



Advertising on Trial: Consumer Activism and Corporate Public Relations in the 1930s (The History of Communication)

Inger L. Stole

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It hasn't occurred to even the harshest critics of advertising since the 1930s to regulate advertising as extensively as its earliest opponents almost succeeded in doing. Met with fierce political opposition from organized consumer movements when it emerged, modern advertising was viewed as propaganda that undermined the ability of consumers to live in a healthy civic environment. In "Advertising on Trial", Inger L. Stole examines how these consumer activists sought to limit the influence of corporate powers by rallying popular support to moderate and transform advertising. She weaves their story together through the extensive use of primary sources, including archival research done with consumer and trade group records, as well as trade journals and a thorough engagement with the existing literature. Stole's account of this contentious struggle also demonstrates how public relations developed as a way to justify laissez-faire corporate advertising in light of a growing consumer rights movement, and how the failure to rein in advertising was significant not just for that period but for ours as well.

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