## "I AM TELLING YOU IN A FRIENDLY WAY: IT'S A RE - MARK - ABLE CAR!": ADVERTISING AMERICAN CARS IN INTERWAR ROMANIA

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#### **Abstract**

This article studies the advertising of American cars in interwar Romania. It asserts that American cars and the advertising of American cars were the most consumed goods and representations in the interwar period. Moreover, it argues that Romanians consumed American cars not only in their practical role as means of transportations or their promises of pleasures and dreams, but also as representations of American technical progress. The vast majority of American ads that circulated in Romania were translation and adaptation of American ads circulated in the United States couple years earlier or were created by J. Walter Thompson's international branches for General Motors in their offices in Alexandria, Antwerp, and, later, including in Bucharest office. The example of J. Walter Thompson and General Motors is illustrative for the collaboration between American companies abroad. Working on a global market, imposing global values, they created a model followed and adopted to a different scale in interwar Romania as well.

**Keywords:** advertising, American cars, interwar Romania, Romanian market, luxury market, consumerism, American influence.

American cars as well as American advertising of American cars were the most consumed American goods and representations in interwar Romania. While American cars represented more than 70 percent of the cars sold in interwar Romania, 30 percent of the advertising in the newspapers was advertising of cars¹. Cars captured Romanians' imagination and dreams; they became part of the popular culture. In Cezar Petrescu's novels, known for the representations of interwar Romania, one of the characters categorizes the inhabitants of his city by the corresponding cars' names: Buick, Nash, Chrysler, Ford or Chevrolet, series and the number of cylinders; and women passerby, by their approximate or only illusionary resemblances with Greta Garbo, Lya Mara, and Mary Pickford².

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Virgil Schulder, "Reclama în comerțul modern," Reclama, nr. 3, 1929, 45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cezar Petrescu, *Oraș patriarhal* (București: Ed. Eminescu, 1982), 101.

Drawing on the tradition of Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, Geo Bogza writes about owning a car, except Fiat and Citroen, the cars mentioned were American. Consuming cars meant also association with women. Each car took on the features of women representative in the society. Cars became new means in creating and reinforcing ideas about masculinity. Moreover, "the automobile is both phallic symbol and female object"<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, the associations reflect on the position these cars held within the society, based also on their prices:

"Look on the boulevard of blood, the cars drove at dawn having women's features. The Ford, dressed in a print dress, is a cheap and sentimental seamstress. Chevrolet has in its design something of the grace and the simplicity of a schoolgirl wearing her uniform and satchel under the arm. Look, the Chrysler seems an en vogue actress and the Studebaker an exotic dancer from the Tropics. Buick and Oldsmobile are not attractive. They have something masculine in them. They are, in any case, hermaphrodite. In exchange, Nash is a princess with lots of white pearls, when she walks she looks as she serves the tea"<sup>4</sup>.

The automobile became the site of modern masculinity<sup>5</sup>. The car, as a masculine technology, draws a connection between possessing a car and possessing a woman, driving becomes a sexualized activity. "From the very beginning cars were less about transportation in the public imagination than they were about pure pleasure, excitement, and sex"<sup>6</sup>.

"From the radiator to the tires, from this car bursts the idea of sex, which I possess like I possess a woman. I friendly caress her hair and I smile at her when I verify to see if it has fuel. A red kiss is starting the ignition and my fingers touch the speed gear like I touch the knee. I have the pleasant sensation of giving up when horizontal, when it bursts forward with me. I embrace the steering wheel like I embrace the hip and I push the clutch pedal feeling it like I feel the breast".

The car is both a necessity and a luxury item in interwar Romania. It helps create new identities. "For our needs of clothing and comfort, for the rapidity fulfilling all our necessities demanded in a hurried tempo, for the devices that walk spatially the voice and the thought, *the car* became so creative, became so potential of taste, imprinted on this century new specific forms and patterns. They were created objects, which have their act of identity built in the steel shell".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Deborah Clarke, *Driving Women. Fiction and Automobile Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Unu, April, 1929, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Deborah Clarke, *Driving Women*, 46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Jack de Witt, "Cars and Culture: Songs of the Open Road," *The American Poetry Review* 39, No. 2 (March/April 2010): 38, <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/20684521">http://www.jstor.org/stable/20684521</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> N. H. Maxy, "Arta decorativă și arhitectura în slujba reclamei," *Reclama*, nr. 1, April 1929, 8.

The car show rooms received special attention within the advertising world. N.H. Maxy analyzed the show rooms:

"Lately old stores for cuffs, old bodegas, and coffee houses were transformed in sumptuous salons for displaying the cars. No seller grasped the space of presentation of a car; none studied in detail its shape. Thus, their salon still has the "renaissance" pillars, the office or English salon lamps; the railings of iron garlands in the Byzantine style, the ceilings covered with Florentine stucco painted in white oil. I focus especially on automobiles show rooms because, in the saddest economic era, only they had the necessity and the capital for a new space".

In 1927, a study of the advertising of the automotive products in Europe evaluated the Romanian market. Discussing Romanian market for automotive, it underlined the advantages such as cheap gasoline price (16 cents a gallon in August 1926) and the fair system of highway system, especially compared to its neighboring countries and the disadvantages such as the unsatisfactory state of politics, finance, and transportation<sup>10</sup>. The study further details the state of advertising in general and automotive advertising in Romania:

Preparation of advertising copy in the Rumanian language outside of Rumania has frequently proved unsatisfactory in the past. Best results in the preparation of advertisements are usually obtained through very close cooperation with the manufacturer's Rumanian distributor. Advertising in Rumania is still in its infancy, and the prospective buyer's attitude toward advertising is one of suspicion. Hence, extravagant claims have no pulling power. The methods used by motion-picture film producers and automobile manufacturers have recently given the country a sample of up-to-date advertising. Most of the automobile advertising is confined to the Bucharest daily papers, which have a circulation throughout the entire country<sup>11</sup>.

The ads contributed to the diffusion of American goods as well as the American - style consumption. The advertising of cars targeted wealthy families, fashionable elites, industrialists, and farmers. They emphasized speed, modernity, progress, and comfort, but also savings in gas consumption and prices, and their design. Ads flaunted superlatives such as "the best car in the world", "the best ever made", "the most famous luxury automobile", "the safety it brought", "supremacy on the market" of a model or another, or "the value is bigger than the price." Presenting the object - the car - relies mainly on copy, which, at its turn, contains numerous mechanical and technical descriptions. The images of cars were, at the beginning of 1920s, seldom static and smaller, while, starting early 1930s, the idea of movement and speed started to be represented through elongation, streamlined details, and inclined plan.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Trade Information Bulletin, nr. 426, 1927, 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibid., 13.

The advertising of American cars in Romania was translated directly from ads circulated in the United States and adapted to a degree to Romanian market. Few ads, discuss specifically Romania. One of them for Chevrolet car, on 16 May 1929 in *Universul* "is more than ever the ideal car for Romania, with its unpaved and rough roads" In general, ads underlined the success of the cars in the United States, but also in various European capitals such as Warsaw, Stockholm or other important cities such as Alexandria.

Few ads display imagery associated with the representations of the United States abroad. One ad for Hudson published in *Universul* on 9 June 1939 has as a background a graphic image of New York skyscrapers and the Statute of Liberty with the copy underlining features associated with the United States in the period: "America, the country of technical wonders, sends us this year the latest technical perfection" 13. Even more simplified, another ad for Plymouth published in the same journal on 1 December 1930 shows a Plymouth car in front of a very graphic image of skyscrapers.

The advertising associates Packard and Buick cars with luxury, accentuating the prestige of owning a Packard or a Buick. Packard owners, as presented in the advertising, are Romanian or American elites. An ad from 10 October 1928 in Universal mentions among the owners prince Nicholas, king George of Greece, George I. Brătianu, G.V. Bibescu, Barbu Stirbey, William S. Culbertson. Moreover, Packard is "the limousine of the diplomats" 14. "Packard is the conception of Lux, the Quintessence as far as automobiles are concerned"15. Buick as well is "chosen everywhere by elites. Buick's clients are the best recommendation for this car. In any European country as well as in the United States and South America, the Buick is known as the car of outstanding people. Bankers, lawyers, political and social elites choose this car before any other" 16. Using statistics from the United States, a Buick ad underlines the place among luxury cars, being surpassed in sales only by the cheaper cars: Ford and Chevrolet. Packard also used statistics in order to prove their reputation or their position in comparison with the competition. To take an example, a Packard ad on 9 February 1930 accentuated the stability by looking at the company itself, underlined the stability and dedication of their employees to the company, but also the durability of Packard car and the stability of their clientele by accentuating that "96% of Packard owners replaced the old Packard with a new model" 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> *Universul*, 16 May 1929, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> *Universul*, 9 June 1939, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Universul, 12 December 1926, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Universul, 9 September 1927, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Universul, 4 May 1929, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> *Universul*, 9 February 1930, 6.



Universul, 30 June 1930, 5

The luxury market that cars such as Packard, Buick, Cadillac, and Lincoln represented, could be understood at a glance from the advertising. Associated with elites, aristocracy, Packard was an "object of art" in itself as well as a "wonder of modern technology"<sup>18</sup>. The car advertising tried to differentiate among themselves not only through their technological improvements, but also their design started to become a matter of interest. From the simple black car to streamlined bodies in a multitude of colors, not only companies, but also advertising catered to the taste of the consumers. Advertising associated these cars with "fashionable people", wealthy society. It is common among the social tableaux to allude to activities associated with high society such as travel for leisure in exotic location such as Taj Mahal, horse racing, or going to the opera.

According to Heon Stevenson, car advertising tried to establish the reputation and the allegiance to a brand or another by using five main themes: the car was always presented as intrinsically excellent, not only by its technological qualities, but also its appearance; second, by buying the car the future owner will raise the envy or "keeping up with the Joneses"; thirdly, it appeals to the rational purchase by underlining the excellent value for the money; fourthly; the future buyer was invited to consider the established clientele of the product; finally, the qualities of the product were carefully described in order to justify the rational purchase<sup>19</sup>.

The advertising of luxury cars was limited in Romanian newspapers. To take as the standard of analysis the daily newspaper *Universul* (it is the newspaper with the biggest number of readers and in general advertising agencies, J. Walter Thompson included, published their ads firstly here) between 1919 and 1939 (the most important period of publishing advertising for cars based on the number and repetition of publication was roughly 1926-1935) were published 102 different ads for Buick, 25 for Packard, 6 for Lincoln, 4 for Cadillac while Ford cars and trucks had 186 different ads, 180 for Chevrolet. Moreover, most cars advertised were four, six or eight cylinders.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> *Universul*, 17 May 1926, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile Advertising*, 1930 - 1980. An Illustrated History (Jefferson, North Carolina & London: McFarland & Co., 2008), 92.



Miroir de Bucarest, June 1938, 43

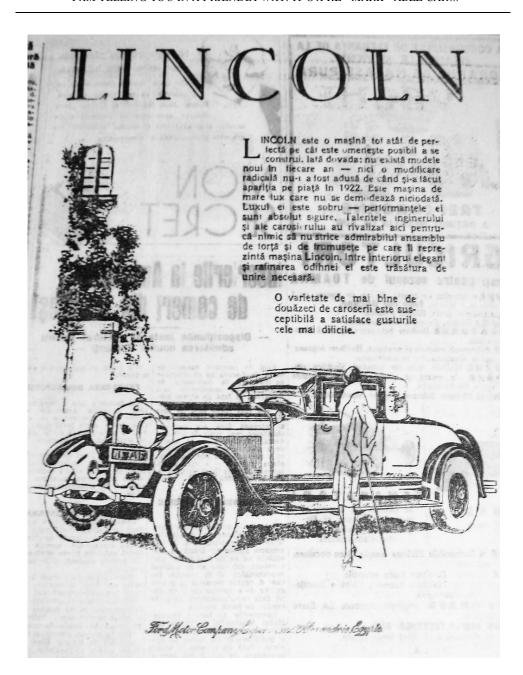
Most likely responding to General Motors policy to have an annual model change, Lincoln, part of Ford Motor Company, reinforced the importance of a

reliable, good mechanical design: "Lincoln is a perfect car as is humanly possible to build. Here is the proof: there are no new models yearly - nor any radical change was made since its appearance on the market in 1922. It is the car of great luxury that never goes out of fashion. Its luxury is conservative - its performances are absolutely certain" As mechanical design was stable, there were twenty different body types available in order to satisfy the most difficult clients' taste. "Good taste, though not defined, was implied to be immune from depredation by time; a Lincoln would not, the reader inferred, become outmoded quickly" The main ideas of its copy were directly translated from American circulated ads, even though in the United States the above studied copy circulated in an ad in 1927, while in Romania was published only in 1929.

Lincoln ads, designed to appeal to well-to-do class, accentuated their luxury, expressed in their appearance as well as the way the car was used. To take an example, an ad on 10 March 1929 in *Universul* with very clear, punctual copy implies that the car was built by wealthy people, not only driven by wealthy people. The graphic represents a Lincoln car with its chauffeur, while a wealthy looking woman just emerges from the car, buying a flower bouquet from a flower girl dressed in the Romanian national costume. Furthermore, the ad also relied on a powerful slogan "the car that [you] do not discuss".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> *Universul*, 19 August 1929, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile*, 96.



Universal, 19 August 1929, 5

The few ads in which women were represented reinforced gender stereotypes. Most car ads have men as the active participants, while women most of the time were just in supporting roles. Moreover, in most ads that represented both men and women in the car, men always drove. According to ads copy, two main concerns mostly preoccupied women as drivers or just as participants in choosing a car: the elegance of the lines, beauty of the car and the safety of driving said car.

On 8 July 1929, the ad from *Universul* shows a Packard car with a woman driver, while another one leans casually on the car. The copy details the easiness of driving the car, despite the power of the car. Another Packard car ad from 14 October 1927 emphasizes that "an elegant woman always chooses Packard"<sup>22</sup>.



Universul, 14 October 1927, 7

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> *Universul*, 14 October 1927, 7.

On 14 February 1930, another ad for Chrysler has as a slogan: "Automobiles are judged a lot harsher by women than men" Furthermore, the ad seems to target women as it presents less technical details and answers questions that, according to the ad, a woman would ask. The ad offers some practical details, while reassuring the female driver of its beauty, which according to the copy it is always the first question asked, the comfort, easiness and safety of driving, but also its value women being preoccupied with thrift and lastly, indirectly, addressing to men, the power represented by the six cylinders "General Motors was not the only company whose awareness of the value of style in car choice had consolidated into considered policy by 1930" 1930".

On 8 April 1929 a Chevrolet ad states that "equally favored by men and women, Chevrolet became the ideal car of the family" <sup>26</sup>. Following, preestablished roles for women and men in choosing a car as well as pre-established roles in using the car, the ad states:

Men - especially the ones with technical inclinations - admire the safety and the economy of the Chevrolet engine, which shows enough power in order to climb rapid slopes with maximum of speed, reaching easily 75 km per hour on a good road. [....] But Chevrolet, enjoys the stronger admiration of women, who are delighted by the elegance and the luxury of bodies by Fisher, the first creator of bodies in the world. Indeed, the most enthusiast owners of Chevrolet are exactly these women, who choose their car with the same care they choose the house and the furniture<sup>27</sup>.

Another ad for a Hudson car, published on 6 July 1930 in *Universul*, states that "each member of the family is delighted by this car". Furthermore, each member of the family appreciates different qualities of the car:

Misses finds it luxurious, comfortable in harmonious colors, both the exterior and the interior are made by artists.

Mister is happy with the spaciousness, the solid execution, yet cheap. Such a minimum check for a wonderful car.

The son is delighted by the acceleration and the speed, the charm of youth. The performance of Hudson Great 8 is the performance of a sport car.

You could convince yourself of what we state by taking the car for a test drive with your family, without any obligation to buy<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> *Universal*, 14 February 1930, 9.

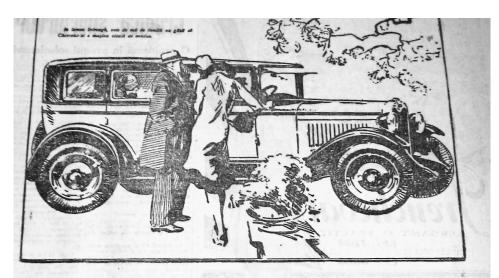
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile*, 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> *Universul*, 8 April 1929, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> *Universul*, 6 July 1930, 7.



# Deopotrivă de favorizat de bărbați și femei Chevrolet-ul a devenit mașina ideală a familiei!

Pretutindeni el e aclamat ca o "mașină mare" în toate privințele, afară de preț.

M AREA popularitate a Chevroletuiui, uimitorul său succes în lum:a întreagă, succes care a avut de rezultat vănsarea a 1.200.000 de ma șini în cursul anului 1928, se datoresc în bună parte favoarei egal de puternice, pe care a întâmpinat-o, atât din partea bărbaților, cât și din a femeilor.

Birbații, — în special cei cu aptitudini tehnice. — admiră sigurar ța și economia motorului Chevrolet, care lesf ișoară suficientă un resprea urca aante rapide cu maximum de viteză jungând cu uşurință la 75 klm. pe ră, pe un drum bun Posesorii de hevrolet uri din lumea întreagă delară, că motorul automobilului lor gal, da ă nu superior, motoar lor untor automubile. ma consistiate Dar Chevrolet-ul se bucură de o admirație și mai puternică din partea femeilor, care sunt încântate de eleganța și luxul caroser îlor Chevrolet, desenate și construite de Fisher, primul carosier din lume. Intr'adevâr, cei mai entusiaști posesori de Chevrolet uri, sunt tocm a acele femei, care își aleg automobilul cu aceiaș grijă și discernământ cu care'și aleg casa și mobilierul.

Examinați Chevrolet-ul ch'ar azi, cereți o cur-ă de încercare, — țe care orice concesionar al Chevro-let-urilor va fi încântat să v'o înles-nească, — și veți înțelege de ce (hevrolet-ul e cel mai popular automobil din lume. Apoi agentul nostru vă va expune planul de plăți lunare și vă veți da seama ce ușor e pentru Dv. să deven ți imediat proprietarul unui automobil

# CHEVRO'LET.

CHEVROLET - PONTIAC - OLDSMOBILE - OAKLAND - VAUXHALL - BUICK - LA SALLE
CADILLAC - CAMIOANE CHEVROLET - CAMIOANE O M.C. - CAROSERII FISHER
D.O.D. II. S. F. A. L. R. L. U. I. G. E. N. E. R. A. L. M. O. T. O. R. S.

Universul, 8 April 1929, 5



Universul, 6 July 1930, 7

As the previous Hudson ad, other car ads in the period start to pay special attention to the power of the car. The majority of the ads made particular references to the power of the car, preoccupied to set clearly the number of cylinders, the connection between the horse power and speed. They also underline how smoothly the car can reach speeds between 75 km and 96 km per hour, pending on the car or model, year of fabrication. Most ads in Romanian newspapers had clear information about the local representatives of American companies, local and regional dealers in Romanian territory as well as the prices of their models, the installments plans and test drive options they offered.

The grace of the car was implied by the grace of women, streamlined silhouette of the car doubled by the streamlined silhouettes of women. Moreover, "Fast...elegant. This new Oakland car has the charm of the modern girl. [...] Elegant, stylish as youth itself"<sup>29</sup>. On 19 September 1929, another Oakland ad represents a group of young people, a young lady driving while two young men, close to the car: one stays on the car reading the newspaper, the other smoking a cigarette with a pet dog around him, a little bit farther away another elegant lady glances at them, it states that "young stylish people prefer Oakland"<sup>30</sup>. The ad further details: "They prefer Oakland because exactly as themselves, this car poses the vivacity and vigor of youth. They prefer it because its diverse bodies, built by Fisher, bear the seal of "chic", which the young people insist to place on everything that surrounds them, on the furniture of their house, on their clothing as well as on all the objects they use"<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> *Universul*, 10 February 1929, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Universul, 19 September 1929, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid.



## Universul, 10 February 1929, 3

The Packard slogan "Ask the man who owns one", which appeared intermittently after November 1901<sup>32</sup> was translated literally in Romanian either as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Arthur W. Einstein, Jr, "Ask the Man Who Owns One" An Illustrated History of Packard Advertising (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 2010), 26.

"Ask someone who owns a Packard car" or in the ads, which emphasized driving as a pleasure and leisurely activity as "Ask the man who owns a Packard". Couple of ads did not translate the slogan, it appeared directly in English. The pleasures of driving a Packard car are greater, Packard a big luxury car determines the owner to take the lead from the chauffer "because driving a Packard gives so much satisfaction and content, thus the owner cannot resist to such a pleasure" Driving is also a pleasure because of the easiness of handling the car, thus an ad for Chrysler, on 14 May 1930 accentuated that "driving is childishly simple and easy" 34.



### Universul, 6 April 1929, 7

Ultimately, the cars were associated with and represented modernity and progress. The modernity and progress were obvious through the technological innovations they brought, but also the innovations in transportations. In 1938, Chevrolet, "always in front of the progress," underlines the evolution of their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> *Universul*, 6 April 1929, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> *Universul*, 14 May 1930, 9.

model from an old, outdated model in 1931 to a new perfect model in 1938, yet, now or then Chevrolet was still the leader of "reduced price cars"<sup>35</sup>. A modern car for a modern family has also qualities associated with new ideas about modernity, meaning a "fast, spacious, safe" car<sup>36</sup>. In its attempt to underline the modernity through comfort, an ad for Plymouth from 1930 shows a diagram of the car, but one detailing the distance of windows, chairs, distance between chairs, the length and width of the chairs.



Universul, 9 April 1938, 5

### **Ford Advertising**

Ford Company's main means of advertising were permanent ads in the main daily newspapers and magazines, large posters, *The Ford Bulletin* and *Revista Ford*, "Ford Page" - a permanent page in the magazine *Motor*, posters of 33 - 38 cm priced at 30 lei per hundred, showrooms, exhibitions, but also radio

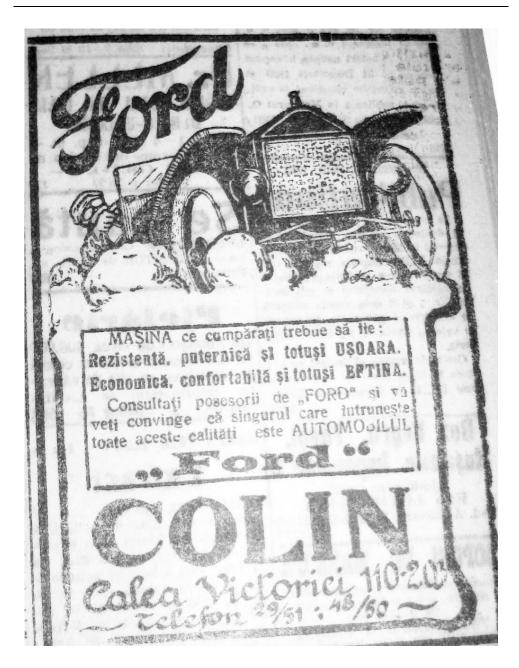
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> *Universul*, 9 April 1938, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Universul, 14 September 1929, 7.

shows. Launching a contest for the best photography taken by Ford owners was also an important way to further stimulate the consumption of Ford cars and other Ford products by involving the consumers. Among the prizes were a Ford radio or radiator. *Revista Ford* aims to be a magazine for the general public, while detailing the accomplishments and activities of Ford Motor Company. In its pages it shows the factory as well as images from the factory, the workers, the assembly of the cars, the showrooms, the dealers of Ford cars in the country, the workers' choir of the company.

In the early 1920s, Ford advertising was a simple announcement, very few graphic images. Ford's representatives in Romania, Noel, Colin, and Meribar just announced the cars, trucks, the arrival of spare parts, and Fordson tractors and their prices. Few details about the small consumption of gas (10 liter for 100 km) or, in the case of the Fordson tractor, details about the advantages it could have brought in facilitating rural labour such as the speed, the increase of production, and the cultivated surface. Fordson ads usually had a rural setting. An ad from 27 February 1921 in *Universul* sets the qualities of Ford cars accentuated by advertising: resistant, powerful, yet light, economical, comfortable, yet cheap<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> *Universul*, 27 February 1921, 3.



Universul, 27 February 1921, 3

Starting with 1926, more elaborate ads for Ford cars appeared in Romanian newspapers and they made direct references to Ford Motor Company in Alexandria

or Istanbul until 1931, when a local branch is opened in Romania. The ads presented the showrooms, advertising the new Ford cars that arrived every year. For example, in 1928 an exhibition organized at Alcazar extended its schedule because of the success the cars had, which can point to consuming cars not only as goods, but consuming them as images and representations. Many ads covered an entire page of *Universul*, elaborating the success of Henry Ford as well as Ford cars. These ads were dominated by text, explaining the advantages of owning a Ford car, detailing its mechanical accomplishments. Seldom, ads warn against using fake spare parts for Ford products. Advertising stressed power and safety, durability, speed and performance, elegance, but also thrift and the superiority of Ford cars. They accentuated necessity, savings, low prices and instalments, comfort and luxury. Besides mechanical discourse, most ads focused on their market (elites, industrialists and businessmen, farmers). Most of the ads included richly dressed bystanders (single men, families, rarely single women or women with their children).

Women were rarely represented in Ford ads, mostly as passengers. For instance, only one ad reads "the lady prefers the Ford car because of its grace and safety"<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, this ad offers a detailed description of the car, accentuating its elegance. The ad appeals to women consumers by underlining "the discreet and aristocratic nuances of the car, luxurious interior comfort [...] in order to satisfy the most refined taste"<sup>39</sup>. Instead, *Revista Ford* dedicated an article to women drivers presenting them as elegant, followers of women horse riders, yet part of the city tableau, simple and natural.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> *Universul*, 22 March 1931, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Ibid.



Universul, 22 March 1931, 3

Ford cars were also part of racing competitions in interwar Romania. Numerous ads record the victories of these cars. Both in Romania and Eastern Europe, Romanian drivers won some important prizes while driving Ford cars. An ad using the symbol of the Parthenon, show Ford cars racing toward it announcing the first five places were won racing with Ford V8.



Timpul, 21 June 1937, 8

Along with the characteristics of the cars, ads also announced the programs they presented on radio. For example, the ad in *Universul* from 7 July 1932

announce their radio program on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday or another ad from *Timpul*, 24 December 1937 announces the choir of Ford Motor Company's musical program on the radio.



Universul, 7 July 1932, 7

"By buying a Ford, you buy comfort, elegance, solidity"<sup>40</sup>, it brings not only pleasure, but also comfort, the ad accentuates the comfort a car can bring in one's life. Ford is ahead of the time, "by presenting today the car of tomorrow"<sup>41</sup>.



Universul, 4 July 1932, 3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> *Universul*, 4 July 1932, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Another ad shows a man with glasses browsing a Ford catalogue, the other half of the ad presents a Ford car driven outside of the city with the copy ,,the man who thinks always chooses Ford''42, accentuating the undeniable value of the car, while having a moderate price. This ad depicts choosing a car as a rational process, emphasizing the role of consumer in taking an educated decision.

The ads also started to appeal and mention the pleasure of driving. "Styling and engineer features incorporated into the automobile had to represent fun, escape, and adventure. This orientation of consumer's perspective - in which he willingly colluded - had little to do with the car as transportation, and everything to do with the fantasies and aspirations evoked by its particular characteristics"<sup>43</sup>. The ad underlines again the comfort, the easiness, and pleasure of driving: "You will be rested at the end of the trip because of the mechanical functionality, because is a big car and the driving is smooth, comfortable despite the road conditions"44. However, the pleasure of driving does not come only from driving because of the above mentioned qualities of the car, but also the pleasure of automobility, driving itself is a pleasurable activity. The following ad reads: "drive in order to experience the pleasure this exceptional car brings to you"45. The pleasure of automobilism comes from the mechanical qualities of the car such as the speed Ford can reach, but especially from the psychological sensations and emotions it creates. Thus, "you feel an imperative need to drive - driving only for the pleasure of driving – to experience again that sensation of power, of safety, and absolute control that this exceptional car gives you"46. The car brings the owner, the driver mobility, but also freedom. "A combination of snobbery with escapism promised new social, as well as geographical, horizons"47. To take an example, Grigore Gafencu, Romanian politician and foreign affairs minister in interwar Romania, discusses in his memoirs the pleasure of driving, albeit a Chrysler car: "Moments of complete happiness when this wonderful car slides on the paved roads of Hungarian neighbours. Peace of soul, peace of mind. The sensation of flight, the flight with its strong vibrations and the deafening noise of the motor cannot give it yet"48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> *Universul*, 4 April 1930, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile*, 81.

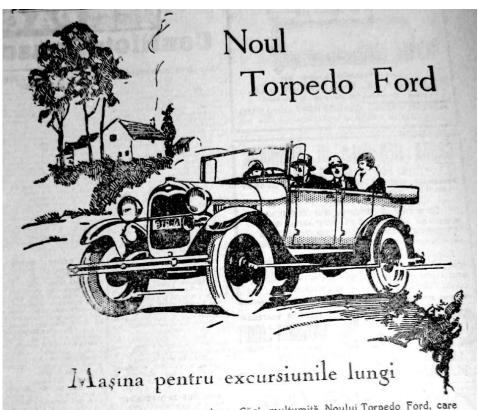
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> *Universul*, 31 March 1929, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Universul, 5 June 1929, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile*, 81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Grigore Gafencu, Însemnări politice (1929-1939) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991), 134.

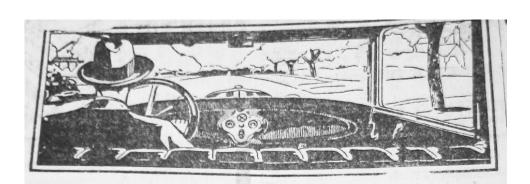


vieței de oraș. Această perspectivă ispititoare cari nu dispun decât de puțin timp și de șină sigură și confortabilă automobilismul mijloace limitate, pot realiza această dorință. e o adevărată plăcere.

A sosit vara, sezonul în care apreciem Căci, mulțumită Noului Torpedo Ford, care aerul curat al câmpiilor. Să părăsim — la un preț foarte moderat vă oferă: videci orașul zgomotos, spre a ne recrea la teză, o siguranță absolută și un confort frumusețea unui peisagiu înverzit, la viața complect — oricine va putea realiza acest simplă și liniștitoare a câmpiei răcoroase, vis, dorit atât de intens. Viteza lui vă perspre a uita — la sânul naturii — vârtejul mite de a face excursiuni lungi, siguranța sa înfrânge ultima ezitare, deoarece vă veți e astăzi la îndemâna fiecăruia; chiar aceia convinge la prima cursă că, cu această ma-



Universul, 27 July 1929, 5



# Așezați-vă la volan pentru a cunoaște plăcerea ce procură această mașină excepțională.

Bucuria pe care o simte cineva de a conduce FORDUL nou, nu este datorită numai vitezei — siguranței — confortului — regularităței mersului — mândriei din cauza frumuseței liniilor și a colorilor acestei mașini — dar este deasemenea datorită plăcerei pe care ea o oferă automobilismului.

Chiar la pornire, la prima Dv. plimbare, simțiți în mod hotărât că aveți aici o mașină alertă și capabilă. O mașină care va fi la înălțimea tuturor eventualităților. O mașină care nu cere decât a fi rulată. Dotată de o vigoare nouă. Condusă tot atât de ușor în mijlocul unei circulații dificile ca și pe drumul mare. Simțiți o nevoie imperioasă de a fi la volan — de a conduce numai pentru plăcerea de a conduce — de a cunoaște din nou această senzație de putere, de siguranță și de stăpânire absolută pe care v'o dă această mașină excepțională.

Căci puteți obține astăzi pe un preț redus, tot ce sunteți îndrep-

tățit a cere automobilului modern. ca-roseria de oțel... liniile joase și armonioase... alegerea culorilor... viteza de 95—105 km. pe oră... motorul cu 4 cilindri dând 40 cai putere la 2200 rotațiuni pe minut.. accelerația rapidă... consumația de 8-10 litri pe 100 km. depinzând de viteză... rezervorul de benzină de siguranță, sub torpedou, permițând scurgerea directă prin cădere... frânele pe patru roți de tipul mecanic și cu saboți în interiorul tamburilor, având o acțiune eficace la cea mai mică presiune a piciorului... frâna de mână independentă de frânele pe patru roți... amortizoarele hidraulice Houdaille... noile arcuri transversale, de o construcție exclusivă FORD și asigurând o suspensie remarcabilă... rezistența și regularitatea care sunt caracteristica produselor FORD și cheltueli de întreținere minime. Toate modelele FORD sunt înzestrate cu un

parbriz de geam triplex, incasabil, fără supliment de preț.

Ford Sister Company Exports Inc. Alexandrie Egypte.

Universul, 5 June 1929, 2

Ultimately, Ford ads, more than other cars' advertising, accentuated the low prices. They explain the low prices through their economical acumen, but also because of the durability and the resistance of their products culminating with an ad stating "it's worth more than it costs"<sup>49</sup>. Moreover, a Ford car is likely to appeal both to amateur drivers and professional drivers. Ford represents itself in advertising as "the universal car" rather than a high class car.



Universul, 26 May 1931, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Universul, 8 October 1931, 7.



Ford ads, J. Walter Thompson, Bucharest Office Proofs

Source: From the Collections Ford Motor Co. Archives - Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn (MI), Acc. 1790, Box 24.

Although very graphic, the covers of *Revista Ford* show Ford cars in different settings mostly in Bucharest, yet, most covers show the car in static positions, without a driver. The advertising of Ford cars in this magazine is more graphic, most of the articles and ads showing photographs, mostly black and white of Ford cars. They set the car within the city as a symbol of its modernity, the car is "the mirror of the modern city"<sup>50</sup>. Images of American modernity such as The Telephone Palace, but also other modernist buildings such as Scala Palace are associated with Ford car.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Revista Ford, November 1938, 5.



Revista Ford, January 1938, 8



Revista Ford, November 1938, 5

Taking into account the categories it addressed, the advertising suggests several types of car cultures in Romania: luxury cars, middle class - sedan cars, sports cars, and trucks. As previously mentioned Ford cars were successful, yet out of 16 models sold on Romanian market, Romanians preferred three: coupe deluxe,

cabriolet deluxe, and Fordor deluxe<sup>51</sup>. Ads suggested that pending on these categories the automobile was important for working, transportation, racing but also for leisure.

Most ads for the tractor Fordson appeal to the rural world, with one exception - an ad "Fordson and industry", which details the advantages Fordson brings to industrial life as the fact ,,it produces double with half the spending and in half the time"52. The advertising of Fordson truck paired with articles about the motorization of agriculture gives a complete picture of interwar Romania truck culture. Buying a truck for personal use, but also the Romanian state was interested in promoting its use. The low prices for agricultural products, explained through the increased efficiency and the decrease of price production through the systematization of work affected directly Romania, a rural country. The rhythm of production in the United States, helped by the rationalization of work was a model to follow. Thus, the agricultural production "must not rely on luck, but on modern scientific methods"53. The tractor, a new Ceres deity, brings the economy of the cost of production as well as the economy of time<sup>54</sup>. The majority of Fordson ads appeared under the slogan "it's worth more than it costs", explaining how easy it was to handle it, accentuating the better yield. "It plants seven - nine acres, while the oxen do not even plant two acres"55 or with Fordson you will reap one hectare per hour"56, while the price was 730 \$ or 160,000 lei in 1930 to 100,000 lei in 1933.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> From the Collections Ford Motor Co. Archives - Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn (MI), Acc. 1790, Box 24.

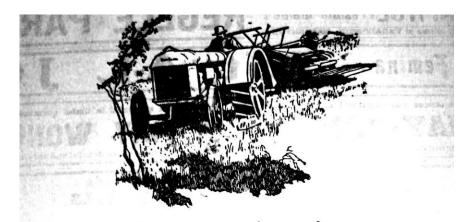
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> *Universul*, 17 December 1927, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> "Motorizarea agriculturii," Revista Ford, January 1938, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ibid., 4 - 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Universul, 10 May 1930, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> *Universul*, 27 August 1931, 3.



# In momentul recoltei timpul câștigat echivalează cu bani.

Vă convine a pierde o zi întreagă cu seceratul și adunarea recoltei de pe un câmp de 10 pogoane?

Vă convine a pierde cu boii de două ori atât timp cât v'ar trebui pentru recoltarea cu ajutorul unui tractor Fordson?

Ce ați zice de un om, care s'ar apuca să recolteze cu ajutorul unei secere, așa cum o făceau strămoșii noștri?

Știți prea bine că cu cât veți recolta mai repede, cu atât mai mare va fi câștigul realizat.

Un Tractor Fordson va remorca o secerătoare de 2,40 m. și vă va recolta bucatele de pe două câmpuri de 10 pogoane fiecare, adică 20 por goane într'o singură zi și numai cu jumătatea cheltuelei. Nu este decât ceeace a fost realizat de orice agricultor, care a cumpărat un Tractor Fordson. Nu numai că îi s'a dovedit, dar fiecare agricultor s'a convins că acest Tractor îl scutește de o cheltuială, la economisirea căreia el nu s'ar fi gândit niciodată. Intrebați pe Agentul Dv. Ford în această privință, dar duceți vă chiar azi, deoarece orice pierdere de timp este și o pierdere bănească.



Randamentul dublat - Cheltuielile pe jumătate

Tractorul merge tot atât de bine cu gaz obișnuit ca cu benzină. Agentul Ford cel mai apropiat vă va explica felul în care Tractorul Fordson merge cu motorină.

Universul, 24 September 1930, 9

Ford truck advertising, "the most efficient mean of modern transportation"<sup>57</sup>, always addresses to industrialists. To take another example of advertising Fordson truck, in October 1934, Ford Motor Company organized a caravan of ten trucks and visited industrialists and merchants to demonstrate the utility of their trucks for diverse transportation<sup>58</sup>. Although, the main features the advertising presented was the low price of the Ford truck, other qualities mentioned were its sturdiness, resistance, safety, and economy. Most ads consisted of a graphic image with the truck, without a driver, few showed a couple of workers or images of factories in the background.



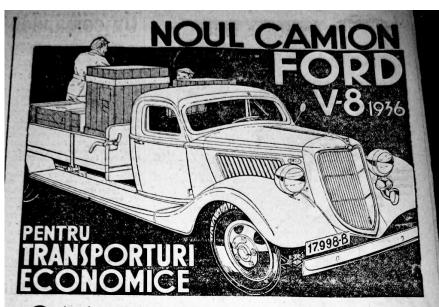
Universul, 15 December 1926, 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> *Universul*, 21 November 1929, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> *Universul*, 29 October 1934, 5.



Universul, 14 May 1931, 5



amioanele și autobuzele FORD V-8 înlocuiesc peste tot, cu cel mai deplin succes, camioanele și autobuzele mari și scumpe, mai ales în conditiuni grele de serviciu. Acest fapt nu mai surprinde azi pe nimeni. Până mai ieri, camioanele și autobuzele necesitau un surplus de forță, care nu se putea avea decât plătind un surplus de pret. Dar azi situatiunea se prezintă cu totul altfel. Camionul FORD V-8 posedă un motor de 80 CP și se vinde cu jumătate sau chiar o treime din prețul camioanelor sau autobuzelor

Este un adevar

necontestat că

autobuzele și ca-

mioanele

FORD V-8

merg mai repede

și consumă mai puțin, atât ben-

zină cât și ulei,

se repară mai les-

ne, obosesc mai puțin echipajul, și se uzează mai încet, grație unei judicioase distribuții a încăroăturii. care acum câți va ani dispuneau de o asemenea forță. Acest motiv singur a fost suficient pentru a convinge pe mulți dintre actualii proprietari de camioane și auto buze FORD V-8.

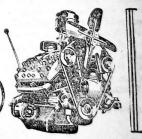
Mai sunt însă multe alte argumente care atrag zilnic noui cumpărători. În primul rând, ei și-au dat seama că economia realizată la cumpărare este numai un în-ceput. Adevărata economie pen-tru un proprietar de camion sau

autobuz FORDV-8 apare atunci când el compară contul de exploatare al mașinei actuale, în raport cu acelea mai mari sau similare din trecut.

### O INOVAȚIE SENZAȚIONLĂ A LUI FORD

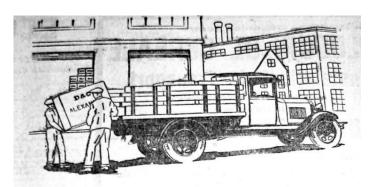
Jupă mii și mii de kilometri de ulaț, motorul necesită o reparație mai mare. Ford oferă, pentru un preț extrem de redus, mai redus decât al oricărei reparații, schimoarea motorului cu unul refacut în uzinele FORD și purtână marca de garanție. Astfel, o reparație costisticare, care imobiliza mașina zile intregi în garaț, se ace în câteva ore, prin montarea unui motor nou cu un tarif iși foarte redus.





Universul, 27 July 1936, 7

Fordson truck has also an important role in the process of consumption, being "the agent of the safe union between the producer and the consumer"<sup>59</sup>. Fuelling consumption also means the standardization of transports, using methods such Taylorism, rationalization in each aspect of the process.



## O trăsură de unire sigură

între producător și consumator

DACĂ în transacțiile dintre producător și consumator factorul "transport" trebuie să îndeplinească în întregime importantele sale funcțiuni, mijloacele de transport trebuie să fie în primul rând regulate și sigure. Atunci numai se va putea lucra într'un mod rațional și renumerator.

Camionul Ford de o tonă și jumătate a fost construit spre a atinge acest scop. Puternicul său motor de 40 cai putere, osia sa dinapoi de o construcție specială, arcurile sale dinapoi de tip cantilever, prețul său inițial și cheltuelile sale de întreținere mici, consumul său de benzină extrem de redus, împreună cu alte numeroase caracteristici de reală soliditate, fac dintr'insul cel mai economic mijloc de transport pentru toate industriile și cel mai sigur agent de legătură dintre producător și consumator.





Fordson

FORD MOTOR COMPANY EXPORTS INC.
FORD FREEPORT, ISTANBUL

Universul, 10 April 1930, 3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> *Universul*, 10 April 1930, 3.

Besides car advertising, American products such as tires and oil were advertised. Seldom, ads for American cars and tires were tied together (the ads presenting Ford Caravan had small insertions about Firestone tires and Standard Motor Oil), underlining the success in racing or long rides to prove the durability both of the car and the tire, the speed and the performances of the car. To take an example, an ad published in *Universal*, on 3 February 1936 presents a telegram from the winners of Monte Carlo Rally, Zamfirescu and Cristea, in which they mention the excellent Firestone tires. The ad urges the readers "Thus, you prefer as well as well-known motorists do - the superior quality of Firestone tires"60. Goodyear ads accentuated the safety. The durability, their popularity in the world, but also, they were careful to disseminate against imitations. In general, there were many ads warning against using imitations. These products also advertised by using the testimonial. While Goodyear used an advertising with an international personality, Standard Motor Oil used Mr. Friedman, the owner of Taxico, a Romanian company of bus transportation, in order to convince the consumers to buy their products or major Berlescu, prince Constantin Cantacuzino to appeal to racing motorists and experienced sportsmen.



Revista Ford, January 1938, 20

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> *Universul*, 3 February 1936, 13.



Revista Ford, January 1938, 20

Goodrich Rubber Company took a step further and opened a local branch, which was advertised in 1931. In 1938, Romanian company Banloc Goodrich obtained the licence from Goodrich, Rubber Company and the ads recorded the

### LAVINIA POPICĂ

change advertising now the Romanian tire, under Goodrich licence. The contract between Banloc and Goodrich stipulated that Goodrich will supply competent personal, information and supervising for producing the products, while Banloc obliged to pay 5% licence from sales, 50 cents for each car or motorcycle envelope sold, 5 cents for each inner tube, one dollar for each auto bus, tractor or plane tire, 10 cents for each inner tube. The pro rata temporis was 15,000 \$ in the first incomplete year and 20,000\$ in the following years. 61 They started the production in May 1938, unfortunately, in 1940/1941, because of the war, American staff was repatriated, but the production continued using the American methods of production. Between 1940 and 1944, Banloc credited Goodrich with 160, 110.50\\$62. Mobiloil is in a similar position, advertised as an American product for the most part of interwar period, until in 1939, when Vacuum Oil Company S.A.R. started to produce and to advertise it as a Romanian product. Advertising of oil products accentuated the importance of the oil for extending the life of the car, the importance should be given not only to the exterior of the car, but also to the interior. A powerful ad of Mobioil states "the life of your car is in your hands"<sup>63</sup>, accentuating that experienced drivers only use Mobioil and savings can only be made by utilizing a quality oil.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> A.M.B., *Banloc S.A.R.*, Ds. 1/1938, n.p.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Revista Ford, August 1938, n.p.



Revista Ford, July - August 1939, 1



Revista Ford, August 1938, n.p.

#### **Conclusions**

Cars advertising, in general, and American cars advertising, in particular, were the most spectacular and numerous ads in interwar Romanian newspapers. Taking into account one can argue that "in some ways the car *is* America"<sup>64</sup>, Romanians consumed American cars not only in their practical role as means of transportations or their promises of pleasures and dreams, but also as representations of American technical progress. Buying American cars meant also buying into American way of life.

The vast majority of American ads that circulated in Romania were translation and adaptation of American ads circulated in the United States couple years earlier or were created by J. Walter Thompson's international branches for General Motors in their offices in Alexandria, Antwerp, and, later, including in Bucharest office. In Romania, J. Walter Thompson was also responsible for the advertising of Ford Motor Company. The example of J. Walter Thompson and General Motors is illustrative for the collaboration between American companies abroad. Working on a global market, imposing global values, they created a model followed and adopted to a different scale in interwar Romania as well.

Car advertising appealed to a large number of consumers, who, even if they did not become direct buyers, they could admire it on Bucharest walls or in the show rooms of different companies. The signs of former American ads are still part of the urban setting in Bucharest, where you can see a smaller scale Ford T at the entrance of a former Leonida repair garage.

The cars were part of a new definition of modernity, which implied technical progress, speed, comfort, safety. They were also used as a status symbol. The copy of car advertising in that period set the main themes, which are still present in nowadays car advertising: speed, power, comfort, beauty, efficiency and favourable ratio price - qualities. The graphic of advertising also evolved from simple announcements or static images of car to more realistic images, elongated, situated in an inclined plan in order to suggest the idea of movement. Furthermore, cars embodied ideas about masculinity, reinforcing gender stereotypes. Cars advertising portrayed cars both as useful for business, commercial and rural activities, but also as means to fulfil its dreams of spending leisure time in a different location, even exotic ones or fuel sportsmen racing competitions.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Deborah Clarke, *Driving Women*, 44.