors and of different sizes and experimented with different pricing strategies for new products and services.

The pressure from large, commercial clients continue to build, however, as their IT needs grew. At the end of the 1960s, the head of the CIGREF, Pierre Lhermitte, convinced the French electricity supplier, EDF, and the bank, Société Générale, to join with his organization and threaten to build a common data transfer network. The objective of the group of significantly large firms was to put
pressure on the telecommunications administration to accelerate their development of such solutions to satisfy the needs of business customers at a reasonable price.

This first period of the development of modern commercial activity in the telecommunications administration represents a relatively modest step forward. Although the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications began to take steps towards institutional communication, the main customer-oriented activities were occurring as a result of the pressure coming from large commercial customers. It is noteworthy that the emergence of advertising and promotional activities did not occur in the historic core of the telecommunications administration, the fixed-line phone network of domestic telephone user. It was at the periphery of the organization that this organizational change occurred in order to support the development of new services for data transmission targeted at business customers. In terms of its mainstream activities aimed at households, the telecommunications administration in France was perceived as inefficient and incapable of meeting the needs of users and it was regularly the subject of humorous sketches by comedians on TV and radio. At the same time as French telecommunications’ engineers in the administration and in the largest national equipment supplier were in the process of developing what was to become the world’s most successful digital switch, Alcatel’s E10, the administration was suffering from decades of chronic underfunding and underestimation of the demand for telecommunications services among the general public (Carpenter, 2011). This situation was to change significantly in the second period under investigation and commercial activities, including advertising, began to be considered as part of the activities that needed to be adopted and improved on an on-going basis.

**Period 2: More systematic adoption of marketing practices, including advertising and promotion, between 1974 and 1985**

The late 1960s proved to be a period of significant institutional reform in the French Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Two major reports were published in 1967 as part of a study by senior civil servant, Henri Chanet, and their conclusions reflected those of many previous reports by groups of telecommunications users and telecommunications engineers. The reports focused on the need to reform the financing of the roll-out of telecommunications infrastructure, on the one hand, and on the need to modernize the organizational structure of the administration, on the other (Carpenter, 2010).

In relation to the financial situation, a series of financing companies were created over the next decade – initially private and subsequently public – to allow the administration to raise investment capital on public markets in France and abroad. These financing vehicles acquired the equipment needed to build the network and leased it to the telecommunication administration at terms adequate to refund investors. The organizational reforms initially focused on separating the telecommunications administration from that of the post office. The links were historical and intricate and impeded the development of the telecommunications network by undermining initiatives to invest. To build a new telecom exchange, for example, in order to add new users, managers were obliged to request funds separately from different departments at the national level. Depending on what funding requests had been received from other services, such as the post office or the postal cheque service⁹, a building might be authorized but not the investment needed to equip it. The following year, the opposite decision might be taken. Over a number of years, the telecommunications administration was systematically separated from that of the other parts of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and autonomy for spending on investment and personnel was decentralized to regional level to allow for the acceleration of the roll-out of the country’s telecommunications network.

In the early 1970s, the density of the French network was significantly below that of its European counterparts. These institutional reforms coupled with the leadership of Gérard Théry, the director named in 1974 by the new French president, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, meant that the “catch-up” phase was particularly impressive. By 1978, two million new telephone lines were being installed annually, a rate unequalled in any other country at the time (Figure 8).
As part of the institutional reform of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, the telecommunications administration was anxious to distinguish itself from the other branches of the Ministry. This differentiation was achieved in a number of steps, culminating in the first major advertising drive at the end of the 1970s.

Following the publication of the Chanet reports in 1968, one of the first new services to be created in the telecommunications administration was that of “Programing and Economic Studies” (Service des Programmes et Études Économiques or SPEE, under the direction of Gérard Théry, future Director of the administration). A separate “Service for Commercial Affairs” (Direction des Affaires Commerciales or DAC) was created in 1971. Both these new groups adopted modern methods of market research and forecasting, as well as quantitative and qualitative segmentation techniques. The adoption of such methods corresponded to a relatively recent and novel modernization of management within French administration. The adoption of such techniques was intended to be more widespread as part of a drive to rationalize decision-making within the French administration. This initiative was heavily influenced by the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (3) developed by the US army and the French telecommunications administration was considered to have been the most successful in modernizing its management (Poinsard, 1987), although it has been argued that this is primarily due to its success in freeing itself from the straight jacket of centralized budgetary control (Carpenter, 2013).

In September 1976, the telecommunications administration took an initiative to distinguish its material from that of the Post Office by changing the color of its vans from the yellow color adopted by the Ministry in 1959 with its new logo. The new blue vans of the telecommunications administration were the first highly-visible sign of its new found autonomy. 1976 was also the year when a programme was launched to install public telephone boxes outside of post offices. In addition to offering 24-hour access, this contributed to the public perception of a growing distinction between the two nationwide services that were part of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (Bertho, 1981, pp. 495-496).

In January 1977, the Ministry granted the telecommunications administration permission to carry out advertising in two formats: two-page print advertisements in weekly magazines or advertisements on the blue Renault 4 vans belonging to the telecommunications administration (Figure 9).
In 1979 the telecommunications administration created the first advertising and communications service within the commercial affairs department and the first mass advertising campaigns (Figure 10). The message chosen highlighted the success of the massive deployment of the telephone network in France and explained that “the number of telephone subscribers has doubled in four years” with the slogan “The telephone. It connects people”.

In 1979, a TV advertising campaign was developed for the PTT Ministry using virtually the same slogan as the print advertisement for the telephone administration “PTT: the people who connect people” (Pineau, 2012). Two very popular French actors who had been the stars of a recent box-office hit in the cinema, *Les Bronzés*, star in the TV advertisement (Figure 11). One appears as a postal worker who stops his delivery van to chat with the other who is in the process of climbing up a telephone pole, participating in the rollout of France’s rapidly expanding telecommunications network. The dialogue between the two characters clearly highlights the fact that the two major organizations in the PTT Ministry are in competition but also gives an impression of complementarity. Symbolically, the postal worker is on the ground moving around to deliver material forms of communication in his vehicle while the telecommunications worker is elevated working on immaterial communication. In response to the postal worker’s comment that there is more and more post to deliver all the time, the telecommunications worker replies that telephone subscriptions have doubled in five years and “I won’t even talk to you about satellites”. The telecommunications administration has thus used the same advertisement to
highlight both its rapid growth in delivering the badly-needed telephone service in France and its technological prowess. As the postal worker is in a car and not on a bicycle, it is also clear that progress is underway in this organization also and it is the subject of a joke between the protagonists in the advertisement.

Figure 11: TV advertisement for PTT (1979)

Nonetheless, the telecommunications workers’ discourse explicitly positions the telecommunications administration as moving rapidly ahead on both efficiency and technology dimensions. No French consumer watching TV in 1979 had any need for services linked to satellites – or access to them, as they did not yet exist commercially – but the administration used the advertisement cleverly to enhance public awareness that the organization was at the forefront of technological developments in the area. The success of the “catch-up” phase of network deployment meant that the telecommunications administration had significant good-will to leverage with policy makers to pursue its ambitious plans to develop new products and services and position the French telecommunications sector as a leading innovator in the sector (Carpenter, 2011).

A second advertisement campaign specifically for the telecommunications administration was run in 1981 with the claim that “every day, 12,000 telephones are linked to the network” under the heading “Spring has arrived for the telephone” (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Advertising campaign for telecommunications administration, 1981
In addition to the print advertisement, this campaign was accompanied by a thirty second animated TV advertisement and thirty second radio advertisement, along with posters on the vehicles of the telecommunications administration (Ministère des PTT, 1984).

From 1980, the budget for advertising and promotion began to develop significantly (Figure 13). The budget of 8 million francs in 1978 was increased by over 50% to 12.6 million francs by 1980\(^1\). This figure rose to 46 million in 1981, an almost fourfold increase (Weil, 1988). On-going increases in spending led to spending of 135 million francs in 1985.

Figure 13: Advertising budget of the telecommunication administration, 1978-1985 (millions of francs)

This was the year when the system for telephone numbers was adapted to the growth in phones connected to the network. Telephone numbers subsequently went from having seven numbers to eight and a high-profile journalist on radio and TV, Léon Zitrone\(^2\), was hired to front the major advertising campaign (Figure 14). It was developed by the Opus agency at a cost of 22 million francs (Stratégie, 1998).

Figure 14: Advertisement for the new system for telephone numbers (1985)

Source: Bibliothèque Historique de la Poste et des Télécommunications, Paris, France.
As the cost of long-distance calls fell from the early 1980s, the advertisements highlighted the cost of specific calls, by making reference to the manner in which the French train service announced its prices between cities: “Rennes-Lille: 2.10 francs. The cost of a minute on the phone” (Pflieger, 2003, p. 112).

**Period 3: The emergence of modern advertising and promotion practices: 1985-2002**

The 1980s initially represented a period of consolidation for the French telecommunications administration, during which the advances made in the previous twelve years were consolidated by the new socialist government elected in 1981 under the presidency of François Mitterrand. During this period, however, the commercial services installed during the 1970s significantly developed their activities through the dedicated ‘Télèboutiques’ located throughout France and primarily targeted at end users in addition to continued development of commercial services as the use of information technology spread from large to medium-sized and small firms.

The Télétel telematics network linked to Minitel terminals was a particular success during this period. Based on telematics technologies developed in the late 1970s, the concept of distributing a low-cost, dumb terminal to households was unique to France and was accompanied by a range of administrative and commercial services available ‘on-line’ to encourage households to experiment and to develop their use of what amounts to an early (closed) version of the Internet. The first services were subsidized and developed in close collaboration with the services of the telecommunications administration and the “killer app” was access to the phone directory at no cost. Rates for other services such as information, exchange and entertainment were based on the time spent connected to the service and the telecommunications administration centralized billing and subsequently distributed all but 9% of the payment to the service provider. The Minitel service was extremely successful in France for a period of approximately 20 years, after which time it was overtaken by the Internet. Attempts to internationalize the service in the 1990s failed as technological, regulatory and institutional conditions in other countries were significantly different to those that provided the fertile terrain for the emergence of such an innovative ecosystem in France in the 1970s and 1980s.

Unlike the original service of the administration, the telephone, the Minitel service represented a significant innovation in the telecommunications sector at the time. Unlike the data transmission services developed in the 1970s for large businesses, there was no express demand for such a service. Promoting this new service thus required communication to generate awareness of the service and to encourage adoption of its use to access services available on this interface. The interface developed was called the “kiosk” in reference to the name used in France for newspaper stalls in the streets. Large firms who agreed to develop access to their services via the kiosk also advertised these new channels, thus increasing the coverage of advertising and promotion beyond that conducted by the French telecommunications administration. Such firms included large state-owned firms such as the train service, SNCF, and the electricity service, GDF and also private firms such as department stores and banks. New targeted messaging services also flourished with anonymous users in their own homes accessing discussion groups and, at times, paying for access to soft pornography discussion sites. All paid services were accessed using the code 3615 and for decades after the successful launch of the Minitel network the French advertising landscape was peppered with calls to “hook up” to services such as that of 3615 Ulla. A horoscope service was created with the code 3615 Sélène (Figure 15).
Once the administration had caught up with other countries in relation to the roll-out of the telephone network, the priority became to increase usage rates. In 1986, the DGT launched a communications campaign to encourage calls abroad. Foreign calls were considered to be very expensive and were almost exclusively used by professional and commercial subscribers. Advertisements were prepared for different destinations, such as Japan (Figure 16) to explain how affordable it was to make calls outside of France.

In addition to the great technological and commercial advances of the 1980s, the French telecommunications sector was not immune to the wave of deregulation that had rolled across the Atlantic to land initially on the welcoming shores of the UK under its economically liberal Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. The landmark European Commission Green Paper on telecommunications
was published in 1987 and opened the door to growing liberalization and competition within the sector with a view to creating a dynamic European market in telecommunications.

The new French government of 1986 was not opposed to greater competition in the area of telecommunications, in particular in light of the growing potential of the mobile sector. A new Communications Directorate had also been created in 1986 and one of their first tasks was to develop a coherent and unifying image for the administration whose activities were increasingly resembling those of a private firm (Leclère and Carré, 1995). France Télécom was officially created as a stand-alone administration on 1 January 1987 with a new logo (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Logo of France Télécom (1987)

When the French telecommunications administration became a separate entity to the PTT Ministry in 1988, the primary concern of the new entity, France Télécom, was the launch of new products and services. These included services linked to the Minitel network for both private and professional users, new cable services such as TV and the growing potential market for mobile telephony. The Communications Directorate came up with an institutional advertising campaign with the slogan “The 4th dimension. Live all of space at the same time” (Figure 18). The objective of the campaign was to anchor France Télécom in the public’s mind as a future-oriented organization. The focus is not on the technology, although the text does highlight the achievements of the organization in the area of teletex, satellites, faxes and digital networks, but on the autonomy that telecommunications afford to the user (Barré-Vinchon, 2001, p.33). The advertising campaign was designed by the Opus & Hintzy agency with a budget of 33 million francs (HistelFrance, 2019).

Figure 148: France Télécom’s first institutional advertising campaign (1988)

Source: HistelFrance (2019).

Another slogan used at the time in institutional advertising claimed that France Télécom “ahead of the curve” (Pflieger, 2003). France Télécom’s objective in such advertising is two-fold. On the one hand, the newly-formed company wants to distinguish itself clearly from its former partner organization, the Post Office. In order to do so, however, it emphasizes the ubiquitous nature of communication and positions itself as a modern company rather than making explicit references to technology as it had done
in previous campaigns. Its institutional advertising also refers clearly to its sponsorship of gymnastics and singing competitions, neither of which are activities requiring technological prowess (Tcherniak, 1998, pp. 28-37).

The increase in activity and the diversification of advertising media used by this newly-created entity can be seen from the details of a personal archive of internal France Télécom documents related to advertising campaigns carried out between September 1989 and November 1991 (Figure 13). The number of campaigns rose from eight in 1989 to twenty one in 1990, before declining to ten up until November 1991.

Figure 19: Number of advertising campaigns per month, September 1988 – November 1991

![Graph showing the number of advertising campaigns per month from September 1988 to November 1991. The number of campaigns increased from eight in 1989 to twenty one in 1990, before declining to ten up until November 1991.]


Of the total thirty nine campaigns run over these four years, sixteen were directed at end users and twenty three were aimed at business customers and institutional users such as local public authorities (Table II). Print media was by far the most commonly used means of advertising for both types of segment but TV and cinema advertising as well as poster campaigns were adopted for some end user campaigns from October 1989. Direct mail was used in a business campaign in early 1990 and public relations and attendances at trade fairs were also adopted towards the end of 1991.

On three occasions during this period, France Télécom participated in an international advertising campaign. In November 1989 and 1990, in collaboration with other members of the CEPT, the French administration ran common press advertisements with its counterparts in Belgium, Spain, Great Britain, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany to encourage international phone calls. In October 1991, France Télécom ran a press campaign to support its international development. Both institutional and commercial messages were diffused in nine international financial publications such as the ‘Financial Times’, ‘Business Week’ and the ‘Wall Street Journal’ as well as in six specialized telecommunications publications such as ‘Communications Week International’ and ‘Telecommunications International’ (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Advertisement for France Télécom in English press (1991)
### Table II. Media of campaigns and length (months), September 1988 – November 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Mass media</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>GI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 88</td>
<td>Call forwarding</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Press Ps Rd Tv Cn PC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 88</td>
<td>Data transmission</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 88</td>
<td>Freephone number</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 89</td>
<td>Business directory</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 89</td>
<td>Data transfer</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 89</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>2 1 1.5 2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 89</td>
<td>Telemarketing</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 89</td>
<td>Telephone directories</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>3 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 89</td>
<td>International calls</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 90</td>
<td>Minitel (telematics)</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 90</td>
<td>New services, telephones</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>8 1 1 Direct mail: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 90</td>
<td>Low-cost evening rates</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>1 2 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 90</td>
<td>Company phone card</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 90</td>
<td>Freephone number</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 90</td>
<td>Minitel</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 90</td>
<td>Office communications</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 90</td>
<td>Data transmission ISDN</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 90</td>
<td>Telemarketing</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 90</td>
<td>Minitel</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 90</td>
<td>Phone card (120 units)</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 90</td>
<td>International calls</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 90</td>
<td>Fax services</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 90</td>
<td>Minitel</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 90</td>
<td>Fax by Minitel (Minitelex)</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 90</td>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>3 0.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 90</td>
<td>Freephone number</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 90</td>
<td>International calls</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 90</td>
<td>Agoris fax machine</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 90</td>
<td>Directory for professionals</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Direct mail: time not specified (ns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 90</td>
<td>Local public authorities</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 90</td>
<td>Olympic games</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 91</td>
<td>Customer relations</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 91</td>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 91</td>
<td>Data transmission ISDN</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1.5 0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 91</td>
<td>Minitel</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 91</td>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 91</td>
<td>Institutional, international</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 91</td>
<td>Local public authorities</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 91</td>
<td>Minitel communication</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 91</td>
<td>Professional directories</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*B2B: business to business, B2C: business to consumer, Poster (Ps), Radio (Rd), Cinema (Cn), Phone Card (PC), Global (Gl)

**Source:** Internal France Télécom documents, ‘Campagnes publicitaires’, September 1988 – November 1990, private archives of Michel Berne, France Télécom

Many of the short campaigns were aimed at launching new products or services, related to existing businesses. These included, for example, call forwarding services and cheaper prices at certain times for individual users and more effective data transmission and fax services for businesses, as well as new ways for them to communicate their own services via advertisements in telephone directories and telephone cards. The organization had moved beyond its phase of network expansion, where demand for the telephone service exceeded supply, to a new phase where new products and services were being promoted in a relatively-mature market.

In addition to new services available on the very successful telematics network, Télétel, with its innovative terminal, Minitel, France Télécom also ran campaigns during this period for a new service whose significance was yet to emerge: mobile phones. During this time, France Télécom was advertising a mobile telephone service based on its non-digital service, Radiocom 2000. In 1988 this service in France still had only 60,000 users and was primarily used in for telephones in vehicles mostly by business customers who were mainly either top executives or sales personnel who travelled extensively. In the same decade, however, deregulation to introduce competition in telecommunications and new digital
technologies were converging to transform the environment of previous national monopolies such as France Télécom.

The UK was the first to put mobile telephone licenses up for tender in 1982 with two licenses granted initially to Vodafone and Cellnet and two others subsequently granted in 1989 to Mercury Communications and Hutchison Telecom. The second round of licenses granted in the UK corresponds to the roll-out of networks built on the new digital GSM (Groupe Spécial Mobile) standard developed in Europe. In parallel, equipment providers had developed truly mobile phones at more affordable price points. Two notable developments in this respect were Motorola’s International 3200, launched in September 1991 and whose price fell to £199 by 1993, and the Nokia 1011, so called to commemorate its launch date of 10 November 1992 (Linge and Sutton, 2015, p. 25).

In the UK, Mercury one2one was the network in the world to use the 1,800 MHz bandwidth when it opened its new service on 7 September 1993 (Linge and Sutton, 2015). The communications campaign it used to launch its new service was also unprecedented. A budget of £10 million was allocated to a mass media campaign that covered print, radio and TV media as well as posters and numerous PR events (Figure 21) to which high-profile individuals were invited, generating further publicity. Such events used music from the British pop group, Queen, including “I want to break free” and “A kind of Magic”, breaking with the traditional conservative image of the incumbent fixed telecommunications service provider, British Telecom, whose advertising was relatively austere.

Figure 21: Image of the launch campaign for Mercury one2one in the UK (1993)


Top executives from Mercury and its parent company, Cable & Wireless, appeared on TV and radio and in the newspapers to give interviews. The company was aiming not only to take on the existing mobile service companies, Cellnet and Vodafone, but also to convince users of fixed lines that they could switch to a mobile service. Lord Young, President of Mercury one2one announced that the company’s objective was to “make sure that consumers make a good deal with telecommunication”. Its service was only available in the London region initially and Mercury one2one offered free calls from 7pm to 7am and all day on weekends. By the end of 1994, after one year in operation, it had over 200,000 subscribers. Cellnet opened its GSM network in December 1993 (Linge and Sutton, 2015, pp.27-29).

As the fourth operator to enter the already-competitive UK market, Hutchinson Telecom needed to be innovative. It did so by choosing a highly-memorable name, “Orange” (Figure 22), and slogan: “The future’s bright, the future’s Orange”, as well as developing a revolutionary pricing concept of a monthly subscription price which bundled access to the mobile service and payment of the cost of the terminal.
Hutchinson Telecom also innovated with its advertising for Orange services. Its advertisements had mostly black and white images to contrast with the colorful logo. The images chosen were stark and simple and relatively unrelated to the world of technology. It often used images of children and babies, for example, to link the use of mobile phones to the future (Figure 23).

In the UK, such large and innovative advertising and promotion campaigns helped to increase the diffusion of mobile phones. The mobile phone equipment rate increased from 7% of the population in 1995 to 46% in 1999 and 73% in 2000, one on the highest rates in Europe (Sammut-Bonnici, 2006).

In France, France Télécom was also facing direct competition in the mobile sector following the granting of a mobile license to SFR (‘Société Française de Radiotéléphonie’) in 1987. The company was a joint venture between CGE, a French water utility company, and Crédit Lyonnais, a French bank (Laborie, 2008, p.28). SFR’s initial network was developed using the Nordic NMT standard.

France Télécom experimented with an alternative mobile service between 1991 and 1997, with the launch of ‘Bi-Bop’, a tele-point service that allowed users to telephone with a terminal on condition they were not more than 200 meters from a base station (Offner, 1999, pp. 56-57). Despite having 130,000 users, Bi-Bop was abandoned in favor of France Telecom’s own GSM service, Itineris from 1997.

Itineris was launched on 1 July 1992 (Figure 24) and France Télécom rapidly equipped its existing professional mobile phone clients with the new service to become the leading mobile telephone service provider in France with 400,000 users by 1994 (Laborie, 2008, p.91).
Both SFR and France Télécom adopted geomarketing to link their communication with clients to the deployment of their new mobile services. By identifying less densely serviced areas, both companies competed by trying to outdo the other in expanding their coverage and simultaneously attracting new clients (Tritz, 2000).

Considering the level of competition to be less-than-optimal, the Minister for Post and Telecommunications attributed a third mobile license to Bouygues Télécom who started their mobile service in May 1996 (Figure 25). Having lost the opportunity to have a license in 1987, Bouygues was determined to differentiate itself from the other applicants and it focused primarily on consumers, rather than professionals and businesses.

Figure 25: Bouygues Télécom logo (1996)

![Bouygues Télécom logo](https://www.corporate.bouyguestelecom.fr/nous-connaître/notre-histoire/)

Bouygues Telecom’s launch even highly publicized, as was the case with Mercury one2one in the UK. It put up a marquee on the “Champ de Mars” in Paris in front of the Eiffel Tower where invitees could watch a spectacular fireworks show and see the Eiffel Tower lights go off and on again. The party lasted well into the night and complaints were filed by local inhabitants who claimed their windows had been broken by the festivities (Dupont-Calbo, 2012).

Bouygues Télécom was the first operator to introduce bundled monthly pricing into the French market. Simple pricing was accompanied by advertising campaigns that stressed the democratization of mobile phone usage (Figures 26 and 27). The first advertisement explains that “telephoning becomes a 6th sense” and the second advertisement highlights the advantage of the new pricing packages, claiming that with Bouygues Télécom “you can telephone without counting”.

Figure 26: Bouygues Télécom advertisement (1996-1997)


Bouygues Télécom’s success in reaching one million subscribers by 1997 stimulated the other competitors to develop similar service bundles and to drop their prices. Between 1995 and 1997, the price of mobile phone communications in France was reduced by two thirds (Dupont-Calbo, 2012).

Faced with new competitors for mobile services, France Telecom continued to develop its existing services and to innovate with new ones and with new ways of communicating their value. A notable success story in 1995 was its launch of a new paging system, Tatoo, targeted at a young segment aged between 18 and 25. Pagers of increasing levels of sophistication had existed for professional use since the mid 1970s but it had remained a niche market for France Telecom. Bouygues had launched a service, Kobby, aimed at both the professional and the mass-market segments in December 1994 and Cegetel subsequently launched Tam-Tam for the general public. When France Telecom launched Tatoo in September 1995 (Figure 28), it was clearly not a superior product to the two that already existed on the market, as it only allowed the user to communicate a number to call, rather than a message which was possible with the other two solutions. While not offering value added in terms of performance, however, France Télécom is considered to have succeeded in adding “relational value” with this new product and the communication campaign adopted for its launch (Jallat et al., 1997).

The segment chosen for the launch of the new product and service was younger than that of mobile phone services. As these consumers have less income, a payment system was developed that only charged for sending calls from fixed telephones or Minitel terminals. In addition to distributing the pagers in the 500 France Telecom agencies, it was sold in supermarkets and specialised electronic and sports equipment stores.

Research done on the target segment had indicated that adolescents and young adults wanted a simple and cheap means of staying in contact with their group of friends. The advertising campaign for the
Tatoo launch was carried out by the BDDP agency and is considered to have been a huge success. Three “tribes” were invented to represent groups of adolescents/young adults: the “Hip-Hop” gang were on springs, the “Musacos” were dressed as musical instruments and the “Jet Balles” were playing a made-up ballgame. The recognition level of the advertisements were 20% higher than average and 30% for the target audience. The spontaneous brand recognition of Tatoo was 68% for the target audience, compared to 60% for Tam-Tam, the first pager to be launched a year earlier than Tatoo.

Tatoo was an immediate success with 68,000 pagers sold four months after launch. By January 1996, 100,000 were sold and by the end of 1997, almost one million were in operation. The launch campaign is considered in France to be representative of a new form or marketing linked to the sociological concept of “tribes” to which consumers choose to belong. The lessons of how to target a group with common tastes and affinities to generate rapid adoption of a new product or service are considered particularly relevant to emerging high-tech markets (Maffesoli, 1988 and Cova, 2008).

Public relations took on an entirely more significant role in France Télécom in the run up to its privatisation on October 20 1997. The organisation’s future President and CEO, Michel Bon (Figure 29), needed to convince investors to acquire the 211 million shares to be floated in order to raise 40 billion francs for a firm that was to remain 60% state owned (Bui, 1997).

Figure 29: Michel Bon, Chief Executive Officer of France Télécom on France 3 TV (22 September 1997)


The former French telecommunications administration was thus launched on the French and New York Stock exchanges in October 1997. A final advertising campaign from that year highlights the transformation that had occurred not only in the firm’s governance but also in its communication and advertising. The future company was seeking to position itself as a modern, innovative and dynamic organization resolutely looking to the future and the theme of the campaign was the year 2000 with the slogan “we will make you love the year 2000”. A variation on the campaign theme was used on telephone cards (Figure 30) with the text “in the year 2000, there is 2” to emphasize the collaborative nature of communication.

Figure 30: France Télécom advertisement on telephone card (1997)

Source: Private archives of Patrick Luciano.

The advertising campaigns of France Telecom in the 1990s are clearly influenced by the UK experience, and notably British Telecom’s response to the modern advertising and promotions approach of new entrant, Mercury, outlined earlier. To change its image and to increase use of the telephone, British Telecom hired Abbott Mead Vickers/BDDO who developed an advertising campaign called “It’s good to talk”. The British actor, Bob Hoskins, appears in the TV advertisements (Figure 31) and the
success of this very intimate vision of the importance of conversation is believed to have had a significant influence on the advertising campaigns of European incumbents in the second half of the 1990s.  

Figure 31: British Telecom’s “It’s good to talk” campaign with Bob Hoskins (1994)

Overall during this period, there was a significant increase in advertising budgets in the sector as new competitors entered the rapidly-expanding Internet and mobile phone markets. Incumbents clearly benefited from the growth with the turnover of France Télécom doubling between 1994 (€21.7bn and 2002 (€46.4bn). During the same time period, however, spending on advertising and promotions increased seven-fold from €167m in 1994 to €1.2bn in 2002 (Figure 32). As a result, while spending on advertising and promotion represented less than 1% of turnover in 1994, this percentage had grown to 2.6% by 2002 (Figure 33).

Figure 32: Spending on advertising and promotion (€m), France Telecom (1994-2002)

At the height of the telecom and internet bubble in 2000, France Télécom adopted a new visual identity with a new logo using the sign “&” in red and orange (Figure 34). The new identity of the firm sought to reposition the traditional fixed telephone supplier for the Internet era and change the perception of the public from it being a “Phone company” to an “Internet company” (Atelier BNP Paribas, 2000). A mass advertising campaign including newspaper and TV coverage was prepared by the advertising agency BDDP Corporate and launched in March 2000 (Libération, 2000).

After 2000, spending on advertising and promotion continued to grow in absolute terms from €939bn in 2001 to €1.2bn in 2002, although this represented a slight decline in percentage terms from 2.8% to 2.6%. In 2002, after the bursting of the telecom bubble, France Télécom found itself in perilous financial situation and drastic restructuring was undertaken. Subsequently, spending on advertising and promotion was decreased by €200m per year over the three-year period between 2003 and 2005 (Commission des Opérations de Bourse, 2002, p. 34).

Conclusion

The objectives of the institutional advertising campaign undertaken at the time of France Télécom’s IPO in 1997 are very coherent with the use of advertising generally. It sought to communicate specific messages aimed at target segments to help the firm achieve objectives that enhance performance in ways that can be measured – in this case through a successful stock market launch. The previous decade had shown that the telecommunications administration was capable of adopting increasingly diverse communication tools and, in the case of advertising, of diversifying its use of different media to address new segments with new products and services as well as communicating new prices. In new areas of business such as mobile telephones, the administration was already facing direct competition as a result of deregulation but, in reality, the threat of competition in other areas of business had already posed a distinct threat and the administration had already adopted customer-oriented practices, including...
advertising. This was the case, for example, in data transmission where the threat of ‘competition’ came from users who were putting pressure on the administration to develop new and cheaper services by threatening to develop their own network. Even before the existence of such actual or potential competition, however, the French telecommunications administration had adopted advertising to identify itself clearly to the French public and distinguish itself from the Postal service. Jointly, as part of the French Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, both administrations were pioneers in engaging in institutional communication and research on user perceptions. The telecommunications administration, however, as far back as the 1970s was facing different technological and market developments that required it to engage more actively in both institutional and commercial advertising. This historical examination of its early advertising initiatives suggest that its future competencies in the area of advertising, when it did become a company facing intense competition, were developed from skills that had been honed in decades when competition was either non-existent or very indirect. With the launch of the Minitel, in particular, the administration showed itself capable of creating a market and was a very active user of advertising and promotion, in partnership with its content suppliers.

Our analysis has also highlighted a strong international influence in relation to advertising and promotions when the UK preceded France in introducing competitive practices and restructured the telephone market. Mercury one2one and Orange in the mobile segment of the market were particularly strong influences, in part as a result of their decision to make use of established, well-known advertising agencies to professionalize activities in the area. The massive up-take of mobile phones in the UK clearly led to great interest on the part of operators in other European countries. In France, the new entrant Bouygues Télécom adopted a very similar approach to launch its new services. In parallel, British Telecom’s campaign, “It’s good to talk” at the time was a strong influence on the French incumbent operator, France Télécom.

Further historical research into the adoption of advertising practices in the telecommunications sector in other countries or in other public monopolies in France may illustrate similar or contrasting practices. Such comparative historical research potentially offers valuable insight into the multi-faceted use of institutional and commercial advertising in different contexts over time.

A long-term comparative study of the emergence of advertising and promotion practices in the industry since its inception could add to existing attempts to understand the role of international and universal expositions in the diffusion of the telephone (Carpenter & Luciano, 2017). The relative importance of different forms of communication in the promotion of the adoption of the telephone could also be compared to those used for encouraging adoption of the telegraph and electricity. The question of how advertising and promotion evolves as such a disruptive innovation as the telephone progresses along the adoption curve would require a historical study that covers approximately 150 years from its invention in 1876 to global mass adoption of the Internet and mobile phones in the 2000s. Early practices at the end of the 19th century for simple fixed-line telephones could be compared to advertising and promotional practices for the Internet and mobile phone adoption in the 1990s and 2000s. A final area of future historical research in the area of marketing in the telephone sector is that of branding as the sector was relatively slow to adopt branding practices. When it did, branding was closely linked to advertising and promotion and an overall historical study of such marketing evolutions would enhance our understanding of both the sector and the discipline.
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Notes

1 The ‘Centre National des Études des Télécommunications’ (CNET) or ‘National Centre for Telecommunications Studies’.

2 Guy Georget was a commercial artist who produced graphic advertisements for major French companies during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The logo he developed for the French Post Office, a graphic drawing of a bird, continues to be used almost 60 years later for the company, as well as for its new banking branch, La Banque Postale.

3 Interview with Jean-Paul Maury, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, 22 July 2017.

4 The ‘Conférence Européenne des administrations des Postes et Télécommunications’ (CEPT), created in 1959 with 19 organisations representing the administrations of Post and Telecommunications in 19 European countries.

5 The ‘Club Informatique des Grandes Entreprises Françaises’, or ‘Information Technology Club of Large French Firms’.

6 The ‘Salon des Industries du Commerce de Bureau’ (SICOB) was begun in 1950 and held annually until 1990.


8 The ‘Groupement d’Étude pour un Réseau Interprofessionnel de Paquets’ (GERCIP) or ‘pilot study group to study the feasibility of a joint data transmission network’.

9 The Ministry of PTT was responsible for the administration of the services of the post office, postal cheques and telecommunications.

10 Orange is the new name of the privatized company since 1 July 2013.

11 This advertising budget covers the campaigns managed by the DAC and those managed with the organisation that managed the Yellow Pages, a professional telephone directory and those managed by regional services. Institutional campaigns, commercial revues, attendance at trade fairs and public relations were part of a separate budget.

12 Léon Zitrone (1914-1995) was a Russian-born French journalist who presented and participated in radio and television throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

13 Interview with Pascal Périn, Director Strategic Studies, Orange, 9 April 2014.
Primary Sources for Advertising and Marketing Historians at the Harvard Libraries

Fred Beard
Gaylord College,
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Purpose – An online search of the Harvard University Library System – which includes the Baker Library, Houghton Library, and the Radcliffe Institute’s Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America – reveals nearly 1,000 archive and manuscript holdings on advertising and related topics. The purpose of the research described in this paper is to investigate the extent of these holdings and to assess their value to advertising and marketing historians.

Approach – Described are the extensive and valuable special collections and other holdings related to advertising, business, and marketing of the Harvard Library System. Also described are the availability of the holdings and recommendations for accessing and studying the collections and artifacts.

Findings – The Harvard University Library System is confirmed to be historically significant because it contains some of the most topically valuable collections of 19th century advertisements and ephemera in North America, especially in regard to the role of women in the history of advertising; some of the collections are international in scope; and the collections address a wide variety of products, services, and advertising objectives.

Contribution – A prior search for the world’s largest and most historically significant archives and collections of advertisements and marketing ephemera (promotional objects or media executions created for a one-time, limited purpose) revealed a handful of library and museum collections of exceptional size or topical importance meriting further investigation. This paper adds to the line of research focused on revealing the breadth, depth, and historical value of the world’s important collections of historical advertisements and ephemera.

Key Words – marketing history, advertising history, advertising archives, marketing ephemera

Paper Type – Research Paper

Introduction
Many historians date the dawn of modern advertising and branding to around the year 1900 and tend to fixate on the philosophies and practices of the period’s influential Americans, such as Albert Lasker, John E. Kennedy, George Rowell, Francis Wayland Ayer, Harley Procter, James L. Kraft, and J. Walter Thompson. This fixation has directly encouraged two limitations in advertising’s historiography, which Schwarzkopf (2011) – who reviewed historical studies published between 1980 and 2010 and synthesized the findings with several of the classic historical works – labeled the “Americanization” and “Modernization” methodological-theoretical norms. America, as Schwarzkopf (2011: 534) argues, “is talked up by historians into the embodiment of a new stage in the development of humanity, a stage dominated by modern consumer capitalism. With the takeover of European culture by the American advertising industry, thus goes the story, history had finally arrived at the level of a globally shared consumerist consciousness.”

Beard (2016) confirms, however, that advertising similar to that of the 20th century in design and intent existed much earlier, that it came into use for similar reasons, and that much the same pattern of reasons occurred around the globe, including among the ancient civilizations of the Middle and Far East. Economically, even in its earliest uses, advertising was linked to trade specialization, affluence and discretionary income, marketplace economies, competition, and new forms of goods distribution. Other important themes in the development of advertising and related forms of commercial communications are the use of trademarks; advertising’s early use with persuasive intent; the importance of spectacle; the appearance and evolution of early aural and visual media; the influence of technology on media