CHAPTER 18

THE MICHELIN TIRE COMPANY’S ADVERTISING MANAGEMENT TEAM

The different foreign affiliates of Michelin operated their own Advertising Departments which were supervised from the central offices in Paris, although they had certain autonomy to act in environments that were quite distinct from the reality of the French market. These departments received instructions and supporting graphic material—standardized clichés and cartoons for use in advertisements, most of which were O’Galop’s work—to complement their own production that they commissioned to local agencies and illustrators. Michelin’s advertising in the American press, between 1903 and 1907, was marked by the particularity of each one of their different import agencies prior to the launch of the American subsidiary. After 1907, when the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown was founded, the firm’s management of their advertising was delegated to the successive heads of the Advertising Department, with the help of different advertising agencies.

1. Michelin Advertising Departments in Europe

Advertising and promotion were organized from Michelin’s Parisian headquarters located at 105 Boulevard Pereire under André Michelin’s management. The experience of the French parent company can serve as a reference for understanding the policies developed in the corresponding departments of foreign subsidiaries, in this case those established in Milan and London.

1.1. The French Advertising Department

The management of Michelin advertisements for France and for the Franco-Belgian market was carried out in their internal service where commissions made to freelance illustrators and external designers were received and from which the originals were sent to different press channels for their publication. This department was personally directed by André Michelin (1853-1931) during the period before the First World War. Towards 1910, to reduce his workload, the position of Manager of the Advertising Service was created, initiating the selection process for a professional who, according to André Michelin’s handwritten notes, had to meet the following requirements:

SUGGESTED CITATION:
Medrano-Bigas, Paul.
“He must not be proud of his own ideas, and must know how to judge the ideas of others. He must see clients frequently. Find out what will make an impression. He should constantly review and improve his copy. And always stick with the shortest, most striking formulas. He must never imitate or combat the campaigns of the competitor—unless he is sure to win. And he must always remember that images are more important than words.”

As explained in chapter 2 “The Birth and baptism of Bibendum,” dedicated to the genesis of the mascot and the intervention of his creator Marius Rossillon “O’Galop,” from the outset André Michelin had counted on the contribution of illustrators and caricaturists from popular French satirical magazines as mainstays of their advertising strategy. The humor, satire, provocation and irreverence of the ideas proposed by creators such as O’Galop, Cousyn, Hautot, Poulbot, Chenet, René Pean, Raymond Tournon, Walter Thor and many others endowed advertising content with surprising appeal that was widely accepted by the general public.

Between 1898 and 1914, Michelin’s advertising communication—very aggressive, especially in their campaigns against rivals Continental and Dunlop—had been based on contributions from O’Galop. In the years after the Great War, this role was assumed mainly by Édouard Louis Cousyn and George Hautot, who worked for the Advertising Department managed since the beginning of the 1920s by Étienne Debuissone, engineer and member of the CTP-Corporation des Techniciens de la Publicité. Finally, the graphic management of the newly founded Michelin Studio first resorted to Hautot’s contributions to initiate around 1924—no longer under Debuissone and with an elderly André Michelin who was then 71 years old—a long period of anonymous production detached from the signatures of well-known and recognizable artists and illustrators. This trend intensified especially in the U.S. market towards the years 1928-1929.

1.2. The Italian Advertising Department

The Advertising Department of the Agenzia Italiana Pneumatici Michelin was part of the Commercial Management located in Milan—the production center was in Turin—, originally at number 67 Foro Bonaparte. In 1911 it moved to number 14 Via Foro and, from 1914, it was located at number 66 Corso Sempione. The Advertising Department was initially under the management of Camilo Bellosi—manager from 1908 until 1914—and, subsequently, Attilio Vaccarossi, director and manager from that year onwards.

In addition to advertising management, an important part of the Department’s effort was devoted to publishing the corporate magazine Il Pneumatico Michelin—renamed Bibendum in 1921—as a vehicle for disseminating the company’s corporate culture. The twofold aim was to strengthen the ties between the company and their own employees as well as to seek outside projection through free distribution to customers and users of Michelin products. The role of O’Galop as a pillar of Michelin’s advertising graphics in France was assumed in Italy, between 1905 and 1925, by Carlo Biscaretti di Ruffia. His prolific production included the corporate magazine—where he worked mainly as an illustrator, but also as a columnist—as well as the advertisements inserted in periodical press. Biscaretti was later replaced by other artists such as Ramponi or Guillermaz. All of them were—as was the case with O’Galop, the French point of reference—, creative illustrators trained and linked to popular and humorous magazines in the country.
1.3. The British Advertising Department.
In May 1905 the Michelin Tyre Company Limited, the commercial subsidiary of Michelin for the British market, was legally established. In the initial phase, staff consisted of seventeen people, two of whom were assigned to the Advertising Department. In early 1911 they moved from their headquarters at 49-50 Sussex Place South Kensington to the new building recently inaugurated, the Michelin House or Michelin Building, at 81 Fulham Road, in London’s Chelsea.

Although a large information gap exists, it seems that the Advertising Department worked intensively with Black’s Advertising Agency, a local advertising agency run by James Black and with offices at Oxford Street. The history of this advertising agency goes back to at least 1900, when it appears under the name of Black & Co. Advertising Agents, located at number 9 Catherine Court, Tower Hill, EC. Around 1910 it became Black’s Advertising Agency with premises in the Oxford House at 9-15 Oxford Street, and later moved to numbers 51 and 47 of New Oxford Street. The agency, under the name of Black’s Advertising Agency, Ltd., was still active in 1934.

This agency was part of the British delegation that attended the IX Annual Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of America, held in Baltimore, Maryland the week of June 8-13, 1913, a meeting with international character and scope. The Black Advertising Agency participated in the event and in the Exhibition of Advertising Campaigns—more than 2,000 m² of wall space was allocated for this activity—with a selection of press advertisements created for the Michelin Tire Co. between 1910 and 1912. Black’s Advertising Agency managed the Michelin account at different levels, taking charge of both the campaigns and advertisements in the press such as, for example, the application of identification and signage elements—in the form of large enameled metal signs—typical of tire sales establishments forming part of the Michelin commercial network.

The British advertisements of that time manifest a graphic consistency based to a large extent on the use of the same lead illustrator—for whom there is no data—who portrays a Bibendum that is characteristic and differential from the canons proposed by O’Galop. The first appearance of this reinterpreted character is found in an advertisement published in The Times dated November 1907, although it is after 1909 that his presence is habitual. Towards the middle of the 1920s, the Parisian Michelin Studio exercised tight control over the advertising production of the Michelin Tyre Co. Ltd., supplying French clichés to the British Advertising Department and directing the graphic line towards the clean and neutral style marked by Georges Hautot.

2. The advertising of American import agencies
The launch of Michelin in the U.S. market, with a controlled subsidiary—legally constituted in March 1907—and their own factory, was preceded by the strategic consecutive deployment of a series of import agencies: the U.S. Agency of The Michelin Tire Co. run by Norris Mason, operational since mid-1903 and legally constituted in January 1904; the Michelin Tire American Agency, Inc., incorporated in January 1905, and the Michelin Products Selling Co., incorporated in January 1906, both managed by Eben D. Winans; and, finally, E. Lamberjack & Co., Inc. run by J. E. Lamberjack and Paul La Croix, incorporated in January 1907.

Each of these agencies maintained constant and direct contact with the French Michelin et Cie management as importers and suppliers of their tires. Their respective managers traveled to France to receive instructions on the commercial policy to be developed in American lands. The publicity of these Amer-
ican agencies concentrated on press advertisements inserted in motor sector magazines, generally in the form of anodyne advertising modules. These advertisements were structured in the form of functional typographical compositions that showed different types of messages: testimonials, commenting on the victories of cars fitted with Michelin tires in races and competitions, or reporting on the availability of their products and the reasonable relationship between their quality and price.

Between 1905 and 1906, Michelin advertising presented a series of more graphically elaborated advertisements—with borders, adapted typefaces and illustrations—although for the most part they remained impersonal. These types of advertisements were made by art departments of the publications in which advertising spaces were contracted, as they offered creatives, thus ensuring complete service for the advertiser. Although this practice—also common nowadays in relationships between certain publications and small advertisers—resolved the problem of communication in a one-off manner, it lacked the planning, strategy, control and solvency that is required for an advertising agency. These internal departments, made up of writers, anonymous graphic designers and designers, based their effectiveness on the regularity and systematization of the graphic resources used. They bestowed a neutral “family resemblance” to all advertisements they produced, regardless of the singularities of each brand, each advertised product and the personality of the advertiser (figs. 1-10).

3. The Michelin Tire Company Advertising Department

Michelin’s expansion and the creation of the Michelin Tire Company entailed direct control of advertising media by the new management organization. Between 1907 and 1922, four individuals were responsible for the Advertising Department, with offices in the Milltown headquarters: Burton R. Parker, Rupert B. Bramwell, Helmut M. Kiesewetter and Elmer E. Caldwell. No data are available regarding the timeframe between 1922 and 1930.


In November 1907, with the organization of the commercial structure for Michelin’s American subsidiary in full force, Burton R. Parker (1869–c. 1926) joined the company in the position of advertising director. Parker, a native of Hartford, Connecticut, was a professional with extensive experience in the automotive and tire industry. From 1896 until the fall of 1904 he had served in the same role for the industrial rubber company Hartford Rubber Works, where his brother was the company’s President. During his final year there, he was in charge of publicity for one of the group’s companies, the G & J (Gormully & Jeffrey) Tire Co.

In October 1904 he held the post of advertising director at the Olds Motor Works Co. in Detroit, Michigan. In the spring of 1905 he began working as advertising director for the Fisk Tire & Rubber Co. from Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts—direct rival of Michelin in the U.S. market. Here he stood out for his management and the start-up, in July of that same year, of the corporate magazine *The Pneus*, distributed monthly and free of charge and which he directed until his departure. Parker left the company after the summer of 1907 and, towards October-November of that year, he initiated his association with Michelin, in a relationship that lasted until the summer of 1910.12

Parker was responsible for the first stage of positioning the company and their products, and the Michelin Tire Co. made an important investment for publicity in the press. In the majority of advertisements they endorsed themselves based on the achievements obtained in automobile competitions. The expenditures for promotional and sponsorship activities—supplying tires to differ-
ent teams participating in races and paying incentives to racing pilots—added to the cost of advertising itself. This amount must have been considerable, rising above the quantities spent by most American brands.

The typographical advertising modules employed by collaborating import agencies evolved into the massive use of full page advertisements, especially in motor sector magazines. In 1909 the figure of Bibendum timidly began to appear in Michelin advertisements. He was applied as a small graphic detail and in the form of repetitive clichés of French origin, with a limited number of four or five variants.

Contracting advertising space in the press to insert Michelin advertisements followed two procedures. On the one hand, the company directly contacted those responsible for different publications, negotiating the cost and duration of the campaign. On the other hand, the company had to use the mediation of an advertising agent to access another type of periodical press. Among the intermediaries referenced in several documents, two names were listed: the agent H. H. Levey and the firm Frank Presbrey Co., both located in New York.13

The advertising agency Frank Presbrey Co., founded in 1896 by agent Frank Presbrey (1854-1936),14 was responsible for Michelin advertising in newspapers and press between 1910 and 1915.15 It’s possible that the original design of these advertisements—subjected to a rigid structure and a repetitive use of resources and similar elements—were carried out in the Milltown offices and from there, supplied to different publications. However, there is also the possibility that the advertising agency, in addition to managing media, also provided the corresponding creatives and design. The name of the Frank Presbrey Co. also appears in the credits of Michelin brochures published at this early stage.

3.2. Rupert B. Bramwell.
Rupert Bradshaw Bramwell (1876-1922), born in Terre Haute, Indiana, began his professional relationship with the automobile industry in 1900 by joining De Dion-Bouton Motorette Co., a U.S. subsidiary that manufactured automobile models in America for the French firm. In 1902 he left the company and held the position of advertising director at the Pope Motor Car Company in Toledo, Ohio. After leaving Pope, he continued to be linked to his advertising management activity working for different major publications such as Cosmopolitan, Scientific American and Leslie’s. In addition, he worked for four years with the Class Journal Co. publishing group, owner of automotive magazines such as The Automobile, Automotive Industries, Motor Age and the annual reference guide for motorists, The Automobile Blue Book.

In 1909, he became part of the Michelin Advertising Department, coinciding a few months with Burton Parker, and subsequently, relieving him of his responsibilities and becoming one of the important men in the company’s organizational chart for years. Throughout his long career in Michelin’s service—in 1922, at the age of 46, he had to retire due to pneumonia which eventually caused his death—he not only directed the Advertising Department, but he also dedicated part of his activity to maintaining direct and fluid contact with different distributors from the most important strategic locations, obtaining numerous sales contracts thanks to his policy and attitude.16

Michelin’s renouncing of automobiles races as a method of promotion, effective at the end of 1912, combined with a few difficult years in an unequal technological struggle against the formerly
emerging, and by then already entrenched, North American rivals. Bramwell had to deal with these difficulties and a significant reduction in the advertising budget, as evidenced by the limited presence of Michelin in written media, although other resources were used, such as the systematic mailing of letters and brochures.

The period between 1911 and 1914 was also marked by the appearance of peculiar illustrations and clichés supplied by the French parent company. This singularity was determined by the origin of the source, since illustrations did not rely uniquely on the habitual vignettes by O’Galop. The designs and advertising illustrations of the British Michelin Tyre Company would be disseminated for a second round in American lands, perhaps due to the premise that the Anglo-Saxon connection offered greater complicity and communicative effectiveness. The pamphlets, brochures and instruction books of that time published by the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown were inspired by British references or reproduced directly, with slight modifications.

3.3. Helmut M. Kiesewetter and the Wales Advertising agency.

Helmut M. Kiesewetter (1890-1963) joined the organization of the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown around 1910 and would remain there for the next four years. Although he worked as Bramwell’s assistant during his time at Michelin, his role would be relevant in the firm’s future advertising. In the spring of 1914, Kiesewetter left Michelin to take over, as General Manager and advertising director, the Broadway delegation of wire spoke tire manufacturer George W. Houk Manufacturing Co. in Buffalo, New York. After two years with Houk, he joined the M. P. Gould Advertising Agency (founded by Maurice Philip Gould around 1900) and, in 1917, he joined the Wales Advertising Company from New York. The Wales Advertising Co.—founded by James Albert Wales in 1912—was the agency chosen by Michelin in early 1916 to manage their advertising. The incorporation of HM Kiesewetter as head of the Michelin account ensured the agency’s fluid communication with the client and an in-depth knowledge of their policy and their needs.

Since 1914, the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown had found themselves in a delicate situation due to the start of the First World War. The French parent company had their own problems managing their activity as well as their role in the war scenario. Their American subsidiary was affected, with the departure of part of their staff to the European front, French men with experience and training occupying trusted technical positions. Furthermore, the parent company suffered from the reduction of productive activity due to prevailing raw material restrictions with resultant market containment. In 1916, Michelin et Cie. had normalized their situation and their productive and financial capacity was in good health thanks to contracts guaranteed by the French Government to equip military vehicles with their tires, as well as other types of production such as projectiles, bombs, ammunition, rubber parts or airplanes. This stability allowed them to resume the rhythm of American activity.

The efforts and hopes of the Michelin Tire Company had focused on the development, between 1913 and 1915, of a new tire with a non-skid rubber sole. It dealt with the “Universal Tread” model, officially presented November 1915 and whose launch and presence in the market relied on costly promotional investment. Precisely a news item dated November 13, 1915, reported on the disassociation of Michelin with the agency Frank Presbrey Company, which had managed their advertising account until that moment.
The beginning of 1916 was, therefore, the beginning of a renewed stage of advertising. This occurred in the strategic approach developed by Michelin’s Advertising Department led by Bramwell, with contributions from the Wales Advertising Co. having Keisewetter as a direct contact. The deployment of media produced was affected as well. Moreover, the recruitment of the Wales agency with Keisewetter as account manager implicated the debut in that year of Arthur Norman Edrop as designer and art director for Michelin’s press campaigns.

In 1920, the Wales Advertising Co. hired Frank A. Grady—from the agency H. K. McCann where he worked as a copywriter—to assist Keisewetter in the management of the Michelin account. Management of this account had incorporated the account generated by the tire company with the appearance of their steel disc wheels known as Michelin-Budd Disk Wheels.21

In addition to the relevance of Burton Parker, Rupert B. Bramwell and Helmut M. Kiesewetter, other names within Michelin’s Advertising Department in various periods and with different responsibilities can also be cited, such as Charles W. Trueman in 1916, previously advertising director for the local paper New Brunswick Times. There is also Elmer E. Calwell, between 1917 and 1918, previously assistant to the advertising director for the rival firm Ajax Rubber Co., who left Michelin to create an agency that provided advertising services and illustrations in New York.22
Notes.
1. In the exhibition *Nunc est Bibendum !!.. Un mythe graphique depuis 1898*, which took place February 2008 in Clermont-Ferrand, France, an interactive DVD was shown where different digitalized pages could be consulted of a thick original book used internally by the Michelin Advertising Department—dated between 1900 and 1914—that comprised part of the Michelin Heritage Fund. As in an album of chromos or a scrapbook, the reproduction of different vignettes created by illustrators such as O’Galop were attached to those pages, and, along with each of them, handwritten notes and a detailed list of the magazines to which a copy was sent to insert in the form of an advertisement, with the registration dates of each delivery. *Nunc est Bibendum !!.. Un mythe graphique depuis 1898*, from February 20 to August 31, 2008. Musée d’Art Roger-Quilliot, Clermont-Ferrand, France. This proposal was the French adaptation of the exhibition conceptually devised by Juan de San Román, director of Michelin Spain-Portugal Communication and Heritage, which opened at the Valencian MUVIM-Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat on April 14, 2005 and was exhibited in different Spanish cities between 2005-2007.
2. As stated by Darmon (1997), p. 64-65, without citing the original source (presumably, documents from the Michelin Patrimoine Archives).
4. As indicated in the signature of the series of articles on different brands under the generic title of “La ‘petite histoire’ des grandes marques” that Étienne Debuission wrote in the 1920s as a collaborator of *Vendre*, a French publication on advertising. In 1924 Étienne Debuisson was the honorary president of the Corporation des Techniciens de la Publicité, an association created in 1913.
5. Both appear referenced, according to the timeframe, in the pages of the corporate magazine.
7. *Op. cit.* In the same exhibition, an interactive DVD was shown in which a few digitalized pages of the *Michelin Advertising. Baltimore Exhibition* could be consulted. On the first page, at the foot of Bibendum’s figure, the following was indicated: “Advertising agents: Black’s Advertising Agency.” The dossier, from 1913, contained clippings and entire pages of Michelin advertisements taken from various British publications where they had been inserted. The name of James Black as head of Black’s Advertising Agency appears in the development of the legal process published in *The London Gazette*, October 26, 1923, number 32874-E.
8. As shown in the lists from different years, between 1900 and 1934, of the *Post Office London Directory*. Information kindly provided by Robert Athol, The National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) and Phyll Melling, Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London.
10. I have been able to examine in person several plates of this type preserved in private collections and of which I maintain photographic documentation. In the lower right corner, in sans-serif font and small size, the company “Black’s Advertising Agency” appears.
11. The advertisement shows Bibendum holding a model of the characteristic building for the Olympia Motor Exhibition, the British motor racing and motor world fair, where Michelin presented their own space (stand number 284); *The Times*, November 5 and 12, 1907.


19. The first references identified that advertise this link are found in *Bulletin*, published by the American Newspaper Publishers Association from New York, in their numbers: number 3426, p. 56, February 19, 1916, and number 3555, p. 624, November 25, 1916. Subsequently, in 1920 and 1921, the agency’s press advertisements, offering their services, included a list of customers for whom they were already working, including the Michelin Tire Company (specifying the Michelin Tires and Budd-Michelin Disk Wheels as products). Advertisements in *Forbes*, July 23 and August 20, 1921.


**Bibliography**

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**MEDRANO BIGAS, Pau.** “La huella del neumático como soporte publicitario. El caso de Michelin y las batallas comerciales entre las compañías pioneras del sector (1904-1916).” *Pensar la Publicidad*, 2011, volume 5, number 2, pp. 139-158.

Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid y Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2011.

**The Fiftieth Anniversary of Michelin Tyre Co. Ltd. 1905-1955.**

COMPLEMENTARY DESIGN. The contracting of advertising space in magazines and newspapers to insert one-off advertisements or those forming part of a prolonged campaign benefited, on occasion, from the services of the publishers’ in-house graphic departments. As shown in this double page, taking as an example the specialized magazine from the automotive sector The Horseless Age, the advertiser had the possibility to order from the publisher, free of charge, the graphic design for his advertisement. The publisher internally managed the composition of illustrations, inscriptions, typographies, borders and ornaments adapted to the stipulated format.

1. (Opposite page) Full page advertisement published in the magazine The Horseless Age, November 7, 1906.
RESULTS. The above images show a variety of examples for advertisements designed by the internal graphic department of The Horseless Age magazine. The final, uniform result does not take into account the differential characteristics of each advertiser’s product.

3. Advertisements of mechanisms and engine parts for the Diamond Stamped Ware Co. in The Horseless Age, October 26, 1904.
6. Advertisement for Badger Brass Mfg lamps. Co. in The Horseless Age, June 26, 1907.
SIMILARITIES. The graphic design of Michelin advertisements published between 1904 and 1906 in magazines from the automotive sector did not differ substantially from that of their rivals, neither in the application of conceptual references nor in the use of graphic resources.

