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Customer of last resort? The Swedish advertising industry and the government from World War II to the end of the Cold War

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ABSTRACT

In connection with World War II, the advertising industry in neutral Sweden began cooperating with the government. This proved beneficial for the industry since blockades and rationing caused the civilian advertising market to almost disappear. After the war, the cooperation continued, albeit primarily regarding military matters. Later, however, the government began procuring advertising and media services on largely commercial grounds. This paper covers the history of the relationship between the advertising industry and the government and provides an analysis of the influence of the public advertising market and cold war institutions on the industry. I find that the government, by acting as a customer of last resort, conserved the industry structure and made it possible for the Swedish advertising cartel to survive World War II, and for the large firms that dominated the industry during most of the century to survive the dissolution of the cartel in 1965.

KEYWORDS

Advertising; Cold War; Sweden; War Information Services

Introduction

During the half century that includes the years just before World War II until the end of the Cold War, the development of Swedish advertising agencies was highly influenced by their relation to the government, which was both the regulator and an important customer of the advertising agencies, particularly later in the period (Funke, 2015; Galli, 2012).¹

Advertising has played an increasingly important economic role and, as such, has been the subject of many business history studies. The government as advertiser, however, has mostly been overlooked, and the same applies to the Swedish advertising industry. Despite the availability of rich archival sources, business history research regarding Swedish advertising firms is limited (for an overview, see e.g. Broberg, Gianneschi, & Jonsson, 2016; Åström-Rudberg, 2016a).

My intention is to examine the relationship between the Swedish government and the advertising industry and to show how the market for government advertising developed over time, with a special focus on the role of the advertising industry (and its organisations) in shaping the institutions and building the market for government advertising, and how the Cold War institutions shaped the industry.²

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In addition, I intend to further the understanding of public-private relations in the advertising industry, an area of research that, if not absent, is limited and mainly focused on the democratic implications of the government as an advertiser (Dudley, 1947; Mullen & Bowers, 1979; Young, 2007). This perspective is important in order to understand the Swedish development, but it is only one facet among others.

Wartime advertising came to have significance for the industry and its relation to the government partly because it helped the industry preserve profitability through the war years and partly because the war changed attitudes towards government advertising and advocacy. Analysing the corporate side—and the industry's role in promoting advertising—can thus provide a significant contribution to business history research.

Furthermore, I will make a contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding whether the government should make or buy goods and services needed for its defence. For the government to be able to buy goods or services from private contractors in wartime, suppliers must be available during peacetime. When the product is more specialised, it is less likely that there will be wartime suppliers without peacetime government contracts. This is an issue that has been studied by Wilson for armaments in general, and by Bennett for capital ships (Bennett, 2016; Wilson, 2016). Their basic insight is that the government may save by postponing purchases until the outbreak of war, but it is then out of luck if the competence and capacity of suppliers is consequently unavailable. In the present case of advertising, the issue was influenced also by the attitude towards government advertising in Sweden, which changed over time. When government advertising was considered inappropriate, e.g. during peacetime, the choice was limited to buying from private advertising companies even in the event of war.

In addition, I will provide an analysis of the incentives for cooperation and the influence of the public advertising market on the industry structure. By functioning as the customer of last resort, both during World War II and later, the government contributed to preserving the industry structure.

The paper is organised as follows. First, a discussion of the sources used, and previous research is provided. Then, I present a general overview of the Swedish advertising industry, followed by an empirical section that is divided into four subsections. Finally, a concluding discussion focuses on the role of the government as the customer of last resort for the Swedish advertising industry.

Method and sources

Digitisation and computer software, such as relational database packages, have greatly improved research possibilities in business history. The new tools and methods make it much easier to handle substantial amounts of archival documents and greatly increase transparency.

This article is based on extensive research conducted using three significant archive collections and three private collections: the Swedish Labour Movement's Archive and Library (ARAB), the Swedish National Archives, the Swedish Military Archives, the Swedish Association of Communication Agencies, the Centre for Business History, and the Museum of Landskrona. The Archives of the Labour Movement contain the papers of the advertising group ARE; the National Archives contain the papers of the State Information Board (SIS), the Government Commission on Right-hand Driving, the Government Study Group on War Information

Services, and the Council for Public Information; the Swedish Military Archives contain the papers from the Preparedness Board for War Information (BN); many of these documents have been declassified at my request. The Swedish Association of Communication Agencies possesses papers from the Association of Advertising Agencies (AF). Finally, the depositories at the Centre for Business History and the Museum of Landskrona contain papers from a number of advertising agencies.

All documents in a series deemed relevant for the project were scanned or photographed. The digitised documents were made searchable through optical character recognition (OCR), and many of them have been coded in a relational database. For each document, the title, date, archive, archive box, author of the document, and persons or companies mentioned in the document have been coded. In addition to the entries above, every source post contains the complete text in searchable form and the original document in a portable document format (PDF) such that the researcher has direct access to the original layout of the document.

The relational database method also makes it easy for the researcher to link other documents to the source database entry. If a document is mentioned in the minutes of a board meeting, for example, then these two documents can be linked (provided that both are found in the archive). In the same fashion, letters can be linked to the replies to the letter regardless of whether they are found in the same or different archives. Other historical sources, such as oral history interviews, photos and films (both the media files and metadata), can also be linked to the source database—one of the key features with relational databases is the use of one-to-many and many-to-many relations between entries (Murmann, 2010).

The method also makes it possible to be transparent with the material that has been reviewed and for the researcher to show that he has not missed relevant documents. The researcher can more easily see whether there are missing documents in any series or whether the archives are weeded or silenced in any respect (Decker, 2013). This is otherwise a problem for historical research. The drawback is that the method is not suitable for small research projects, as the process of digitisation and database coding is time consuming. Further, of course, the use of digital tools does not replace the researcher's critical assessment of the sources used.

The rich archival sources make it possible to add to the existing literature regarding the government as advertiser in peacetime, which is limited and mainly focuses on democratic issues, and in wartime, which is extensive but primarily centred on conditions in the US and UK, where advertising was used not only to boost morale and support campaigns for thrift and the sale of war bonds but also to disseminate information about how citizens could protect themselves, and the country, from sabotage and espionage. The same applies to advertising about psychological warfare during World War II from the Allies, the Soviet Union and Germany and during the Cold War. The literature about wartime advertising in neutral Sweden, however, is much more limited (Björklund, 1967; Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942; Åström-Rudberg, 2017).³

The government and the advertising industry

Contrary to the practice in most countries, the Swedish advertising industry was cartelised.⁴ The cartel was founded in 1915, formalised in 1923, and survived until 1965. In 1956, most

practices of the cartel were ruled to be in violation of the new competition law introduced in 1953, which disallowed anti-competitive practices that were not in the public's interest, but the members managed to postpone the dismantling of the cartel for another decade (Gustafsson, 1974; Åström-Rudberg, 2016a).

The longevity of the cartel can be explained by its design. The trade group representing the cartel members had reached an agreement with the Swedish Newspaper Publishers Association (TU) requiring certification for advertising agencies. To be certified, several criteria had to be met: the agency had to demonstrate financial stability and post a 25,000 SEK guarantee (Åström-Rudberg, 2016b); the agency must also demonstrate that it had an established customer base, that the leadership had previous industry experience, and that it was in good standing ('Normer för Annonsväsendet', 1948).⁵ The number of certified agencies was initially capped at 12; this restriction was dropped in 1925, but the number of certified agencies did not exceed 12 until 1942 (Åström-Rudberg, 2016b).

The Newspaper Publishers Association agreed that only certified agencies could place ads in newspapers on commission. The commission, usually between 15 and 25%, was supposed to cover the costs of designing the ads and this made it unprofitable for advertisers not to use certified agencies, as the advertisers then had to pay the production costs in addition to the list prices for advertising space – the system therefore steered the business to the cartel members.

Since radio (except for the first year, 1922) and television (from the beginning of services in 1957) were operated as government monopolies and free from advertising until 1992, newspapers were the primary advertising channel. Thus, a non-certified agency was locked out of the most important part of the market (Åström-Rudberg, 2016b). Non-certified agencies existed but were relegated to work as contractors of certified agencies or to other forms of advertising, such as posters, cinema advertising and direct mail.

The certified advertising agencies tried to actively strengthen their position as a professional industry from the mid-1930s. This was performed, for example, by publishing trade magazines, organising educational activities and establishing contacts with government officials. Such contacts were established by arranging a large conference in Stockholm in 1937 with the theme *Advertising serves society*. At the same time, the conference demonstrated the extent of the quest to become an established industry. At the conference, the prime minister gave an address, and the crown prince acted as protector (Rosenberg, 1937, p. 8).⁶ In the following year, this initiative was followed by a new conference about public health advertising (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1939, p. 11).

During the 1950s, the cartel was challenged. The cartel members tried to address this challenge by allowing more members to join, and the number of certified agencies increased gradually from the 1950s (especially after the 1956 court ruling) until 1965, when the cartel was finally disbanded after a second court ruling also found the revised cartel agreement to be in violation of competition law. The number of agencies then increased rapidly (see Figure 1).

Despite the growth of the industry, the average firm size remained constant, which is related to the fact that the new agencies which emerged were smaller, but the established ones grew larger. The average size in both 1930 and 1960 was approximately 70 employees, whereas in 1970, it had been cut in half to 32. In 1980, it was cut in half again to 14.

The history of government advertising in Sweden after World War II can be divided into three phases. The first phase is before 1965, when the advertising industry cooperated with

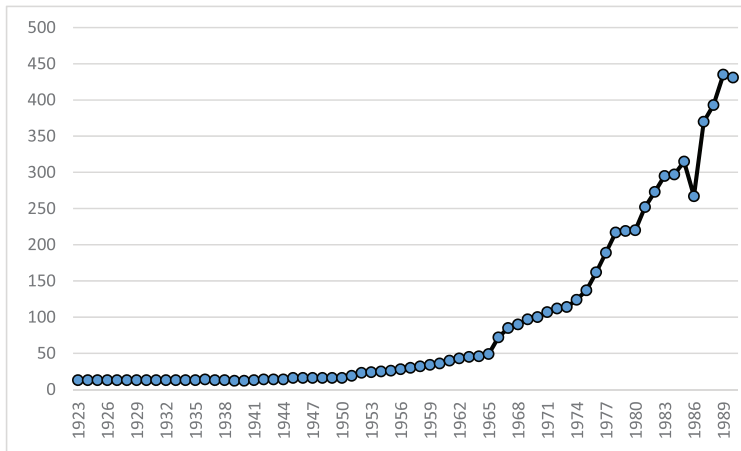


Figure 1. Number of advertising agencies from 1923 to 1990. The Cartel ended in 1965 (Data from 1923 to 1965 was collected by the author, and the data from 1965 from Arnberg & Svanlund (2017)), used with permission.

the government only to aid defence efforts. The second phase is from 1965 to 1975, when the first large public (peacetime) advertising campaigns were launched. The third is the period from 1975 to 1991, when advertising became an integral part of the activities of the public sector. The end year is set to coincide with the end of the Cold War since the market development was closely connected to the Cold War institutions; 1991 is also a suitable closing point because the market for government advertising after that closely resembled the commercial advertising market.

Setting the stage: pre-1945

The first initiatives for cooperation between the government and the advertising industry were taken in connection with the outbreak of World War II – and advertising was used throughout the war to support the defence effort.

The initiative came from the advertising agencies, and the cooperation proved highly beneficial to the industry since shortages caused by blockades and rationing made the civilian advertising market almost disappear. It can be argued that the cooperation with the government during World War II most likely saved many of the established advertising firms from bankruptcy—or at least saved the industry structure.

Already before the outbreak of war, the advertising industry had tried to position itself as a force that took corporate responsibility. When World War II broke out, however, the completely different conditions made it possible for the industry to demonstrate how it could be a useful social actor. ‘At the outbreak of war in 1939, many advertisers made the reflection that now, if ever, there would be an opportunity to win the government’s understanding of modern advertising and organised propaganda’ (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942, p. 54).

In the summer of 1939, representatives of the industry contacted the authorities and offered their services. Suggestions were given about how advertising and propaganda could be used in the defence effort. Total war demands total defence, it was believed, and

advertising had an important role to play. 'It is equally important to defend the resistance among the civilian populations and to prevent the external defence from collapsing because civilians lose their morale' (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942, p. 18).

On 6 September 1939, a 'three-man committee' was set up to establish a central government information body (the State Information Board), which was organised later in the autumn and formally came into being on 1 February 1940.

The idea of a government propaganda apparatus being activated in the event of war (or risk of war) was not new; it had been discussed at least since 1927, when the first plan for a national information central was drafted.⁷ The initiative was taken by the army and navy staff ('P. M. Nr. 1 angående').

Although plans had been made, the organisation had not been tested, and the concept of government propaganda was controversial. In a speech to the Advertisers Association, the director general of the State Information Board elaborated on this issue: 'Government propaganda activities were previously an unknown concept in Sweden. The examples from other countries have not been reassuring' (Greitz, 1940, p. 1).

According to a memo from 9 September 1939, advertising was not initially part of the strategy ('V.P.M.', 1939). However, TT [the national news wire service] and Radiotjänst [the national radio monopoly] were supposed to form the integral parts of the organisation (Ekblad, 1938). The new body nevertheless came to include advertising from an early stage.

When the three-man committee was organised, it was decided that the productions should be sourced from outside contractors. This point was also emphasised later when the organisation was formalised: 'It is, as far as I can see, not possible for the government, not even desirable, to quickly create a large advertising and propaganda apparatus that, with exclusive powers, would meet the demands of the new situation' (Greitz, 1940, p. 6).

The State Information Board operated until 31 December 1944, when it was disbanded due to the increasingly hostile attitude to government information services, and the looming end of the war.

When the Board was founded, the attitudes were totally different, and advertising was seen as beneficial. The offer of participation from the advertising industry was taken up at a meeting the day after the formation of the three-man committee on 7 September 1939, and it was decided that the president of the Swedish Advertising Association should be given a hearing (Three-Man Committee, 1939a). The minutes from a later meeting on 21 September indicated that a meeting with the Association of Advertising Agencies was held and that a 'committee for deliberations on the problems that the participation of advertising professionals in information campaigns could cause' was established (Three-Man Committee, 1939a).

Representatives of the Association of Advertising Agencies met in November 1939 with the newly appointed minister of supplies and the association offered their members' services to the government; the minister's response was positive.

However, the first advertising campaign launched after the outbreak of the war was a result not of the industry's initiative but rather of the authorities. During the fall of 1939, a comprehensive campaign was conducted to draw the attention of the Swedish people to what was called the 'silence problem'. The crisis situation demanded that the enemy not receive unnecessary information about things that could damage the Swedish defence or supply effort (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942).

On 4 October 1939, the three-man committee met with the Chairman of the Advertisers Association regarding the 'silence campaign' (Three-Man Committee, 1939a). A further meeting on the same subject was later held with directors from two advertising agencies (Three-Man Committee, 1939a). On 21 October 1939, funds were requested for a poster campaign of 300,000 posters to be placed on buses, trams and public buildings (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942; Three-Man Committee, 1939b). Approximately 439,000 posters – see Figure 2 – were ultimately printed (Blomquist, 1939, p. 2).

The government's attitude towards advertising became increasingly positive, and further proposals for cooperation from the advertising industry were positively received. Representatives for the State Information Board also emphasised that advertising professionals' skills and knowledge could not be replaced by civil servants.

'When the Swedish Newspaper Publishers Association and the Swedish Advertising Association offer the Government its services, one assumes that these will be accepted with the greatest



Figure 2. Poster from the 1939 'Silence campaign'.

satisfaction. Advertising agencies and advertising consultants in this country have great capacities. In their service, they have skilled advertisers, draftsmen and experts in other areas, which can give the government valuable assistance in a pressing situation' (Greitz, 1940, p. 6).

Although the first campaign was not created by a cartel agency, the following campaigns were. They were initiated and designed by advertisers operating within the Advertising Council of the State Information Board. Among the campaigns that followed were the vigilance campaign, 'A Swedish Tiger', with the well-known blue and yellow tiger designed by Bertil Almkvist,⁸ and 'The Spy Solves Puzzles, Hold on to your Piece'.

The vigilance campaign was launched in 1941, and the main channel was advertising in newspapers. The campaign's ten ads were published in almost all Swedish newspapers. The campaign was aimed at both the public and conscripted soldiers, the latter by posters at places and cafes near the military camps. 'The Tiger' appeared on various military publications and military stationery.

The Association of Advertising Agencies was involved in a series of other awareness campaigns during the war, including campaigns to save on gasoline and avoid car trips, campaigns for rubber waste collection and campaigns for households to save on cooking fat. In addition, the Association of Advertising Agencies joined a campaign to save electricity (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942, p. 59).

On 23 July 1940, an advertising council was established within the State Information Board. The council would follow and assist the government's information activities in the formulation of advertising campaigns and monitor crisis advertising.

It was also agreed with the government that the Association of Advertising Agencies should coordinate the advertising. Thus, it was also possible to maintain the current organisational and compensation model. Any advertising that the government ordered should be distributed through the Association of Advertising Agencies and shared by all member companies using the pre-war market shares as the allocation mechanism (Reklamnyheterna, 1940).⁹ Extensive government advertising would otherwise risk undermining the operating model of the Association of Advertising Agencies; if the largest advertiser, the government, was not included in the commission system at a time when the commercial advertisers sharply reduced their advertising, it would be a hard blow to the agencies included in the cartel system. The government was obviously not bound by the cartel agreement between newspaper publishers and the Association of Advertising Agencies. If the State Information Board or other authorities wanted to advertise without going through a certified advertising agency as provided for by the agreement with the Swedish Newspaper Publishers Association, they could have done so. Through the agreement, the certified agencies gained a special position vis-à-vis the government, and at the same time, the cartel was secure.¹⁰

This was also a victory for the newspapers, not only because of their dealings with the certified advertising agencies but also because their revenues were secured. Because of the involvement of the advertising industry, the newspapers could expect that future government information would be provided in the form of paid ads. Previously, the government had often sent dispatches and other information material that the newspapers then published as news. However, it was noted early by the industry that although the newspapers initially expressed willingness to publish public information, the scheme was not sustainable over the long term. The war meant less commercial advertising, and the newspapers were dependent on alternative revenue sources. Government support of not only the advertising industry but also the newspapers was also an official purpose (Greitz, 1940, p. 2).

Government advertising in support for newspapers had been called for already at the outbreak of the war. For example, the director of the propaganda department of the Office for Public Information noted in October 1939 in a memo to the three-man committee that 'during a worsening crisis situation, the newspapers' economics would be further threatened. One has to take into consideration that the newspapers in such a situation—even if goodwill exists—would not to the same extent as the present time be able to serve the authorities without compensation'(Björklund, 1967, p. 881).

The economic threat to the both the newspapers and advertising agencies was significant, and the government contracts were as much about economic short-term survival as an opportunity to demonstrate community engagement: 'For many advertising companies, however, to put it in plain language, the public propaganda campaigns also gave them a welcome relief, as the commercial advertising business, at least at the beginning of the war, was severely restrained and in some areas had largely disappeared' (Björklund, 1967, p. 881).

A comparison with the role of advertising in warring countries such as Britain reveals both differences and similarities. A significant difference is that the fall in commercial advertising came to be significantly greater in Sweden than in Britain, even though the state of supply was even worse there. Just as in Sweden, the industry felt threatened, although the threat in Britain was seen as mainly from the government, as the industry felt that it was possible that the government would curtail its freedom. To avoid this, substantial resources were devoted to try to win government support and sell the importance of advertising as part of the war effort, something that proved successful.

Compared to the rest of the British war economy and its constituent parts, the advertising industry appears unique in the extent to which it was able to preserve its autonomy during the war [...] The very survival of the wartime advertising industry was the result, at least in part, of the extraordinary efforts that the main trade bodies went to in order to demonstrate that commercial advertising had a legitimate role to play in a nation at war (Clampin, 2014, p. 45).

An important difference between the warring United Kingdom and neutral Sweden involves the manner in which advertising was used as a means of maintaining a sense of normality. In Britain, advertising in newspapers was also believed to make them more credible in the eyes of the public, as the ads allowed them to retain a pre-war appearance (Clampin, 2014, p. 45).¹¹ This perspective was lacking in Sweden. Instead, it was the advertising industry that tried to encourage companies to focus on advertising and tried to induce the government to realise the value of commercial advertising (Törnqvist & Carlson, 1943).

Phase 1: 1945–1965

Government advertising had been significant during the period from 1939 to 1945, but the winds were fated to change. The 20-year period after World War II would be characterised by a different attitude towards government advertising. This period forms the first phase of this study.

Some government institutions, including the finance and appropriations committee of Parliament, argued that the wartime advertising organisation would be made permanent and given peacetime tasks. The opposition to this was, however, severe, reflecting the now hostile attitude toward government advertising: 'There was enough support in some circles for a permanent agency, but on the other hand, the criticism was very strong against a

proposed reorganisation of the information board to a government advertising organisation with implied significant dangers, a line the experiences from the south [i.e. Germany] lent support to' (Björklund, 1967, p. 881). If advertising could be used to make people think or do things that they would not otherwise have thought or done, was it not an overly powerful tool for use in peacetime? 'In the long term, no government propaganda can be combined with the citizen's spiritual and economic freedom; in the long term, all materially overwhelming opinion propaganda is a danger to a social system such as ours, even though it is in the best interests to enter into the service of this society' (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942, p. 44).

Not only were these thoughts expressed by the industry's representatives, but the dangers of government advertising and propaganda activities were also stressed by representatives of the government: modern information campaigns are so powerful that they can be used only in extreme emergencies in a democracy. 'It is obvious that, under pure peace conditions, government authorities will not conduct any form of propaganda' (Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret, 1953, p. 61).

Although the attitude towards government advertising was negative, it never ceased completely. The industry tried to convince the government to continue to advertise and felt that there was a need to educate the government to become a better and—it may be assumed—more frequent advertiser. Frank Lohse, the chief executive officer of the largest advertising firm, Gumaelius, said that it is "for the government and its various institutions as sometimes with private entrepreneurs: they must be taught to become advertisers" (Björklund, 1967, p. 876).¹²

One of the campaigns that emerged—which was initiated by the industry—was the energy savings campaign launched in connection with fuel rationing in 1948. The advertising industry then created advertising to defend the restriction (Björklund, 1967, p. 880). In the same year, the People's Savings Campaign was run by the government in collaboration with various non-profit organisations and interest groups.¹³ The campaign warned of worse times and urged people to reduce consumption and instead save for the future.

Although advertising by the government or on behalf of government authorities was considered inappropriate, this did not apply to wartime advertising. In war, the rules were different. The 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade the same year led Sweden to invest large resources in building a strong defence.

The idea of total defence – where civilian organisations, including private corporations, were supposed to be involved in, and in peacetime prepare and plan for, the defence of the realm and the supply of the war effort – constituted the foundation for the Swedish defence strategy. As part of this effort, a government study was set up to organise a war information service authority, modelled on both the Swedish and US World War II counterparts, such as the War Advertising Council (Regarding the US organizations, see, e.g. Fox, 1975; Stole, 2012).

The 'Mossberg study',¹⁴ which was completed in 1953, proposed to establish a National Information Central.¹⁵ The importance of advertising in wartime was highlighted in several places in the study. It was noted, for example, that 'advertising could be used to reach people that could not be reached through other communications channels' and that advertising was especially useful 'when it is important that the message is undistorted and reached the recipient in exactly the intended verbal form and wording' (Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret, 1953, p. 118).

When the National Information Central was organised in 1954, no provisions for in-house advertising production were made. Instead, it was considered more appropriate to rely on

civilian advertising companies, as had been the case during World War II (Beredskapsnämndens delegation, 1955). The main advantages of external, civilian production were that it was assumed to be more flexible and creative, whereas advertising production within a government agency risked becoming unwieldy and bureaucratic. In the Mossberg study, it is stated that '[t]he professional experience and the skills of the ad men should best be put to use if the production was left to companies within the advertising industry and not performed by the authorities themselves' (Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret, 1953, p. 199f). The study further claimed that a government agency's operating capability also for a considerable time after establishment was likely to be fairly insignificant' (Kommittén för utredning om det psykologiska försvaret, 1953, p. 199f).

The massive evacuations of population centres that later formed the centrepiece of Swedish civil defence were not yet proposed at the time of the Mossberg study. Instead, civilians were to be protected from air raids by bomb shelters. This was a contributing factor to the choice to rely on civilian advertising agencies. If cities and towns were not evacuated, the companies would stay in business, as they had during World War II (Beredskapsnämndens delegation, 1955; Riksreklambyrån, 1966).

After only one year, in 1955, it was decided that advertising activities were to be organised directly under National Information Central. The military situation had changed, and it was now expected that any war would involve nuclear strikes against population centres. This prompted massive evacuations; thus, the civil industry was not expected to remain in business after the outbreak of war. Civilian agencies would instead supply staff to an advertising department within National Information Central. The civilian agencies that formed the cartel volunteered to staff this agency, and in some cases, this took a significant amount of their executives' time. A central task was to prepare 'canned' campaigns, i.e. pre-prepared advertising campaigns ready to be used—with minor changes—when war broke out (Lakomaa, 2012).

For two decades, civilian advertising companies willingly staffed this organisation without financial compensation.¹⁶ The involvement was considered important and honourable. This participation also had economic motives, as participating agencies were considered more likely to obtain government contracts. Most participating agencies did not gain anything from their involvement, and although participation remained prestigious, interest faded when war was no longer perceived as imminent.¹⁷ Operations were discontinued in the middle of the 1970s.¹⁸

Second phase: 1965–1975

The second phase began in the late 1960s when the Swedish government started running large public advertising campaigns. The first was connected with the introduction of right-hand traffic in 1967, and later campaigns were aimed at, for example, energy savings and public health. The change in attitude was closely linked to the expanding welfare state and the perception that advertising could be used to organise the good society; that the war was more distant also contributed. The industry welcomed these new market opportunities.

The first major campaign was the information campaign for the transfer to right-hand traffic as Sweden changed from left- to right-hand traffic in 1967.¹⁹ The campaign for the change was extensive, and it came to include virtually all possible advertising channels: print, outdoor posters, direct mail, stickers, and apparel.

The campaign also served another purpose: it was used to test the war organisation within National Information Central, and the contract went to two large advertising agencies, Ervaco and Günter & Bäck, both large full-service agencies that had been members of the recently defunct cartel. The campaign was, in principle, the only assignment that was distributed within the framework of cooperation within National Information Central.

Even though the cartel was disbanded in 1965, the government continued to buy campaigns from the large ex-cartel members, thus contributing to keeping (most of) them in business (as newly established smaller agencies were taking over much of the commercial market).

This period was characterised by growing political resistance against advertising. It was also a period when the regulation of advertising increased sharply. During the 1960s, the left wing of the Social Democrats had advanced their positions further, and one of the issues that they pushed for was tougher regulations for advertising. Advertising was now considered dangerous (Funke, 2012). This can be observed as a breach of past traditions within the Labour movement, in which advertising was previously considered a part of modernity and a tool that could contribute to more efficient production and distribution.

That the government began to buy advertising while also perceiving more dangers from it may seem contradictory. However, the right-hand driving campaign should not be observed as an example that the attitude of the state towards public advertising had changed. First, it was organised as a test by the war organisation. Secondly, the campaign was unique; it can be said that the campaign was an exception. Right-hand traffic was, of course, not introduced every year, and it was an advertising campaign aimed not at changing people's perceptions or attitudes but rather at informing them about an existing political decision.

What can be observed as a breakthrough for public advertising was the Government Study on Public Information, which was completed in 1969 and suggested that the public sector should start using information and advertising to a far greater extent than before (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 48).

The new attitude towards public advertising was as a result of the expanding welfare state and the increasing centralisation of society.

[The] rapid development of society in recent decades has led to a significant increase in information needs. First, it is obvious that the public sector's growth is the cause of this. The social institutions have expanded their efforts in traditional areas of activity while at the same time engaging in a number of new issues' (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 9).

The investigation also noted that urbanisation increases the distance between citizens and both politicians and officials, which means that the latter must increase their information efforts (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 10). The study claimed that both government advertising and information activities are needed to inform people, for example, about access to welfare benefits, and the purpose of 'public information is not limited to transmitting "neutral" knowledge. The purpose must often be to, by providing knowledge, change or reinforce the citizens' own values and behaviours' (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 8). What the study addresses is both in line with the sentiment during the 1940s (i.e. advertising is a powerful tool that the government can use to achieve its goals) and in direct contradiction (i.e. it would be a tool that is too powerful for use in peacetime). The study, however,

does not provide any elaboration on this matter or give any explanation regarding what caused the change in views regarding the appropriateness of government advertising. At the same time the investigation offered a generally positive view of private advertising companies, which contradicted the advertising-hostile view of the Labour movement.

Regarding the design and production of advertisements, it was concluded that the authorities did not have the required experience and competence to act as entities other than clients. Furthermore, 'no authority's contact activities are so extensive and evenly distributed over time that one can continuously and fully deploy staff of this kind' (Informationsutredningen, 1969).

'The experiences in the industry should be made useful in community information. In these respects, it may not be reasonable to limit the authorities' procurement of consultancy services to a government information agency with the full service of all services. Instead, the authorities should be able to choose from the entire range of consulting services offered by the market. In addition to these services, the investigation considers it important that a central government advisory body for information issues be established. This should not replace the free market consultants but on the contrary improve and facilitate cooperation between authorities and private consulting companies' (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 65).

Previous suggestions to establish a state-owned advertising agency were also rejected.²⁰ The investigation noted that because of the previously limited use of public advertisements, there were shortcomings in skills in this area (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 67). However, the study noted that '[i]n recent years, a change had occurred insofar as several advertising agencies set up or planned to set up special units for advice to public authorities' (Informationsutredningen, 1969, p. 67). One of the agencies that did so was Ervaco, the agency for which the secretary of the study, James Brade, was previously a director.

In 1971, as a result of the study, a government agency—the Council for Public Information—that would coordinate national advertising campaigns and advertising purchases was founded. This also increased public spending on advertising, albeit not as much as the industry had hoped for, and advertising firms expressed disappointment when the government information study group report did not result in the public advertising efforts they had anticipated—10 million instead of the expected 50–80 million over two years. The new spending was however welcomed (Annonsörföreningen, 1971).

Third phase: 1975–1991

The third phase began in the 1970s, when advertising developed into an integral part of public sector activities, and government agencies and municipalities became major buyers of media and advertising services. The phase ends in 1991. Then, the large agencies that had formed the cartel had disappeared; some of them had merged with new firms, and others went bankrupt. The Cold War institutions that had previously shaped the industry also lost their importance with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Of the public campaigns of the era, the Energy Savings Campaign, which ran from 1973 to 1982, was especially important, not only because it was the largest advertising campaign in Swedish history but also since advertising services were provided by agencies that previously had formed the cartel. The campaign therefore also contributed to conserving the industry structure.

After the 1973 oil crisis, the Swedish government organised the Energy Savings Committee, which was tasked with informing the public about how to save energy. The committee was organised under the auspices of the Swedish Agency for Economic Defence, and responsibility for the major advertising campaigns that were part of the energy savings effort was assigned to the advertising company ARE Idé 1, which was part of the advertising group Förenade ARE-bolagen, which in turn was owned by the Social Democratic Party. Not only was the committee tasked with running advertising campaigns but also half of its budget was devoted to print and billboard advertising (Energisparkommittén, 1975).

The committee's assignment was described by the cabinet as consisting of '[c]oordinated information activities, including inter alia, coordination and support for the authorities' information efforts, planning and implementation of savings campaigns, follow-up and information on the development of energy saving and initiatives resulting therefrom' (Energisparkommittén, 1975).

The choice of ARE as the lead agency can also be connected to the advertising industry's involvement in National Information Central: the director of the Swedish Agency for Economic Defence simply selected an agency that he knew from its participation in National Information Central. ARE Idé 1 initially handled the account itself, but when the assignment grew, it was invited to create an agency pool and share the assignment. With the approval of the Ministry of Finance, the director of ARE Idé 1 chose the agencies Svea, Hera, Landia and Gumaelius to share the account. Svea, and Gumaelius were large ex-cartel agencies, whereas Hera and Landia were medium-sized.

ARE's success (in addition to Ervaco's) in the government sector was based on how assignments were awarded. Before the 1980s, when comprehensive public procurement laws were introduced, personal relations with prospective clients were the key to contracts. This could explain some of the interest in the participation in National Information Central. The war games in which the organisation participated also involved many senior political policymakers, who were also potential advertisers. The campaigns by the Energy Savings Committee were not the only public advertising campaigns during this period.

The revenue from the public sector proved vital for the large advertising companies that had dominated the industry during the cartel period. Two important commercial advertising segments disappeared in the 1970s: advertising for tobacco products and beer. The three largest advertising companies, namely, Gumaelius, Ervaco and Svenska Telegrambyrå, were heavily dependent on revenue from these segments. These changes in the market may have contributed to the bankruptcy of the oldest and largest advertising agency, Gumaelius, in 1978 (CEO of Gumaelius, 1978).

The Council for Public Information existed for a decade, and when the council was abolished in 1982, the responsibility for public advertising was shifted to the government authorities. By this time, the last traces of suspicion against government advertising had disappeared. The Council for Public Information had managed to create a culture in which it was considered normal for government agencies to engage in advertising.

During the 1980s, the expansion of government advertising continued as individual authorities ordered ads in their respective areas and as the government continued the practice of running large public information campaigns. The largest and most well-known of these was the AIDS Delegation perennial campaigns against HIV/AIDS. The American advertising agency Ted Bates initially handled the advertising account, which was later taken over

by the advertising agency Garberg's – both new agencies that had entered the market after the fall of the cartel. The campaigns were widely acclaimed not only for the size of the media purchases but also for the content, as Ted Bates used a controversial theme that alluded to the possibility that HIV could affect anyone and that 'you or your wife' could be the next AIDS victim.

In 1986, the new Law on Public Procurement was introduced, and with it, new demands for both buyers and sellers arose. Advertising agencies could no longer rely on favourable relations with government officials to receive contracts; instead, formal criteria were supposed to be used to select the suppliers of advertising services. The public tenders now usually required the advertising companies to show evidence of, for example, economic stability and fulfilment of their tax obligations. In addition, references from previous public-sector clients were usually required, making it difficult for newcomers to enter the sphere of public sector advertisers. This requirement also led most advertising companies to drop out of the business. They focused instead on commercial advertising and left the less lucrative public advertising to specialised agencies.

Concluding discussion: Government as the customer of last resort

The government has served as the customer of last resort on at least two occasions during the period covered in this paper. The first was during World War II, and the second was during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Although Sweden was neutral during World War II, the country was subject to blockade, and many goods were rationed—the ones available were sold without advertising because consumers bought what they could get. Advertisers realised this situation as advertising purchases fell substantially in the autumn of 1939. However, in principle, the government compensated for the entire loss. This allowed the agencies to survive and maintain their profitability, as the cartel and the commission system could be retained. At the same time, the arrangement ensured that newspapers were not losing ad revenue.

The possibility of being the customer of last resort was based on the fact that the government could choose to whom they steered their business. During World War II, the cartel's members were favoured. Even if the government bought advertisements from elsewhere, advertising purchases were mainly channelled through the cartel.

The cooperation within the realm of National Information Central was also largely based on the cartel, although the number of participating agencies there was smaller. Further, after the demise of the cartel in 1965, the organisation was staffed almost exclusively with ex-cartel members.

The first major public advertising campaign after World War II, the information campaign for the transition to right-hand traffic, was also linked to cooperation within National Information Central. The advertising campaign was a test of the wartime organisation (the contract went to two ex-cartel agencies). Additionally, the next major government campaign, the Energy Commission's energy saving campaign, went to (former) cartel agencies.

The government's helping hand, however, was not there forever. The new law about public procurement restricted the ability to choose who would receive contracts. When the government no longer provided the large old firms that once formed the cartel with contracts, they finally folded.

None of the big three, Gumaelius, Svenska Telegrambyrå or Ervaco, remained by the mid-1980s. In the early 1990s, ARE and Svea were also virtually bankrupt, and they were acquired by competitors or closed. However, with government aid, these agencies were able to survive far longer than they likely would have otherwise. The government was there as the customer of last resort when the market did not demand their services.

What was the government's motivation to support the advertising industry (or at least some agencies)? This question can be analysed both in terms of the motivation for the individual actions and on a more general level. During the war, the government's recruitment of advertising agencies enabled both campaigns to be produced without delay and the advertising industry and press to receive some compensation for the loss of commercial advertising, which meant that they did not risk bankruptcy. Regarding the press, it was directly stated that the government advertising campaigns had this function (Greitz, 1940, p. 2).

In this study, I have found that Swedish historical trajectory was shaped by a combination of institutional factors, some of which are almost unique for Sweden and some that are general. The unique factors were the cartelised advertising industry and the total defence concept, in which almost all industries took part in planning and preparations for war. Together these two factors fostered long-term cooperation as the cartel kept the industry small and the firms large and stable, enabling the long-term relationships that the public-private cooperation were based on. The large firms of the cartel era could also more easily afford to contribute the staff for organisations such as National Information Central.

The general factors are the Cold War setting and the choice of whether to make or buy. Every nation that wanted to use advertising in the event of war needed to ensure that a viable advertising industry with competence in government advertising existed or to create a government-run advertising organisation. The reliance on existing companies eliminates the cost of maintaining the business in peacetime while allowing the use of the service in wartime. The downside is that the business could exploit the situation and charge higher prices.²¹

There are many examples of government attempts to use in-house production to prevent companies from charging inflated prices for military equipment. However, there is a risk that government production will not start until the war is over and that it will therefore become only a cost (Wilson, 2016, p. 18). At the same time, it may be difficult to close operations when they are no longer needed. The creation of an organisation also means the creation of an interest group that works for its continued and expanding existence. During times when government advertising was considered democratically dubious, there was no choice but to rely on private contractors.²²

Even when the higher prices are taken into consideration, the total cost for the government can be lower. Wars are rare, but a government organisation must also be maintained in peacetime. To perform in the event of war, they must also keep pace with the commercial sector. Competition usually improves quality, and private agencies can more easily address the rapid development of the industry and its methods and practices. This was explicitly noted both during World War II in the Mossberg study from 1953 and in the 1969 study on public information. This is also the motive found by Bennett when he analysed the government policy regarding shipbuilding in Britain (Bennett, 2016). The same also applied to advertising, an industry rarely connected to defence. This is the first main contribution of this study. The second is that government acted to preserve the industry structure, and indirectly, individual advertising agencies by acting as a customer of last resort. Without the government contracts, it is unlikely that the cartel would have survived World War II or that

the big four would have survived the fall of the cartel in the 1960s. A stable industry structure, consisting of a few large companies, was probably in the interest of the government as it was easier to negotiate with a limited number of companies. As long as the firms were intended to serve a function in the Swedish total defence, organisation stability was even more important as it was necessary to be able to count on the participating firms still being around in the event of a war.

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Notes

1. Later, by 2005, the government had become the largest advertiser in Sweden (Galli, 2012, 8). In the rest of the paper, government means public authorities, regions, and municipalities but not public owned companies. This paper studies the role of the government as an advertiser. Advertising by state-owned enterprises, such as banks and the National Railroad Company, is outside the scope of this paper, but these enterprises have, of course, used advertising—just like their private equivalents—to sell products and services. Commercial advertising for private customers—which with the exception of the period during World War II constituted the majority of the advertising—is outside the scope of this paper.
2. The government preferred the terms ‘information’ [the same in Swedish] or ‘enlightenment’ [Swedish: ‘upplysning’] for their advertising. The term *annonsen* [‘the advertisement’] was used in Sweden as a general term for advertising or marketing until at least the 1960s. In addition, the term propaganda [the same in Swedish] was used. Propaganda was also used to denote category advertising (or collective advertising), such as ads for whole milk or shoes, in contrast to *reklam* (‘advertising’), which denoted specific products or services, such as ‘Buy shoes of brand X’. In some other countries, such as the UK, the term propaganda was rarely used after World War II to denote anything other than enemy propaganda. In Sweden, however, the term had no automatic negative connotation. In some cases, as indicated above, propaganda and advertising were synonyms; in other cases, the terms were complements. ‘Propaganda is used to create new needs and opinions; advertising, to teach the people to enjoy the new [products]’ (Svenska Reklamförbundet, 1942, p. 48). For a discussion of how the term propaganda was used in Sweden, see also (Gardeström, 2017).
3. Famous campaigns in this regard are ‘Loose lips sink ships’ and ‘Rosie the Riveter’. On the topic of the use of advertising in war, see e.g. Aldgate & Richards, 1986; Berghoff, 2003; Bethune, 1968; Clampin, 2014; Fox, 1975; Griffith, 1983; Lakomaa, 2012; Lykins, 2003; Osgood, 2006; Risso, 2007, 2011, 2014; Schwarzkopf, 2005; Stole, 2001, 2012; Wijk, 1990; Åström-Rudberg, 2017. On psychological warfare and advertising in public diplomacy see e.g. Black, 1975; Brandenberger, 2011; Brooks, 2007; Buitenhuis, 2011; Campion, 2009; Cantwell, 1989; Chapman, 1998; Corse, 2013; Cruickshank, 1977; Cull, 1995; Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958; Lashmar & Oliver, 1998; Lerner, 1971; MacKenzie, 1984; Osgood, 2006; Roetter, 1974; Stenton, 2000; Taylor, 1999; Vaughan, 2005.
4. Regarding the cartel, see Åström-Rudberg, (2016b). There were attempts to cartelise the advertising industry in other countries, including the United States. However, they were unsuccessful in that they did not include a significant proportion of the agencies or did not last long (Johnston, 2012, p. 120; Pope, 1983, pp. 154–162; Schwarzkopf, 2005, p. 65). See also Keep, Hollander, and Dickinson (1998). The Swedish advertising cartel was unique in that it survived for 50 years and included all the major advertising agencies.

5. Gustafsson (1974) notes that the sum was so high that two of the founding members failed to meet the requirements.
6. As Marchand has noted, the participation of the American advertising industry in the war effort during World War I proved important for the industry when it came to gaining influence and respectability (Marchand, 1986, p. 6).
7. The same name ('Upplysningscentralen' in Swedish) was used for the wartime organisation of the war information service during the Cold War.
8. The Swedish Tiger is a pun on the word 'tiger', which in Swedish means both 'tiger' and 'keeps quiet'.
9. A similar agreement had previously been made with the Ministry of Supplies in 1939. Letter to the Ministry of Supplies from AF. Bilaga 3 till protokoll vid ordinarie sammanträde med Auktoriserade Annonsbyråers Förening 24 November 1939, Protokoll 1939–1942, AF Archive. Box 2, and with the National Food Commission.
10. There was some cheating within the cartel as agencies bypassed AF and pitched campaigns directly to various government authorities; see (Åström-Rudberg, 2017, p. 15, p. 18).
11. An important difference that likely contributed to the much larger volume of commercial advertising in the UK and the US concerns the high 'excess profit' taxes that were introduced during World War II. For a company whose profits could be taxed up to 95%, it was of course attractive to invest the surplus on advertising instead of reporting profits.
12. See also Svenska Reklamförbundet, (1944). It was argued that at the same time that the advertising industry promoted government advertising, it was impossible for the government to establish its own advertising department, as it was unlikely that it could be certified, and that because of the agreement between the cartel and the Association of Newspaper Publishers, it would therefore be prevented from placing ads in newspapers. Document titled 'Svar till Bilaga 2 till Protokoll vid ordinarie sammanträde med AF 26 February 1943, Remissvar till Statsrådet och chefen för Försvarsdepartementet, AF, Protokoll'.
13. Swedish: 'Folkrörelsernas Sparkampanj'.
14. Named after the then-Minister of Interior Eje Mossberg.
15. Swedish: 'Upplysningscentralen'.
16. The advertising industry's activities were limited after the early 1970s. Its last exercise on record occurred in 1985. However, the organisation was not formally disbanded until 1994 (when few of the agencies that staffed the organisation were still in business).
17. As we shall see, some of the participating agencies gained a significant amount of business after the demise of National Information Central.
18. Some of the tasks assigned to National Information Central were to be taken over by the Council for Public Information, but there is no evidence of any preparatory work or exercises during the existence of the Council for Public Information (1971–1982).
19. The issue had been addressed in a national referendum in 1955, in which the left-hand traffic alternative won 80% of the vote. However, the result was ignored by politicians.
20. National Information Central tried to convince the government to transform the Council for Public Information into a 'state advertising agency' that would also be active in peacetime. Supplement from Kurt Törnqvist to the government investigative report 'Översyn av beredskapsnämnden för psykologiskt försvar' 1971-02-26, BN KrA/0965/Ö/A 1a/4, KrA.
21. Wilson (2016, p. 35), for example, notes that after World War I, veterans' organisations such as the VfW and the American Legion found it unfair that only men, not 'capital', were drafted for the war effort. See also Leff (1991, p. 1301ff).
22. The advertising activities organised within National Information Central were the closest to a state-owned advertising business that Sweden had. However, this occurred because no private advertising businesses were expected to continue their operations in wartime, as evacuations would lead to companies being forced to close their doors. Although the advertising unit within National Information Central was disbanded and was supposed to be replaced by staff from the newly established Council for Public Information, no provisions for in-house productions were made. The intention from the beginning was for the government to have no other role in advertising than that of a client.

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Archival collections

- The Swedish Labour Movement's Archive and Library ('Arbetarrörelsens arkiv'): ARAB
- Förenade ARE-bolagen
- Swedish National Archives ('Riksarkivet'): RA
- The State Information Board ('Statens Informationsstyrelse'): SIS
 - The Government Commission on Right-hand Driving ('Statens Högertrafikkommission')
 - The Government Study Group on War Information Services ('Utredningen om psykologiskt försvar')
 - The Council for Public Information ('Nämnden för Samhällsinformation')
- Swedish Military Archives ('Krigsarkivet'): KrA
- The Preparedness Board for War Information ('Beredskapsnämnden för psykologiskt försvar'): BN
- Swedish Association of Communication Agencies: KOM
- Association of Advertising Agencies (AAF)
- Centre for Business History: CfN
- Gumaelius Annonsbyrå
 - Erik Elinder personal archive
- Museum of Landskrona
- Ervaco
 - Svenska Telegrambyrå
 - Association of Advertising Agencies (AAF)

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