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# GLOBAL ADVERTISING EXPOSED: HOW J. WALTER THOMPSON CONQUERED WESTERN EUROPE

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## ABSTRACT

"On the surface, multinational is an innocent if rather awkward word, but when you look beneath the innocent surface you discover an extraordinary amount of heat – it is almost a pejorative term that is no less true for a multinational ad agency than it is for any other multinational business" (Denis Lanigan, 1983) [1].

Western Europe's transformation from a group of countries that was almost completely destroyed as a result of World War II to the development of the prosperous European Union in the twenty-first century was a combination of many factors, including substantial monetary aid from the United States but also business know-how in the form of U.S. companies that decided to expand to Europe in search for consumers that were hungry for American products and services. The purpose of this historical paper was to explore how J. Walter Thompson, a U.S.-based global advertising agency, developed from a purely domestic business into one of the leading global agencies in the world over the period of a century.

The article describes how the agency started to expand its operations in Western Europe in the 1920s with the sole purpose of supporting its U.S. clients, and later actively pursued new European customers, quickly dominating the advertising scene in Western Europe. It describes the agency's philosophies of expansion by analyzing its strategic plan en route to becoming a major multinational and then truly global company itself. The article includes a detailed discussion of JWT's worldwide account management style, emphasizing its European accounts. It is rooted in the conceptual framework that views advertising as an institution that is directly tied to capitalism and thus has become a part of the "industrial order," providing consumers with information about products, services, and ideas so that they can make educated purchasing decisions [2] [3]. The thesis of this article is that advertising can significantly contribute to economic growth in other countries as well, including those that had been almost completely destroyed as a result of World War II. Based on the role that advertising plays in a democratic society, advertising agencies have developed into major global companies, supporting global clients as well as local ones.

Note: This article is mostly based on the J. Walter Thompson Company Archives (JWT), JWT-Frankfurt Office Records, John Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising and Marketing History, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

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