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Summary of Breaking Up America

*Breaking Up America* is a book written by Joseph Turow, that is about target marketing and advertisement. He talks about how marketing and advertisement changed from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. He explains how different magazines and television changed the way of advertising.

During the twentieth century, advertisers would support companies through magazines and newspaper ads (Turow 3). Turow explains how advertisers used newspapers and magazines for advertisement. They would also use radio stations for advertisement as well. Also, Turow explains how HBO and Turner’s superstation played a huge role in the marketing shift (34). He explains that business marketing strategies changed once HBO and Turner’s superstation came in place. Turow explains how most of America didn’t have cable television in 1978, so they wouldn’t see the advertisement people who had cable would. The advertising industry took notice to the major shift, and worried that it would increase competition. Also, they worried about HBO having power of sponsorship go down as consumers would pay for their own programming. Turow states that “Turner was both a symbol and key actor in the developments that were causing rumblings through the advertising industry during the early 1980s.” Turner was making a lot of noise in the advertising industry with his superstation. He was expanding his network from Atlanta to Chicago. He went to Chicago, because he said, “We’re now wired to the ghettos.” Turner teamed up with WTCG (Watch This Channel Grow) so it would reach suburbs around the country.

Consumers lifestyles has been a key component in the media business (55). Turow explains how magazines and television targeted different demographics like: homemakers, woman, and African Americans. He stated that media executives made appeals to advertisers around two claims: the claim of efficient separation and the claim of a special relationship (55). The first claim delivered a group to advertisers without making them pay audiences they didn’t want. On the other hand, the second claim the target audiences felt tied to the media firm’s outlet, and that it paid attention to everything about the outlet. The idea was that by appealing to needs and lifestyles of consumers, they were making themselves part of media outlets that consumers considered meaningful to their ways of looking at the world.

The industry had ideas about formats and brands. “It is the format that creates what people think of as the personality of a network, magazines, newspapers.” Turow was stating that formatting is what the consumer thinks the personality of a media outlet is. When a company sell the identity of its format, that is known as a brand. Turow gives an example of CNN being a branded cable news format and *Ladies Home Journal* as branded woman’s service magazine. Turow explains how creating a branded format put materials into a package that consumers in a target audience would identify.

Signaling became a huge deal in advertisement and target marketing. Things like race, gender, age, income, and family status was looked at for signaling (94). Race was a more consistent matter. Sports, news, and magazines would use popular African Americans to signal both white and black people. They would use people like Michael Jordan, O.J. Simpson, and Whitney Houston, because they were known as “crossover” celebrities (94). Turow explains that the race issue was sensitive for magazines that was for fashion, hobbies, and service magazines. The non-celebrities that was on those magazines signal readers about people who had a strong bond with the magazine. Magazines covers was a keystone for signaling points of distinction about the preferred audience (95). He explains how publishers would used the magazine cover as an invitation to get readers to read their magazine. A magazine cover must make the most of a short instance of opportunity by targeting the right targets.

*Breaking Up America* showed how advertisers and the media worked to build America from the 1970s through the mid-1990s (184). During that time both industries showed a greater interest than before in detecting social divisions. Turow gave examples about in the 1970s advertisement was mainly in magazines and newspaper, because most Americans didn’t have cable TV yet. Then he goes on to talk about how HBO and Turner’s superstation change how consumers see advertisements on TV. Also, he goes on to show how consumers lifestyles affected how the advertisement industry would target a demographic. Turow explained how formats and brands helped with signaling audiences. Lastly, Turow shows how race played a role in signaling audiences, and how a cover of a magazine should catch the eye of a reader. Advertisement has been a force guiding the format of the new world, and it will resist taking it off track.

Work Cited

Turow, Joseph. Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World.

The University of Chicago Press, 1997.