A brief history of modern Greek advertising, 1950-1999

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This adaptation is from a thesis submitted in the summer of 2000 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Advertising Design degree at Syracuse University. The goal was to give a general overview of advertising in Greece in the twentieth century, familiarize readers with its largely unknown history, and suggest areas of further study.

Like any other country, Greece’s advertising is one of the best indicators of its economic, social and cultural progress. Through my research and studies, I discovered that Greece’s advertising in the modern sense is especially interesting because of its highly idiosyncratic development, closely tied to twentieth-century historical events. I also discovered that Greece has a distinguished, engaging advertising history shaped by a number of talented, forward-thinking men and women. Unfortunately, this history is grossly underappreciated and practically unrecorded, though in recent years a more concerted effort has been made to begin some documentation of the country’s advertising past.

Greece made great strides in the 1990s in the areas of account management, media usage, and quality and breadth of services provided to clients; many of these improvements were the result of outside factors, however, and at the end of the 20th century the country remained largely behind many of its European counterparts. Creatively, and with few exceptions, my personal belief is that the industry today is in decline. But if Greece can get past its current imitative tendencies (as evidenced in a sizable percentage of 1999 print and outdoor ad samples) and its unfortunate proclivity towards self-impediment (largely driven by a disregard for regulation), the Greek advertising industry—among many other things—stands to benefit greatly.

1950–1969: American domination, economic reconstruction and the Cyprus issue

Author Mark Ellingham writes, “It was a demoralized, shattered Greece that emerged into the Western political orbit of the 1950s”.1 It was also a country largely dominated by the United States. Greece joined NATO in 1951 and the U.S. was granted the right to operate sovereign bases in 1953. As well, the U.S. gave generous aid and even more generous military support to Greece throughout the 50s in order to maintain a right-wing government, a largely successful effort. In 1952, the Greek electoral system was changed to majority voting (which excluded communists from future governments) and women were given the right to vote. In 1955, Konstantinos Karamanlis became the Prime Minister of Greece and was to remain a dominant force in Greek politics for the next 35 years.

Although Greece remained a relatively poor country in the 1950s, living standards improved considerably. In time, the severe damage inflicted on the Greek economy by the two world wars was repaired—although the benefits of economic recovery were unevenly distributed—and consumer spending rose markedly. Athens continued to experience a sharp population increase as thousands of Greeks left their rural hometowns to seek their fortunes in Athens. As well, many Greeks continued to seek new beginnings overseas. Australia, Canada and Germany saw an influx of immigrants in the late 50s.

Improved living standards and internal communications and the development of mass air travel led to a rise in tourism towards the end of the decade. This development positively affected the country’s social values and customs as well as its economy in the decades that followed. Another significant development in the 1950s was the growing crisis in Cyprus, the last Greek-inhabited area in the region to remain outside the boundaries of the Greek state. Greek and Turkish Cypriots both claimed the island as their own; clashes came to a head in 1954 and Cyprus became a British-controlled independent state in 1959. However, tensions continued to mount in subsequent years and led to a Turkish invasion of the northern part of the island in 1974.

In 1963, after two years of political turmoil, Karamanlis resigned and left the country. George Papandreou’s centrist Center Union party was elected into power in 1964. A renewed outbreak of violence in Cyprus erupted into a full-scale civil war, but the United Nations intervened and installed a peace-keeping force. Fearing a resurgence of the left, a group of right-wing army colonels staged a coup d’etat in 1967 and a military junta was established with Colonel George Papadopoulos as prime minister. After an unsuccessful counter-coup in December of the same year, King Constantine fled the country. The colonels imposed martial law, abolished all political parties, banned trade unions, imposed censorship and imprisoned, tortured and exiled thousands of Greeks who opposed them. The dictatorship was able to maintain the momentum of economic growth that began in the early 50s through various unethical financial policies, thus hindering the development of large-scale opposition. However, it did also mean continued growth for the advertising industry.

developments in advertising from 1950 to 1959
More than any other decade, the 1950s provided the groundwork for Greek advertising as it exists today and is considered by some to be “the last decade in the heroic age of Greek advertising”.2 The rapid change in the economic and social fabric of Greece was naturally echoed in the advertising as activities relating to promotions and selling became better planned and more organized. A new generation of university-educated advertising men and women absorbed the business practices of foreign enterprises settling in Greece at

this time and adapted them to their own developing industry. Advertising agencies began to invest considerably in personnel, equipment and technical means. Additionally, the concept of professional specialization was first introduced during this time.

Many new advertising agencies continued to emerge in the 1950s, continuing a trend seen in previous decades. Some of the more well-known of these were ΕΞΥΠ (EXYP), ΙΡΙΣ (IRIS), ΦΑΕΘΩΝ (FAETHON), ΗΧΩ (ECHO), ΤΕΧΝΙΚΗ (TECHNIKE), ΚΟΥΣΕΝΤΟΣ (KOUSENTOS), ΚΟΣΜΟΣ (KOSMOS) and ΑΡΜΟΣ (ARMOS). Meantime, a number of older agencies established in the 20s and 30s that were not able to adapt to the changing needs of the market folded by the end of the decade. Two of the largest and most influential agencies founded during this time still active in at the time of writing were ΓΝΟΜΗ (GNOMI) and Olympic.

Radio advertising rapidly grew alongside print during this time as the first professional recording studios, dedicated radio actors and announcers appeared in Greece. Radio stations began transmitting advertising spots in between a variety of programs (including soap operas, which became extremely popular), games and contests. During the 1950s, cinema poster design flourished through the work of artists such as painters Stefanos Almaliotes and Giorgos Vakirtzes and set designer Giorgos Anemogiannis. In order to meet the growing needs of the advertising industry, the first two graphic arts schools in Greece were established: the School of Decorative Arts of Georgios Vakalo and the School of Graphic and Decorative Arts of the Athens Technological Institute.

By this point, many young illustrators began to work exclusively in the graphic arts and advertising fields. The first advertising association, the Panhellenic Association of Advertisers (Πανελλήνια Ενωση Διαφημιστών), was founded in the 1950s. Membership was open to anyone engaging in promotional activity of any sort. In 1958, the first industry magazine was published titled Δημοσιότης και Προβολή (Demosiotes kai provole/Publicity and promotion). This pioneering publication empowered the young advertising industry, making practitioners aware of the importance of their role and of the opportunities that existed for personal and professional advancement. In addition, the publication helped businesses and organizations across the country discover the value and benefits of advertising, marketing and public relations.

Despite these somewhat isolated efforts, however, advertising people in the 1950s continued to be looked upon in a less than flattering way by the majority of society. Although advertising constituted a large part of the cultural landscape by that time, it was relatively rare for a Greek person to admit they worked in the field of “creating advertisements”. Following is a telling excerpt from An advertising man remembers by Stathis Georgiades, one of the leading advertising personalities at the time and founder of two advertising
agencies, Business in the 40s and GEO in the 60s.

So I begin with the phrase “advertising man”—a phrase that was not very chic at the time, meaning that it wasn’t flattering, I would say it was rather scorned. This was because “advertising man” meant the guy who scrawled messages on walls using a stool, an asbestos bucket and three colors of paint, and “advertising man” also meant the guy that ran an organized practice with a staff and developed relatively systematic, for the time, advertising campaigns. I was impressed by something: I had determined that in 1960, the first “original” advertising man, Chrysostomos Papadopoulos—a man which we in fact characteristically referred to as the patriarch of [Greek] advertising—had not put the word “advertising” next to his name in the phone book. Many other accomplished colleagues, with established, large offices, preferred to write the name “businessman” or something else. And really, how could anyone dare use the word “advertising” when newspapers and magazines, as late as in 1956 and later years, referred to advertising practitioners as “announcers”? 3

Continuing a trend of more than two decades, most advertisements in the 1950s were designed by hand and featured heavy illustration and hand-drawn lettering. However, photography featured more prominently in the layout of advertisements beginning in the second half of the decade. Most ads in magazines appeared in either cyan or magenta ink. The decade saw the rise of a new language phenomenon: the extensive inclusion of new, foreign terms into the Greek vocabulary, most likely a by-product of the country’s increased economic dependence on the United States and the emerging world dominance of American culture. Thus, English words such as Cinemascope, aerosol, pick-up, formica, stereo, slip, pullman, transistor and robot began to appear in advertising regularly and were often transliterated (i.e. spelled out phonetically in Greek). As well, there appeared a surge in the number of products and services (both domestic and imported) with English-inspired names (e.g. duplex, reflex, Artex, Viniflex, Stromatex, Algon, Energol etc.). These names were only sometimes transliterated and more often than not appeared in Latin characters. This development appears to have at once molded and confused the character of modern Greek society; one could assert that the origins of ἡξενομανία (xenomania) —a Greek social epidemic of sorts characterized by the obsession with and imitation of that which is foreign— can be traced back to this occurrence. In recent years, increasing globalization trends and advances in technology seem to have exacerbated this proclivity and have raised many complicated questions relating to language and identity.

illustrator and designer Giorgos Vakirtzes
Billboard advertising for the Greek cinema as developed more than
half a century ago made for a somewhat unique kind of promotion. Its close ties to painting and illustration, the nature of what it promoted as well as the artistic freedom it bestowed upon the designer made it in and of itself a distinctive form of advertising.

Giorgos Vakirtzes (1925–1988) is the most important artist in this genre of advertising as well as one of the most talented and prolific advertising artists of the pre-agency era. Throughout his long career, Vakirtzes designed posters for a large variety of products, services, organizations and political parties. However, he is best known for his original works for the cinema. Vakirtzes began to occupy himself with painting and illustration from a young age. He began work in a small studio in 1936 where he handled signage, set decorations and ornament design. In 1938, he met illustrator Stefanos Almaliotes, who taught him the art of the “giant poster”, or billboard. With Almaliotes' encouragement, Vakirtzes decided to study painting at the School of Fine Arts in 1939. He also worked in various studios before continuing his studies in 1952 and 1953 at the School of Fine Arts in Paris.

In 1945, Vakirtzes began creating his first cinema billboards for many well-known Athens theaters such as Attikon, Pantheon, Rex and Kotopouli. From 1950 to 1964, and largely influenced by the Pop Art movement, he created his most important and well-known cinema billboards in his Athens studio. Interestingly, billboards were displayed for only a few days or a week at a time. At the same time, and up to 1963, he served as art director for film company Skouras Films. Vakirtzes also worked on billboards for Greek film giant Finos Films for more than a decade and designed a variety of film titles for Greek and French movies. Lastly, he created tens of commercial posters and posters for political speeches and social events.

From 1963 to 1967, Vakirtzes worked with the Greek National Tourism Organization and designed many posters for its tourism festivals. In 1963 he became art director at Gnomi and worked in the contemporary advertising and promotions fields for more than 20 years while extending his interests to interior design, book and magazine cover design and art theory. He wrote essays, gave lectures, designed and published four books and took part in a great number of exhibits in both Greece and abroad throughout his career. In 1979, he was formally invited by and traveled to the Soviet Union to serve on an artists' committee for purposes of selecting promotional posters for the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Many of his works are found in the National Gallery of Greece and in private collections in Greece and abroad.

Vakirtzes was an illustrator with a daring, bold style who was fascinated by the cinema and its heroes. The alluring stars of the screen and the exciting and adventurous personalities they embodied piqued his imagination. His illustrations, dramatic and engaging, made an instant emotional connection with a wide audience. His craftsmanship and skill were impeccable, and his lettering, all done
by hand, was exquisite. Although Vakirtzes’ cinema billboards were chiefly used as promotional vehicles, they endure as compelling works of art in their own right.

**developments in advertising from 1960 to 1969**

Rapid developments in the field of Greek advertising during the 1960s reflected the country’s notable economic growth during this time. The decade clearly marked a new era for advertising and the commercial arts in Greece. As the 60s progressed, both new and established advertising agencies became further structured and their approach became more sophisticated. A new crop of qualified and influential figures further shaped and defined the field, agency personnel became fully specialized, and the first dedicated art directors, copywriters and media buyers made their appearance. Greek media further developed and consumer purchasing power continued to increase. With the arrival of the first U.S. and European multinational agencies in Greece towards the end of the decade, advertising began to emerge as an organized discipline and began to be viewed as an investment rather than an expense. The multinational agencies also brought with them new, advanced approaches to strategizing and development of ideas. However, Karachrestos argues that the advent of these agencies ultimately limited the creativity of Greek practitioners because of the introduction and implementation of foreign advertising creative, much of which was localized for language considerations but would otherwise remain the same as in the originating country. 4

The first multinational agency to establish a presence in Greece was Lintas Hellas in 1969. The agency is known today as Lowe Lintas & Partners and is a member of the Interpublic international network. In addition to the appearance of this first multinational agency, a large

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number of Greek-owned agencies founded in the 60s merged with larger agency conglomerates in the 70s and 80s. Three of the most noteworthy agencies founded in Greece during this decade were:

Δέλτα-Δέλτα Δήμου (Delta-Delta Demou)
This leading agency was founded in 1965 by author Nikos Demou and E. Papadopoulos and remained active for just over 20 years. It became one of the largest and most creative Greek agencies and is regarded by its peers as having made an especially large contribution to the field. From 1969 to 1972 the agency collaborated with McCann-Erickson and in 1983 it merged with IKON/BBDO.

Κ & Κ Διαφημιστικό Κέντρο Αθηνών (Advertising Center of Athens)
K & K was founded in 1962 by Michales Katzourakes and Freddie Carabott. This agency produced highly creative work of the utmost aesthetic quality and is regarded by practitioners as one of the most important agencies in the history of Greek advertising. It was the leading print agency in Greece in the 60s and 70s. K&K joined the Univas agency network in 1973.

Spot
This agency was founded in 1968 by Petros Konstantinides, Demetres Mavros and Chrestos Kerasiotes. It became part of the global agency network of J. Walter Thompson in 1975 and was renamed Spot-Thompson. Spot-Thompson is the largest and most profitable advertising agency in Greece today.

The 1960s saw the advent of advertising-specific photo shoots and models in Greece. Advertising on the radio and in the cinema rose to new heights during this “golden age” of popular Greek music and film. Offset lithography printing became increasingly widespread beginning in 1965 and typesetting machines replaced the hand-drawn lettering of the 30s, 40s and 50s. The first organized industry association, the Hellenic Advertising Agencies Association was founded in 1966. The first market research and advertising media expenditure studies were conducted in the 1960s. Television –soon to emerge as the most powerful advertising medium in the country– made its first appearance in 1960, when the first frames were broadcast by the experimental station of ΔΕΗ (the national electricity company) on screens installed at the twenty-fifth International Fair of Thessaloniki, the largest annual commercial event in Greece. Thousands of amazed and fascinated visitors got the chance to view a complete program featuring notable Greek personalities such as politician Konstantinos Karamanlis and movie star Aliki Vougiouklaki. At the end of the show, the first advertisement was broadcast for sponsor Pavlidou, a chocolate manufacturer. Thanks to the advent of offset printing in the mid-1960s, color sections of magazines were

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increased from 8 to 16 pages and the first four-color ad insertions appeared around that time, mostly in popular magazines such as Επίκαιρα (Epikaira/Current Events), Εικόνες (Eikones/Images), Γυναίκα (Gynaika/Woman) and Ταχυδρόμος (Tachydromos/The Postman).

The significant social and cultural movements of the 1960s and the far-reaching effects of art, fashion and music on everyday Greek life in turn affected the content and aesthetics of Greek advertisements. The 60s saw the advent of (among other products) frozen foods, plastic containers, small appliances, synthetic fabrics and weight-loss centers in Greece. These types of products were advertised heavily, as were cigarettes, detergents, beer and turntables. Many of them sported foreign names, a practice first widely instituted in the 1950s. With the pivotal shift from hand-lettered to typeset copy in the 1960s, advertisements underwent a radical change in look and feel. The second half of the decade finds Greek typesetters seemingly struggling to catch up with the principles of the Swiss School of typography (developed in the 1950s) as there is a prevalence of carefully-set san-serif typefaces and compositions on the basis of the grid system. Photocollage techniques began to feature more prominently in advertisements, and layouts ranged in approach from straightforward to slightly more experimental.

Along with commercial posters produced by agencies, a great number of poignant anti-fascist and anti-dictatorship posters were produced during the late 60s into the early 70s. The posters were designed chiefly by young artists of the diaspora who, fueled by a growing anti-dictatorship movement abroad, aimed to mobilize European public opinion against the oppressive regime. Many of these posters were photocopied in small sizes and sent illegally to Greece. At the same time, spurred by the May 1968 Paris student revolt, amateur Greek artists at foreign universities also produced a great number of small prints (affichettes) which flooded the capitals of Europe. During the dictatorship, the posters of Savvas Tzanetakes (1939-1978) circulated widely in Scandinavian countries, where exhibitions of anti-dictatorship posters were organized.5 It is interesting to note that the oppressive and brutal tactics of the junta inspired Greek anti-dictatorship advertising support from beyond the boundaries of Europe. Asked by the North American Greek Relief Fund to help raise money for political prisoners and their families, famed New York adman George Lois (who is of Greek descent) created a memorable advertising campaign in the early 70s aimed at “getting Americans to understand the tyranny of the Greek junta”.6 In addition to raising money, the campaign also raised doubts about the morality of tourism during this troubled time. Concurrently, the regime itself issued posters, pamphlets, other collateral and even created TV spots of its own, as it clearly recognized the importance of advertising as a form of mass communication and persuasion.

5. Karachrestos, Greek posters, p.32.
One of the most important graphic artists to emerge during this time in Greece and an individual who made an enormous contribution to advertising, poster design and the graphic arts was Thessaloniki’s Giannis Svoronos (1919-1987), referred to as “the prince of [the Greek] graphic arts”. Though relatively unknown to the general Greek public, Svoronos is widely regarded by critics as Greece’s first authentic graphic designer. He did not start out in the painting or engraving fields like many before him; rather, he began organizing and communicating messages in a purely graphical way from the very beginning of his career.

Giannis Svoronos was born in Drama, a province of Macedonia in northern Greece. He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts from 1937 to 1939. In 1944, he began a collaboration with lithographers Howell and Kotta; a year later he became co-publisher and co-director of the literary and arts magazine *Κοχλίας* (Cochlias/spiral). Svoronos created and established the magazine’s identity standards, essentially the first time a Greek publication was professionally art directed. In 1953, Svoronos began his close partnership with the International Fair of Thessaloniki. Over the course of many years he designed a large variety of posters, related publications and the Fair’s exhibit halls. Svoronos is most closely associated with and perhaps best remembered for this. By striking a perfect balance of word and image in his compositions, Svoronos introduced the idea of graphic design to the modern Greek poster. Miltiades Papanikolaou, art history professor at the Aristotelion University in Thessaloniki, said of Svoronos’ Fair posters: “[They] stand out for their compositional concepts, their inventive combinations, their distinctive interchange of motifs, their effective contrasts and their overall artistic aesthetic… Svoronos knew more than anyone how to take advantage of the graphic element in its pictorial and plasticized expression”. In 1963 Svoronos turned his attention to advertising and


became art director of the agency ΕΡΓΟΝ (ERGON), a position he maintained for 20 years. Svoronos won many awards and national and international acclaim for his work and took part in numerous group and other art exhibitions throughout Greece. He had two one-man shows in Thessaloniki in 1957 and 1975 and since his passing in 1987 there have been three posthumous retrospective exhibitions of his work, all in Thessaloniki.

### The Hellenic Advertising Agencies Association

The Hellenic Advertising Agencies Association (HAAA) was founded in 1966 by ten founding members and quickly eclipsed the PAA in terms of size, influence and standing. It has been a member of the European Association of Advertising agencies since 1969. The HAAA’s goals are “to advance the advertising discipline, develop relationships between advertisers, media, authorities and international associations, guard established advertising ethics and promote advertising as an activity beneficial to society”.

At the end of the 1990s the association had 43 member agencies that were collectively responsible for 85 percent of the total advertising expenditure in Greece and whose staffs comprised 72 percent of the total number of advertising professionals in the country. A number of local agencies and all of the international agency affiliates in Greece are members of the HAAA.

In the decades since its inception, the HAAA has done much to help repair the tarnished image of the advertising professional in Greece and establish advertising as a viable and respectable science. In 1969, it sponsored an informational campaign entitled “Get to know advertising”, the first time any attempt had been made to educate the general public on the functions and values of advertising. The HAAA’s biggest contribution in this area, however, was the establishment of self-regulation through the *Greek Code of Advertising Practice*, first published in 1977. Although not strictly enforced, it remains the most comprehensive body of law with regards to advertising in Greece. The HAAA sponsors annual conventions, advertising festivals, competitions and pro bono campaigns; it also houses an extensive database of advertising material. Plans in 1999 included the opening of a museum dedicated to Greek advertising.

### 1970 – 1989: The end of the dictatorship; socialism and the PASOK party

In June 1972, General Papadopoulos declared Greece a republic and appointed himself president. In late 1973, students began a sit-in at Athens’ Polytechnic University in protest of the junta but their demonstration was brutally suppressed. Tanks assaulted the building in the morning hours of November 17, 1973, killing at least 20 and injuring many more. After the protest and amid economic problems spurred by the world oil crisis and growing public opposition,
Papadopoulos was deposed by another member of the military. Continued infighting and a disastrous attempt at reunifying Cyprus with Greece—which resulted in the invasion of the island by Turkish forces in 1974 and a near-outbreak of a Greek-Turkish war—finally led the junta to resign from power. In the wake of a complete collapse in civil authority, Karamanlis was brought back from abroad to transition the country from a dictatorship to a democracy. Elections in 1974 were won admirably by Karamanlis’ conservative New Democracy party. The ban on communist parties was lifted, and Andreas Papandreou, the politician who together with Karamanlis dominated the Greek political scene in the later twentieth century, formed the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). Lastly, a plebiscite voted overwhelmingly (70 percent) in favor of abolishing the monarchy. Though Karamanlis’ popularity began to wane in the late 70s, he achieved one of his greatest accomplishments during this time by securing Greece’s entry into the European Economic Community (known today as the European Union). Meanwhile, Papandreou’s PASOK party rapidly gained power as the party vote in the 1977 election nearly doubled.

Greece entered the EEC on January 1, 1981. In October of the same year, PASOK won the election with a whopping 48 percent of the vote and gave Greece its first socialist government. This overwhelming victory was due to several factors, not least of which was an aggressive and organized advertising campaign, the first of its kind in Greece. Clogg writes on other factors that contributed to the party’s success in the election:

PASOK’s ‘short march’ to power since its foundation in 1974 was a remarkable testimony to Andrea Papandreou’s political charisma, to his ability to articulate the aspirations, and more particularly, perhaps, the frustrations and prejudices of a very sizable proportion of the electorate, especially in the younger age groups, in a period of rapid economic and social change.8

Papandreou promised a number of radical changes in both domestic and foreign policy but generally did not follow through with most of his assurances. Bitterly critical of the U.S. and Western Europe throughout his career, he vowed to withdraw Greece from the NATO alliance and the EEC and to remove U.S. air bases. None of this ever materialized. PASOK did implement a number of reforms, some of which were long overdue: the written Greek language was greatly simplified through the employment of a single accent system (monotoniko), civil marriage and divorce by consent was introduced, adultery was removed from the catalogue of criminal offenses, abortion was legalized and the dowry system was abolished, at least in theory. PASOK won the election again in 1985, this time with 46 percent of the popular vote. However, Papandreou’s second term was marred by mounting economic problems, a series of major scandals that affected his government at the highest level.

and a highly-publicized affair with a former air hostess. In 1989, his government was replaced by an unlikely and somewhat bizarre coalition of conservatives and communists.

**Developments in Advertising from 1970 to 1979**

Coupled with the economic and infrastructural advances of the two previous decades, the political stabilization of Greece in the mid-1970s resulted in the beginning of a kind of national maturing for the country, primarily in the areas of social development and communications. This maturing, the increased presence of U.S. and European multinational agencies and the establishment of television as the dominant communications medium led to further growth of the advertising field in the 1970s. Towards the end of the decade, and on the eve of Greece’s induction into the EEC, foreign marketers and other entrepreneurs sought to establish an early foothold in the nation. Mass consumerism, mass production, mass communication and mass behavior became the new realities of Greek society in this decade.

The 1970s saw the rise of direct marketing and the appearance of state-sponsored campaigns, public service announcements, new industry-related publications and the first advertising industry shows. Market research became more commonplace. The first official monitoring of advertising media expenditure occurred in the early part of the decade. Display windows, direct mail and trade fair activity increased. Total advertising expenditure in Greece increased at an average annual rate of 24.6 percent from 1971 to 1981. Newspaper publishing flourished after the end of the junta, as a number of papers that had closed down in 1967 resumed publishing and new papers began to publish as well.

Despite continued notable advances in Greek advertising during the 1970s, the industry was widely blamed for the rise of consumerism (viewed by rising socialist and leftist politicians as a negative) and for many of the country’s economic perils in the aftermath of the μεταπολίτευση (metapolitefsi, Greece’s political changeover from dictatorship to democracy). In 1978, Andreas Papandreou publicly referred to advertising as “pollution”, prompting outrage on the part of advertisers and agencies as well as a public counterattack via a newspaper ad by agency Delta-Delta Demou.

Almost every Greek agency founded in the 1970s became part of a larger conglomerate by the mid-1980s. In 1972, 70 years after its inception in the U.S., McCann-Erickson became the second agency network to establish itself in Greece. The Greek branch is known as McCann-Erickson Hellas. Some of the other agencies to emerge during this time that soon became part of larger agency networks include Bates Hellas, Bold Advertising, Chapman-Palavidis, Euro Advertising, IKON IKON and Producta.

Television exploded as a communications and advertising me-
dium in the 1970s. There existed only two channels, both state-owned: ERT (Greek Radio Television) and YENED (the Armed Forces Broadcasting Service). Greek television programming was screened in black and white from 5:00 p.m. to midnight each evening and consisted of mostly imported American shows (Kojac, Hawaii 5-O, Charlie’s Angels, The Muppet Show), a few highly-watched Greek series, and, of course, commercials. By 1979, television took up a whopping 46.9 percent of the country’s total advertising expenditure. Most of the commercials during this time were conceptually straightforward and relied heavily on humor, catchy slogans and rhyming jingles, many of which were quite memorable. The frustrating and somewhat peculiar habit of model voiceovers on Greek TV spots also seems to have originated during this time: an attractive model, usually a woman, mouths the script while a more audibly pleasing voice is actually heard speaking. Low production standards resulted in generally transparent voiceovers. Voiceovers are still very prevalent in Greek TV advertising today, though still not particularly effective despite higher production and editing standards.

The expansion of offset lithography as a printing process in Greece in the 70s led to the rise of phototypesetting, a technique which gave typesetters a much greater amount of flexibility in setting type than in previous decades. Rub-down lettering from suppliers such as Letraset also created new typographical choices. As a result, the hand lettering of previous decades became obsolete. From a visual standpoint, print advertisements from this decade appear to have an eclectic sensibility. As branding and product image become more important, and as new lifestyle concepts such as fast food, weekends, nightclubs, credit cards and physical fitness enter the Greek vernacular, the advertising of this time reflects this shift. Many ads appear to be influenced by corporate-style graphic design and the principles of David Ogilvy and feature straightforward layouts and (for the most part) careful typography.

**the Greek Code of Advertising Practice (1977)**

Developed by the Hellenic Advertising Agencies Association in 1977, the Greek Code of Advertising Practice sets standards of ethical conduct to be followed by any individual or organization having to do with advertising (including advertisers, agencies and media), applies to all advertisements for any goods or services and consists of 19 articles which set rules in the following areas:

1. Decency
2. Honesty
3. Truthful presentation
4. Comparisons
5. Testimonials
6. Denigration
7. Protection of privacy

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The Code is an adaptation of the International Code of Advertising Practice published by the International Chamber of Commerce. It applies to the entire content of an advertisement, including words and numbers, spoken and written, visual presentations and music and sound effects and sets the following basic rules:

1. *All advertising should be legal, decent, honest and truthful.*
2. *Every advertisement should be prepared with a due sense of social responsibility and should conform to the principles of fair competition as generally accepted in business.*
3. *No advertisement should be such as to impair public confidence in advertising.*

The code also prohibits specific claims, comparative or otherwise (e.g. 30 percent fewer calories), from appearing in advertisements. Today the code is signed by the Greek Organization of Advertisers, the Greek Industrialists Organization, the Organization of Merchants of Athens, the Institute of Consumer Protection, the Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, high-circulation magazines and municipal and private television and radio stations. However, advertising self-regulation in Greece is not actively enforced due to widespread lack of active support on behalf of any of the parties involved. As a result, consumers regularly turn to the government for regulation.11

**developments in advertising from 1980 to 1989**

In the 1980s, the Greek consumer moved significantly closer to his average European counterpart in terms of consumption patterns, life styles, social attitudes and demographics. Following a trend originating in the 1970s, an informal economy continued to flourish which created an affluence not captured by official statistics. However, the economy did not fare well as export to import ratios remained low and inflation remained high.12 Despite economic problems, a number of changes took place in the marketing environment of the country such as increased concentration of goods distribution, increased activity from international companies in the retailing and services sectors and deregulation of the broadcasting media towards the end of the decade. Advertising and marketing research expenditures mostly increased, though they remained relatively low as percentages of GNP compared with other countries in the EEC. 1980s advertising became more inclusive in order to meet new communications needs created by the market and an increase in media.
Agencies adopted a more organized, strategic approach that included public relations, promotions, direct marketing and sponsoring. The first inklings of systematic target marketing began to appear towards the end of the decade. 1988 saw the emergence of AGB HELLAS, the first company to measure Greek television viewership using people meters and provide relevant information and services to the advertising and television market. AGB Hellas is part of the corporate division of the AGB Group, a Swiss company specializing in television audience measurement. Global agencies further established their stronghold in the 1980s, as the newest member of the EEC was viewed as a huge marketing opportunity by foreign corporations. Spot-Thompson, in Greece since 1975, increased billings by 38 percent in 1980 while in 1981 Euro Advertising experienced an even bigger percentage growth after only four years in Athens.\footnote{Kerin, H., “Multinationals move in as Greece adjusts to the EEC”, in \textit{Campaign Europe}, April 1981, p.25.} Advantageous Greek tax laws holding many benefits for foreign companies was another reason for the keen interest in Greece at the beginning of the decade. Some of the most notable agencies founded during this time include:

**Point Zero Advertising**

This acclaimed agency was formed as a result of the merging of agencies Elios-Point and Zero in 1989. It became a member of the BBDO Group in 1992 and in turn acquired the agency Echo in 1998. Point Zero is based in Thessaloniki with an Athens branch. It is one of the few top agencies to maintain headquarters outside of the capital.

**Magnet**

Magnet was founded in 1988 by Efe Karakitsou. It is one of the few active larger agencies in Greece to be wholly Greek-owned and not part of an international network.
MASS Advertising

Noted Greek adman Kostas Goblias founded this agency in 1983. Goblias has penned three books on advertising. His first book, 1981’s Πολιτική Διαφήμιση (Political Advertising), was a ground-breaking publication that made links between advertising and politics unheard of at the time in Greece. Goblias maintained that the nature of political elections could be altered through advertising, equated political parties with brands and the electorate with target markets, and gave advice to parties and would-be candidates on imaging, positioning, launching successful campaigns and how to take advantage of mass media. It would appear that Goblias’ book was read closely by Andreas Papandreou and his PASOK counterparts as the organized, effective campaign waged by the socialists during this year led to a huge victory for the party.

Television advertising in 1980 increased 43 percent over 1979 while newspaper advertising dropped 13 percent over the same period. Other forms of media at the beginning of the decade included the cinema, radio and bus advertising, all largely eclipsed by television. Towards the end of the decade, however, outdoor advertising experienced large-scale growth. Color television broadcasting came to Greece in 1981. The new development created much tension between the two state-owned television stations (ERT and YENED) and advertising agencies as a 50 percent surcharge on commercials screened in color was imposed with only two weeks’ notice (The move brought such protest that it was dropped to 20 percent a month later). However, Greek TV commercial costs were relatively low in 1981 compared to the rest of Europe.

outside criticism, domestic problems

The Greek advertising industry first began to glean attention from reporters and analysts outside of Greece at the beginning of the 80s. However, the remarks were generally not positive. In 1981, journalist Hope Kerin argued that the industry lacked true advertising talent and that copywriting was in particularly poor shape. As well, the poor quality of the Greek media and of television in particular was criticized as the two state-owned television stations would arbitrarily re-zone programs even after the programming schedule was complete. In 1982, clutter problems on television resulted in commercials as long as 40 minutes on some evenings (commercials aired only before and after programming). The sloppy, unpredictable scheduling led to complaints from agencies and advertisers. Journalist Martin Hedges argued in 1980 that the Greek media needed to make changes and become more reliable if they were to attract foreign clients.

Back in Greece, the PASOK party’s leftist leanings and radical agenda of “change” created a difficult situation for advertising agencies and advertisers alike. Advertising was again blamed, this time


more acutely, for promoting capitalism, increasing consumption and causing inflation. After the election of PASOK, new media heads at ERT slashed television advertising spots almost immediately, while YENED rejected about $720,000 worth of advertising over a period of ten days. By the middle of the decade, ad agencies and consumer marketers were struggling as the Greek ministry of commerce imposed restrictions on the sale of consumer products, limited imports of foreign items and imposed price control margins on goods that were imported. Liquor, cigarette and children’s toy advertising on television was heavily restricted or eliminated.

In 1985, Greece battled a damaging public image as the hijacking of a TWA flight from Athens to Beirut and the bombing of Citibank’s Athens branch led 25,000 Americans to cancel summer trips to Greece and added up to millions of dollars in lost revenue. When the U.S. government declared Greece an unsafe country to visit, the Greek National Tourist Office launched a $2.5-million advertising and public relations campaign to try to repair the country’s tarnished image.

Although readership, advertising expenditure and advertising revenue of newspapers all fell during the 80s, a development largely blamed on television, the decade saw the advent of the first tabloid (small format) newspaper and of special Sunday editions. A noted advancement in the magazine field is the emergence of many foreign titles adapted for the Greek market (e.g. Playboy in 1985) as well as new Greek general interest titles. Magazine layouts also became more image-heavy in the 1980s.

The late 1980s saw a flourishing of music poster design in Greece. The appearance of this kind of poster is concurrent with the appearance of the rock club circuit in Greece in 1987. These posters were influenced by postmodern design movements and were one of the first print vehicles to begin making use of the computer as a design tool. One of the most prominent designers of this genre is Dimitris Arvanitis, an established and widely-respected graphic designer whose work is characterized by bold, inventive typography, bright colors and highly graphical solutions. Arvanitis, who attended design school in Belgium, works primarily in poster, album cover, book and magazine design and is widely considered the most important graphic designer in Greece today. His work is featured in museums and galleries throughout Greece and abroad.

As Greece became more image-conscious in this decade, lifestyle advertising, or equating the use of a product with the essence of a particular consumer, became largely popular. A ground-breaking ad in 1987 by Bold Advertising for car manufacturer Citroën is an effective example of such an approach. Despite a left-leaning government and strong anti-American sentiments, Greeks continued to embrace American culture during this decade and this is quite apparent in the advertising of the time.
the PASOK campaign and the rise of political advertising

The first systematic political advertising expenditure appears to have been made in 1961, when Konstantinos Karamanlis’ ERE party and the communist PAME party collectively spent 120 million drachmas on their pre-election campaign efforts.19 ERE was elected to power for the third time in a row; its advertising featured a bold image of Karamanlis as the “national leader.” In 1977, three years after the downfall of the junta and his triumphant return to Greece, Karamanlis’ newly-formed New Democracy party used the slogan "The Big Guarantee" in its advertising efforts and gave Karamanlis his last big electoral victory.

In 1977, the EDHK (Democratic Center Union) party orchestrated an organized campaign that used commercial advertising methods of promotion. As well, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), influenced by Soviet propaganda, featured an especially organized approach with regards to its promotion at the end of the 1970s. This approach included numerous posters containing clear messages and bold graphics.

However, the 1981 campaign engineered by the PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement of Greece) party –which led to its triumphant victory– set an entirely new precedent and is regarded as a turning point in the history of Greek political advertising. This was the biggest, most encompassing, most creative and most passionate (even by Greek standards) political advertising campaign the country had seen. It featured a new logo (a bold though “rather mystifying”20 green sun), an astonishing new system of catch-all words, phrases and slogans, and a series of immaculately executed, inventive and highly memorable visual concepts. Most of PASOK’s print was designed by Takis Kalantides, an art director who opened his first creative shop in 1977 and formed his own agency in 1988.

Fueled by a driving, charismatic leader and his radical political agenda, PASOK managed to encapsulate the desires, hopes, dreams and aspirations of an entire people into a single word: αλλαγή (allagi, change). The word moved beyond the realm of political credo and become a nationwide demand as it riled up the poor industrial


class as well as many younger voters restless after the right’s domination during the post-war period. It became part of the country’s vernacular in the first half of the 1980s and even found its way into non-political advertising. On the broadcasting front, PASOK used strategic musical accompaniments to its advertising which it also used during public party rallies. As Papandreou stepped onto a balcony or in front of a podium, viewers’ living rooms would be filled with the sounds of Carl Orf’s ominous, chilling “Carmina Burana”. The combined effect fired up the crowds and provoked general awe and astonishment. During its second campaign in 1985, PASOK used pioneering (and at times misleading) editing techniques to transform public rallies into television events.

Although no political advertising effort since 1981 has been able to match the fervor and effectiveness of PASOK’s campaign (including its own noteworthy campaigns in 1985 and 1993), one ad from opposition party New Democracy warrants particular merit: a 1993 TV spot picturing a profile of an ailing Papandreou morphing into a profile of mistress Demetra Liani, while a voice warns: “Who will govern us”? 21

Greek political advertising at the end of the 20th century appeared carefully orchestrated, quite aggressive and highly influenced—even driven by—the media. Political parties spent large sums of money for advertising purposes; in 1993, both PASOK and ND were among Greece’s top ten advertisers. Campaigns were analyzed closely. Of particular interest is the noted upsurge in negative advertising in recent elections, with both major parties accusing each other of foul play during the pre-election countdown. The dependence on the media and general shift in approach has fundamentally altered pri-
orities and outlooks with regards to the nature of politics. A 1999 editorial in conservative newspaper Kathimerini read:

As private radio and television stations flourished in Greece, the new trends of campaigning seen abroad have taken our country by storm. In the last few elections, negative advertising has taken ground, replacing the debate over political principles. This “strategy” usually results in sarcastic scorn being heaped on an opponent for no particular reason: it elevates the slogan and not the argument.\(^{22}\)

In 1988, after mounting pressures from political groups and increased pressure from the EEC (its 1989 “Television Without Frontiers” directive provided for the unobstructed move of television broadcasts), the Greek government begrudgingly deregulated the broadcasting media. Greek people accustomed to a broadcast environment of two nationwide television channels and four radio stations—all state-controlled—were introduced to an exciting new landscape which included new private channels, new private radio stations and a host of satellite channels re-transmitted throughout UHF frequencies. The deregulation was prompted chiefly by political maneuvers by the right-wing New Democracy party and took off in 1987 with the launch of the first municipal radio station, ATHENA 9,84. Two other municipal radio stations followed in Pireaus and Thessaloniki. These stations enjoyed high ratings and quickly became huge advertising vehicles.

The initiative was followed by the creation of the first municipal television station in Thessaloniki in 1989. It was shut down by the government, but a subsequent court ruling granted the station the right to transmit. A number of other municipal TV stations popped up soon afterward. In the fall of 1989, the government realized it could not maintain its monopoly and granted individuals the right to launch private television stations. The Mega Channel, the first privately-owned television station, began transmitting in November 1989. It was followed by the station Antenna, which began broadcasting in December 1989. Television production standards improved notably after the introduction of these first privately-owned stations.

The deregulation of the media in the late 1980s radically affected the Greek advertising landscape into the 1990s. In just over three years since the first commercial stations arrived, and amid a nationwide recession, they gained more than 80 percent of TV advertising revenue, ending the monopoly of the state broadcaster.\(^{23}\) However, since commercial Greek TV was introduced without a legal framework, the market remained quite uneven.

1990-1999: the fall of socialism

Amid the huge scandals that plagued Andreas Papandreou in the late 80s, the conservative New Democracy party won elections in 1990 with a majority of only two seats and Konstantinos Metsotakes became the prime minister. After Papandreou’s mandate of change
failed to deliver and with the country in bad economic shape, the new government imposed unpopular and severe austerity measures in order to try to repair the damage. These measures led to large-scale public sector strikes in 1990, 1991 and 1992. The government’s problems were compounded at this time by an influx of Albanian refugees after the fall of communism in 1989 as well as a widely-publicized, badly-handled dispute over the use of the name “Macedonia” for the newly independent southern republic of former Yugoslavia. Corruption allegations against the conservative government into mid-1993 prompted another general election, which returned the languishing Papandreou to power. But outspoken critic of Papandreou and economic reformer Kostas Simitis was appointed prime minister in early 1996 when it became clear that Papandreou’s health was in rapid decline and he could not effectively govern the country. After Papandreou’s death and the appointment of mild-mannered Simitis as prime minister in 1996, the PASOK party underwent a dramatic change of direction. It abandoned many of its leftist views to the point where in 1999 it basically agreed with the conservative New Democracy opposition on all major policy issues. Simitis made a big push for further integration with Europe throughout the late 90s which was largely successful. In recent years, and with the exception of the disruption resulting from the 1999 NATO conflict with Serbia (in which the overwhelming majority of Greeks sided with their fellow Orthodox Christian Serbs), the Greek economy made “striking progress” according to the European Commission. Greece will formally embrace the euro currency in January 2002.

Despite economic advances in the second half of the 1990s, however, Greece remained the poorest country in the European Union at the end of the decade. Greece’s foreign policy at the end of the 1990s was dominated by its very sensitive relationship with fellow NATO ally Turkey as well as dealing with various crises re-
resulting from the breakup of former Yugoslavia and the collapse of communism in Albania and Romania.

**developments in advertising from 1990 to 1999**

The deregulation of the broadcast media in 1989, the advent of the single European market in 1992 and the dominance of large multinational communication groups into the early 90s fundamentally changed the structure and development of Greek advertising and led to an outbreak of full-fledged “marketing mania” by the middle of the decade. The most notable changes that occurred were continued increased advertising expenditure, the entry of multinational clients into the Greek market, and an increase in niche marketing. Advertising became an instrumental part of the system in Greece in this decade. Though the number of agencies did not increase significantly in the 1990s, their size and the scope of services provided did. As large companies become even larger, a rise in the number of smaller niche shops was predicted. At the end of the decade there were approximately 300 advertising agencies and creative shops in existence.

The progress of Greek advertising in 1990s attracted international attention, this time mostly positive. Greece, the most stable country in the turbulent Balkans, began to be regarded as a fast-growing advertising market as well as a business and advertising center for the region. As well, towards end of the 1990s, a larger percentage of existing commercial companies began to invest more heavily in advertising as more organizations began to realize the importance of communicating to their customers through effective advertising messages. The top advertiser in Greece throughout the decade was Unilever; other big advertisers included cellular phone, banking and automotive companies. The top agency in terms of billings was Spot-Thompson. It is interesting to note that despite a strong presence of international advertising agencies in Greece in the 1990s, major accounts were often won by agencies outside the country. For example, the Greek National Tourist Organization awarded its media planning and buying to Grey’s MediaCom in 1995; in 1997, a major assignment for the Greek national lottery was awarded to Boston agency CC and D, who beat out Greece’s McCann-Erickson Hellas, DDB and TBWA/Producta.

As in the case of television, private initiatives with regards to print took off in the 1990s, though quantity over quality became the operating rule. Today the market is ruled by several large conglomerates which have inundated it with over 100 daily newspapers, countless magazines (including twelve TV guides and a dozen fashion publications) and periodicals on everything from families, motorcycles and men to DVDs, computers and cellular phone technology. New magazines are launched almost monthly and are advertised heavily on television. As a result, in 1999 Greece had one of the

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This work by Bold Advertising broke ground in 1987 by being the first advertisement to equate the use of a product (in this case, a Citroen automobile) with a lifestyle. Among other things, the copy says that the car "goes with... mini-skirts, Asics sneakers, the color red, Rayban sunglasses, aerobic exercise, Philip Glass, parties, the midnight hour, New Wave Gel, Francis Ford Coppola, crazy hats, jazz, Madonna, scarves, Saturday nights, Coco Chanel...".

Television: An Uneven Market

Seven nationwide commercial broadcasters, three state-owned channels and a whopping 150+ commercial regional and local stations operated throughout Greece at the end of the 1990s. Again, as in the case of magazine publishing, quantity over quality seemed to be the rule of thumb. This television market, although considered strong, was still taking shape at the end of the decade due to the lack of regulatory legislation. The four biggest TV stations—privately-owned Antenna, Mega Channel, Star and Alpha—commanded 80 to 85 percent of the market while the three national state broadcasters could barely reach a double figure combined. Attempts to decentralize state TV, which consisted of stations ET1, NET and ET3, had not brought results as the broadcasters seemed unable to shake the political specter of the past. Only TV events such as the World Cup Soccer and World Basketball championships occasionally pulled state TV out of its distress. In 1999 the percentage of foreign programming on Greek TV shrunk to 20-25 percent of its overall output, while in 1997 the same programs were around the 50 percent mark. The decline was mostly in U.S. shows and followed a European trend; also, the amount of local programming increased as Greek shows began to be regarded as a bigger return on investment.

The 1990s saw an increase in the amount of government regulation of advertising, a practice which originated in the previous decade. In 1994, the Greek Parliament passed legislation that banned toy commercials between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Critics argued that Greece’s ban was not based on desire to protect children from TV commercials, but to protect its indigenous toy industry from competition. Thirteen complaints from the Toy Industry of Europe (TIE) in 1999 were dismissed by the European Commission; the EC maintained that the ban was “proportionate” and not an excessive measure in preventing the exposure of children to commercial pressure. However, in May 1999, the Greek Union of Consumers for Quality of Life (EKPIZO) released a statement accusing television stations of violating this law. The union based its accusations on a survey of Media Services, a private company that tracks news media. According to the survey, television stations systematically broadcasted ads...
In 1995, Greece adopted a new advertising law based on France’s *Loi Sapin* according to which all media are required to adhere to a published rate card. The legislation was introduced in order to clean up the country’s erratic media business; before the law, two media shops controlled about 65 percent of TV and print advertising. However, advertising professionals asserted it instead slashed ad budgets, increased redundancies in ad agencies and pushed down TV revenue.³² As well, Greece’s ban on any kind of comparative advertising invariably landed agencies and advertisers in hot water, especially since the practice is quite common in the dominant American advertising industry. In 1994, a popular Super Bowl ad for Pepsi-Cola was pulled off the air in Greece. The ad featured two chimpanzees, one drinking Coke and the other drinking Pepsi. The Coke chimp learns to hammer pegs in a hole, while the Pepsi chimp drives a Jeep with girls along the beach.³³

In the area of consumer protection, the Consumer Protection Act of 1991 sought to maintain the health and safety of consumers and protect their economic interests. Until this time, and as previously discussed, there had been no special consumer protection law in Greece. The Act includes regulations on misleading advertising in the press, cinema, radio and television.³⁴ Once again, however, the rules appeared not to be entirely enforced; in the mid-1990s, a number of misleading advertisements appeared for vitamin and dietary products that found their way onto the market without being approved or controlled by the National Drug Association.³⁵

Recent legislation allowed television stations to interrupt movies only every 45 minutes. Advertisers and agencies asserted it would result in much lower movie revenues than if interruptions were more frequent. Lastly, although Greece has a very high number of smokers, there was a marked tendency to further restrict cigarette advertising at the end of the decade, with Europe influenced by American advertising practices as they relate to tobacco. Despite these legal restrictions, Greece’s advertising at the end of the decade was generally quite allowing, especially when it came to sex (as is the case in much of Europe) and other types of services promoted (psychic and dating hotlines, etc.) When it comes to issues of national pride, however, the country has proven to be very unforgiving: In 1992, an ad by Coca-Cola’s Italian operation depicting the Parthenon’s white marble columns shaped like the soft drink’s familiar bottle offended and outraged many Greeks. The ad was pulled and the Italians apologized to Greece.³⁶

Although the 1990s saw a marked improvement in the quality and breadth of services provided to clients by agencies, the same cannot be said for the quality of the advertising itself. With few nota-

33. Guy, P., “Chimp ad’s appeal isn’t quite global”, in *USA Today*, 1 February 1994, p.01B.
ble exceptions (many of them for cigarettes), most 90s Greek print ads at the end of the twentieth century lacked originality and seemed aesthetically inferior. The same can be said for outdoor. Though ads often featured some kind of concept, the executions were generally weak and the typography invariably quite poor (Adaptations of foreign ads, which are very common, are an exception). This development is in stark contrast to the work of previous decades, which generally featured thoughtful layouts, refined typography and good craftsmanship.

What are the reasons for this shift? The advent of desktop publishing in Greece in the early 90s seemed to have brought upon a “style over substance” mentality as designers and art directors became highly dependent on the abilities of the computer. A noted lack of well-designed Greek fonts for most of the decade exacerbated the problem. Although somewhat delayed in Greece, the arrival of computer technology ultimately made it quite easy for almost anyone to produce printed material; thus, a new breed of individuals lacking formal advertising design training (which is generally in bad shape to begin with in Greece) appear to have become part of the landscape. Of course, the enormous impact of the desktop computer on advertising and design was felt worldwide in the 1990s. At the end of the decade, however, and in contrast to more developed countries, Greece had not yet internalized the technology in order to be able to use it effectively. Perhaps more alarmingly, large agencies have tended to see design as a bother in recent years since the profit is marginal compared to advertising, therefore visual aesthetics are not as important or emphasized.

Television aesthetics and executions fared much better at the end of the 1990s; the direction, casting and production values were generally good, though the annoying and not always convincing voiceover effect was still prevalent. Lastly, 1990s radio advertisements seemed somewhat unchanged compared to previous decades; they were fairly straightforward, with heavy use of humorous dialogue usually followed by the presentation of product against a musical backdrop and a tagline.

the Internet

Greece experienced a rapid growth in Internet usage beginning around 1997 which continued through the end of the decade. This has in turn meant new advertising opportunities, though the field is still in its infant stages. Sixty-five percent of current users went online for the first time in 1999. The total number of users in 1999 was estimated to be around 800,000; it is estimated that by 2004 there will be 3.5 million Internet users in Greece, an impressive number given the small population of the country (almost 11 million). According to a survey conducted in 1999 by OTEnet, internet provider of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization (OTE), 65 percent
of users are male and under 30, though this ratio is quickly changing as the number of female users is increasing daily. Fifty percent of Greeks online have a college degree. It is estimated that 75 percent of users connect from cities, 10 percent connect from other urban areas and three percent connect from rural areas. About 10 percent of Greek businesses are online, comprised mostly of computer sales companies, internet providers and media (newspapers, magazines and TV stations).\(^40\) Most users currently surf the Internet for information and news gathering purposes while a very small percentage of users shop online. However, the government estimates that electronic commerce in Greece is expected to reach 100 billion drachmas by the year 2003.

As mentioned, Internet advertising was in its development stages in Greece in 1999. However, rapid development in this area was anticipated as more Greeks go online and more businesses launch Internet websites. The very end of the decade saw a decrease in the number of Greek Internet service providers (ISPs) and an increase in domain requests, which indicates potentially increased commercial and advertising activity. The Internet Advertising Network (www.adlink.gr), a Greek online marketing company specializing in media planning and buying on the Internet, was one of the only companies of its kind in 1999. At the end of the decade, most – but not all – of the major international agencies in Greece had their own websites, many of which appeared heavy on Internet technology (Flash etc.) but low on content and even lower on aesthetic quality. Disappointingly, many of them contained embarrassing English-language typos and translation problems. The following was taken from the website of the creative group Team Athens (www.teamathens.gr), part of the BBDO Group Greece, in 1999:

*The quality of our job, in all aspects, is the essence of our creativity that appears relevant, meaningful (sic) and finally superior to our competitors’ creativity.*

globalization and the language issue

The Greek language, nearly four thousand years old, is considered to be the oldest major spoken language in Europe. Today’s version has evolved from Classical Greek and preserves many of its morphological, syntactic and lexical elements. Greek is a highly phonetic language and its alphabet is quite different from the Latin. A notable trend in 1990s Greek advertising was the widespread usage of English words, primarily in print and outdoor executions. As the markedly homogenous country is becoming more integrated into the European community, there is growing apprehension that it is losing its own language to English. On the other hand, it is generally accepted by Greeks that good command of English is increasingly essential to success in any type of international business, educational or social setting.
As mentioned, the introduction of foreign terms into the Greek vocabulary originated in the 1950s and was concurrent with the spread of American culture. At that time, usage of non-Greek words was mostly limited to names of products which were either transliterated or spelled out in Latin characters. Today, English words may be transliterated and used in place of a Greek equivalent, which may or may not exist; more often than not, however, additional English words are used regularly in headlines and body copy, are not transliterated and may be mixed in with Greek. Thus a kind of “bi-lingualism” is becoming a daily reality. The issue becomes more complicated when taking under account the existing problems currently plaguing Greek copywriting (such as clichés and overuse of adjectives); the Internet, which relies exclusively on a Latin-character communication system; and the general tendency towards imitation of the foreign in Greece.

Opinions vary greatly on the extent of the harm being done to the Greek language, though Greece is certainly not the only country struggling with the issue. Some art directors and editors are advocates of using Greek equivalent words as much as possible and avoid usage of English, and especially Latin characters, in their work. Others see “bi-lingualism” as a natural progression; as ancient Greek was once the most widely-used language in the world (it was almost adopted as the official language of the United States in the eighteenth century), now it happens to be the English language. Still others contend that since advertising as we know it today is an Anglo-Saxon invention, it is natural that the rules of “adspeak” are dictated by the English language. In other words, English goes with the territory. Greek linguist G. Babiniotes wrote in 1999:

Contrary to popular belief, the century which is almost gone leaves behind it a Greek language much richer in vocabulary from that of the previous century, such that it is capable of meeting the new and vastly more widespread communication needs of the modern, dynamic and progressive country Greece is poised to become. And if we lean towards “foreign-izing” a bit, with an affinity for English words, this is the price of a unified Europe and of globalization. How can a thousand Greek years go up against a globalized, commercialized millennium? 

**conclusion**

As we have seen, Greek advertising in its modern sense is a product only of the last 20 to 30 years and its development is closely linked to that of the mass media and television in particular. Despite this newness, however, Greece’s advertising industry has come a long way. Profoundly influenced and shaped by turbulent historical events, it got off to a largely delayed start and adapted admirably throughout the decades to meet the needs of a developing society while enduring both direct and indirect criticism. In recent years,
taking cues and adopting practices from more developed ad industries, it has become a wholly accepted and even admired discipline in Greece and is firmly ingrained into the Greek mentality.

In modern times Greece’s illustrious past has been a heavy burden for the country to bear, and this is true in the case of advertising as well. Modern Greek advertising has overall been a capable successor to the innovations of the ancient era—it has proven to be highly original and creative while capable of effectively reaching a mass audience.

Today, Greece is trying to modernize its culture in order to become a country no longer almost exclusively based on its culturally and historically abundant past. Advertising can play an important role in helping Greece define its modern self by helping to provide the reflection and insight needed to lead the country into the twenty-first century. Though the quality of the work has deteriorated in recent years, the current downward trend can change as media markets mature, computer technology is mastered and the benefits of an internationalized consumer culture are internalized. Also, recent developments in Greece present enormous opportunities for the advertising industry from a creative standpoint. An intuitive Greek agency should be able to beautifully and effectively promote the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens and Greece’s healthy tourism industry through sophisticated, clean advertising and distinctly Greek themes such as light, optimism and the endurance of the human spirit. Lastly, as Greece’s economy and its industries strengthen, the country should become more confident about promoting its own goods and services and the Greek advertising industry is sure to benefit from this revitalized outlook.
Much of the world today faces difficult and complicated questions relating to globalization on a political, cultural, social and economic level, and Greece is no exception. Greek advertising is largely affected by these issues, and its bumpy ride toward maturity is not over yet. Hopefully, as modern Greece finds its distinct place in today’s new global landscape, modern Greek advertising will as well.
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This 1998 ad by WIN Communications is an adaptation of an international placement for Microsoft. Adaptations of ads adhere closely to the identity standards of the advertiser and are usually approved by them.