

Review

'Interactivity' and advertising communication

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The notion of 'interactive' advertising is used in the advertising industry to increase attraction to 'new' types of media and means of transmitting advertising messages. The paper inquires whether 'interactive' advertising is as new and effective as it is depicted by advertising academicians and practitioners. The article brings into question the term 'interactive' advertising and reveals the interactive qualities of 'traditional' advertising. It analyzes some dimensions that have been traditionally ascribed to 'interactive' advertising, such as active engagement and reaction, physical action, involvement, control of consumers, two-way communication, and feedback and demonstrates how these dimensions are themselves already at work in 'traditional' advertising. The author argues that interactivity is a property of any advertising type whether traditional or pertaining to 'new media' such as the Internet.

Key words: Interactive advertising, traditional advertising, advertising theory.

DEFINING INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING

Some studies on interactive and traditional advertising set the notions of 'interactive' and 'traditional' advertising at opposite poles (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci, 1998; Dickinger and Zorn, 2008; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Frank, 2001; Pramataris et al. 2001). Television, radio and print media are described as 'traditional' media, whereas interactivity is positioned as the main characteristic of Internet advertising. As Rafaeli, Sheizaf and Sudweeks (1997) state, "with the rapid rise of the Web as a commercial medium, interactivity emerges as a unique characteristic distinguishing the Web from other traditional media". Thus, interactivity is seen as a quality that is absent from traditional advertising forms (Miles, 2007, p. 311). However, interactivity is not a unique quality of Internet advertising but is an inherent feature of any type of advertising including so-called 'traditional'

advertising (print, radio and television advertising) and the main task of this study is to prove this statement.

The notion of 'interactive' advertising is used in the advertising industry to increase the attraction to the 'new' types of media and means of transmitting advertising messages. This study inquires whether 'interactive' advertising is as new a phenomenon as it is depicted by advertising academicians and practitioners. The analysis questions the term 'interactive' advertising and reveals the interactive qualities of 'traditional' advertising. Such discussions have not been undertaken in previous publications. This study explores a number of dimensions that have been traditionally ascribed to 'interactive' advertising, such as active engagement and reaction, physical action, involvement, control of consumers, two-way communication, and feedback and demonstrates

how these dimensions are themselves already at work in 'traditional' advertising. The author argues that interactivity is a property of any advertising type whether 'traditional' or pertaining to 'new media' such as the Internet. Before proposing evidence that supports this argument, I briefly introduce the existing definitions of the notion 'interactivity' and then provide in-depth analysis of various dimensions of interactivity.

Many researchers concur with the opinion that the term 'interactive' is itself a polysemic and complex one. As indicated by Pramataris et al. (2001), "It relates to numerous important sociological, behavioral and economic issues of media research" (p. 18). Some researchers assert that there is little agreement among researchers on a common definition or conceptual framework (Buchanan-Oliver and Chan, 2004; Bucy, 2004; Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005). One of the definitions has been proposed by Li and Leckenby (2000). They define interactive advertising as the "paid and unpaid presentation and promotion of products, services and ideas by an identified sponsor through mediated means involving mutual action between consumers and producers." McMillan and Hwang (2002) undertake one of the most detailed explorations of the existing definitions of the term 'interactivity'. Analyzing various definitions of the term, the authors summarize that "three elements appear frequently in the interactivity literature: directions of communication, user control, and time" (McMillan and Hwang, 2002; p. 30). Other researchers underline additional dimensions of 'interactive' advertising. They are the audiences' action and reaction (Heeter, 2000), two-way communication (Levy and Nebenzahl, 2006; Pavlik, 1998; Pramataris, 2001), one-to-one communication (Levy and Nebenzahl, 2006; Van Raaij, 1998), involvement (Pramataris, 2001), receiver-controlled system (Levy and Nebenzahl, 2006; Pramataris, 2001; Van Raaji, 1998), feedback (Pramataris, 2001; Van Raaji, 1998), dialogue between consumer and manufacturer (Bezjian-Avery, Cadler and Iacobucci, 1998) and personalization (Pramataris, 2001).

This section problematizes several dimensions of interactivity advanced by these different researchers and attempts to demonstrate how these dimensions of interactivity are present in so-called 'traditional' advertising. Cho and Leckenby (1999) measure interactivity according to "the degree to which a person actively engages in advertising processing by interacting with

advertising messages and advertisers" (p. 163). However, a viewer interacts with 'traditional' advertising by co-creating and constructing the advertising message together with the authors of an advertisement. The active engagement in advertising processing can be exercised through such action as interpretation.

Heeter (2000) defines an interaction as "an episode or series of episodes of physical actions and reactions of an embodied human with the world, including the environment and objects and beings in the world". A great deal of complexity in the notion of 'interactivity' arises from the multipart meanings of the terms 'physical action' and 'reaction.' Yet, 'traditional' advertising can also involve physical actions and can evoke reactions.

Pramataris (2001) asserts that involvement is one of the main features of interactive advertising. (p. 18). Involvement implies "communication that motivates customers to take a direct action towards an experience" (Pearson, 1996, p. 103) and provokes response. However, 'traditional' advertising is motivated by the same desire to involve consumers in communication with advertisers, provoke actions and evoke responses.

Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci (1998) argue that, "in interactive systems, a customer controls the content of the interaction requesting or giving information" (p. 23). This statement will be disproved in this study by showing that audiences have control over the content of 'traditional' advertising as they interpret and ascribe meaning to the advertising message.

For Pavlik (1998), interactivity means "two-way communication between source and receiver, or, more broadly multidirectional communication between any number of sources and receivers" (p. 137). The tautology of the term 'two-way communication' is revealed by addressing the etymology of the term 'communication'. Communication means mutual help, exchange and interaction between people of the same community and therefore it is necessarily two-way.

Pramataris (2001) and Van Raaji (1998) point out feedback as one of the dimensions of interactivity yet audiences of 'traditional' advertising give feedback as well as in 'interactive' advertising and in both cases the feedback requires time. I will now look at each of these issues in depth and explore how various dimensions of interactivity display themselves in the so-called 'traditional' advertising. Once the problem with the notion of 'interactivity' is identified I will suggest another approach

of looking at interactivity.

FIRST DIMENSION: 'ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT' AND 'REACTION'

The active engagement of consumers in the advertising process may divulge itself in various ways. First, a consumer can be engaged in the action of defining a meaning of the advertising message and attributing to it certain qualities such as those pertaining to entertainment and education. From this standpoint, it is relevant to pose the question, aptly expressed by O'Donohoe (1994), as to "what consumers do with advertising, rather than what advertising does to them" (p. 52)? Secondly, viewers reveal their active quality through interpreting advertising messages, and constructing and co-creating a meaning. The complexity of notions such as 'action' and 'reaction' naturally leads to the problem of defining the term 'interactivity'. If interactivity implies the action and reaction of audiences, then even so-called 'traditional' advertisements can be considered interactive; one of the many reasons why this is the case is that interpretation of the advertising message and the co-creation of its meaning are types of actions (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver, 2006; Mick and Buhl 1992; Ritson and Elliot, 1995; Stern, 1994).

It is interesting to recall that the word 'action' is derived from the Latin word *actus* "a doing" and *actum* "a thing done". Thus, as suggested by O'Donohoe (1994), it is important to see what the consumers do with advertising. First, audiences are involved in the process of decoding and interpreting the advertising message. In her article *A Revised Communication Model for Advertising: Multiple Dimensions of the Source, the Message, and the Recipient*, Stern (1994) states that, consumers are the "co-creators of communication" (p. 5) and the advertising process can be viewed as a form of "two-way communication" (p. 13). Ritson and Elliot (1995) point out that audiences "display an ability to read, co-create, then act on polysemic meanings from ads that they view" (p. 1036). Proceeding from these arguments, one can conclude that audiences as well as the authors interact with advertising by constructing and actualizing meanings for advertising messages.

Second, audiences may find different applications for an advertisement. They might use an advertisement not only for its ostensible purpose, which is to inform about a

product/service and induce a consumer to buy it, but also for other purposes intended or not intended by the creators of advertising messages. For instance, some print advertisements are used by people as art works and hung on the wall, and some television commercials are watched for amusement and entertainment. Berger (1995) also detects different uses and gratifications of texts. The theory of uses and gratifications can be similarly valid for advertisements because advertisements can also be considered to be texts (Barthes, 1972). Thus, one may say that people use advertising in a variety of ways; "to be amused", "see authority figures exalted or deflated", "experience the beautiful", "have shared experience with others", "satisfy curiosity and be informed", "find distraction and diversion", "experience empathy", "find models to imitate", "gain an identity", "believe in romantic love, in magic, the marvellous, and the miraculous", and to "see others make mistakes" (Berger, 1995). People find various applications for advertising messages and these are some of the forms of their action. O'Donohoe (1994) underlines further instances of advertising applications such as escapism, play, education and entertainment. In her study of the relationship between Scottish television viewers aged 18 to 24 and advertising (p.56), she reports that many consumers thought that advertisements were "better" or "more interesting" than the programmes, were worth watching for "the enjoyment" or for "a good laugh" (O'Donohoe, 1994). People are engaged in the advertising process through finding different applications for advertisements and using them for the purposes intended or not intended by the advertisers.

SECOND DIMENSION: 'PHYSICAL ACTION'

Heeter (2000) writes that the main distinguishing characteristic of 'interactive' advertising is that it enables a person to perform a physical action. It is true that the audiences of 'interactive' Internet advertising can perform simple 'physical' actions such as clicking on different links with a mouse. However, it must be noted that 'traditional' advertising also contains examples which encourage people to 'physical' actions. A page of a magazine, for example, can be utilized as a container for other physical objects. One can use the actual paper of the advertisement to create a model of the advertised car ("Rethinking Print Advertising", 2006). Although, these types of

interactions can be viewed as fighting against the natural limitation of the 'traditional' medium, the examples above serve as the evidence of the ability of 'traditional' advertising to engage viewers in 'physical' actions. Moreover, moving to examples that are more common, it is still easy to demonstrate that 'traditional' advertising induces physical reactions just as strongly as 'interactive' advertising does. Consider the testers used in print media. A person can remove the tester from the magazine's page, open and use it. All these steps are physical actions. If a person likes a product and proceeds to buy it (or does not like it and does not buy it), the process can be viewed as a physical reaction (Bly, 1985). Another example is coupons which encourage readers to cut the coupon out of the advertisement post it or take it to the store for a discount. These are all examples of physical actions. The simplest physical action in which a person is involved while reading a magazine is the action of turning the pages or delaying the page-turning act.

One may argue that these kind of actions within 'traditional' advertising, such as turning the pages of a magazine, are 'less' interactive than the viewer's activity in 'interactive' advertising such as clicking a computer mouse or the buttons of a keyboard. The terms 'less interactive' and 'more interactive' raise the question of how one can measure interactivity in advertising. Is the amount of calories used, the number of neuron cells engaged or the physical work done by the viewer the bases for measuring the level of interactivity? As long as there is no measuring system for interactivity such a term as 'less interactive' fails to describe the nature of communication and indeed, there is still no accepted system which enables one to measure the level of interactivity. Although, the attempt to define and measure 'interactivity' has been undertaken by Hoffman and Novak (1995; 2009), the concept of 'flow' which has been developed for measuring the level of interactivity has some drawbacks.

THIRD DIMENSION: "FLOW"

Some researchers may believe that 'flow' is the concept that describes our interaction with computers (Hoffman and Novak, 1995). In their paper *Marketing in Hypermedia Computer-Mediated Environments: Conceptual Foundations*, Hoffman and Novak (1995) describe

'flow' in a hypermedia computer mediated environment (CME) as a construct that formalizes and extends a sense of playfulness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Bowman, 1982; Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989; Day, 1981; Ellis, 1973; Miller, 1973), incorporating the extent to which, in the hypermedia environment, consumers: 1) perceive a sense of *control* over their interactions in the environment, (2) focus their *attention* on the interaction, and 3) find it *cognitively enjoying* (Webster, Trevino and Ryan, 1993).

The concept of 'flow' has a few problems related to the nature of the concept. Hoffman and Novak (1996) assert that "two additional antecedents - *interactivity* and *telepresence* - will *enhance flow*" (my emphasis, p. 17). Here, 'flow' is defined by the concept of 'interactivity'. However, the construction of 'flow' has been developed for 'describing our interaction with computers' (p. 12), in other words, 'interactivity' is defined by 'flow'. It is easy to notice that there is inconsistency in both definitions.

Hoffman and Novak (1995) state that there are two main antecedent conditions which are essential for the 'flow' state to be experienced: skills and challenges and focused attention (p. 15). The authors go on by claiming that, if network navigation in a CME does not provide for congruence of skills and challenges, then consumers will either become bored (skills exceed challenges) or anxious (challenges exceed skills) and either exit the CME, or select a more or less challenging activity within the CME (p. 16). Yet, there is an opinion that 'flow' is not a characteristic of interaction at all but one of the states that can occur *in the process* of interaction as well as apathy, anxiety, and/or boredom (Massimini and Carli, 1988). Moreover, 'flow' can be experienced only if skills and challenges are matched (Massimini and Carli, 1988). Thus, 'flow' is not a dimension of interactivity but one of the states that a person may or may not experience.

The state of 'flow' can be experienced not only in the process of interaction in computer-mediated environments, but, as studies report "flow experience in numerous activities including rock climbing, dancing, chess, reading, etc." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989). 'Flow', as discussed above, is found to be a useful construct for understanding consumer behavior in computer-mediated environments (Hoffman and Novak, 1995; Rettie, 2001). But let us see how, for example, Rettie (2001) explains to the research respondents the state of 'flow' in computer-

mediated environment;

(1) My mind is not wandering. I am not thinking of something else. I am totally involved in what I am doing. My body feels good. I do not seem to hear anything. The world seems to be cut off from me. I am less aware of myself and my problems.

(2) My concentration is like breathing. I never think of it. I am really oblivious to my surroundings after I really get going. I think that the phone could ring, and the doorbell could ring, or the house burn down or something like that. When I start, I really do shut out the whole world. Once I stop, I can let it back in again.

(3) I am so involved in what I am doing, I do not see myself as separate from what I am doing (p.104).

The question that follows this description of 'flow' is "can you recall any similar experiences of your own?" Indeed, besides activities in CME, similar experiences can be recalled during other kind of activities, such as reading, watching a TV program, dancing, rock climbing and/or looking at a print or TV commercial. Thus, the similar state of 'flow' can be experienced regarding the so-called 'traditional' as well as 'interactive' media.

FOURTH DIMENSION: 'INVOLVEMENT'

Involvement can be defined as an individual's state of arousal that has intensity, direction and persistence properties. The consumer's internal state of arousal determines how he or she responds to advertising stimuli and these properties of involvement are the bases for information processing (Andrews et al., 1990, p. 28). In this definition, one of the main factors of involvement is a 'response' and the 'internal state of arousal'. In another definition proposed in his book *Building Brands Directly: Creating Business Value from Customer Relationship*, Pearson (1996) contends that involvement is "communication that motivates customers to take a direct action towards an experience of, and relationship with, a brand" (p. 103). In these definitions, one can see that 'response' and 'action towards an experience' are the key words. As argued in the preceding section, 'traditional' advertising is able to induce a response and provoke consumer action.

'Traditional' advertising practices techniques which

involve consumers in the interpretation of advertising messages. For example, the use of more and more layering of metaphor with less and less verbal anchoring naturally leads to a growing reliance on the audience to interpret the advertising message. An audience more deeply involved in interpretation is a more active one" (Miles, 2004, p. 273). According to Warlaumont (1995), polysemy tends to increase the readers' involvement to the process of the interpretation of text. Polysemy can be gained by the use of metaphors, small amount of words (Miles, 2004), a photo-documentary style, the absence of the product in an advertisement (Warlaumont, 1995) and resonance, which is the combination of word play with a relevant picture (McQuarrie and Mick, 1992). Polysemy encourages consumers to find the partially hidden meanings in an advertising message. Viewers are involved into the interpretation and decoding polysemic meanings of messages (Warlaumont, 1995) within 'traditional' as well as 'interactive' advertising.

Some researchers find a correlation between interaction and experiential involvement; they assume that the more immersive the experience, the more interactive it is (Laurel, 1991). The ambiguity of this definition originates from the uncertainty of what exactly is meant by 'experience'. 'To experience' may mean "to have and be aware of a particular emotion or physical feeling" ("Experience", 2003) or "something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through" ("Experience", 2010). In many online dictionaries 'experiential' advertising is equivalent to 'emotional' advertising. Bearing in mind these meanings of the word 'experience' it can be stated that 'traditional' advertising enables customers to live certain experiences. In their article, *Red Time is Me Time: Advertising, Ambivalence, and Woman's Magazines*, Stephen Brown, Lorna Stevens, and Pauline Maclaran (2003) explore the ambivalences and tensions experienced by women in response to an advertising campaign for a United Kingdom women's magazine called *Red*. The authors indicate that some female participants experience relief and pleasure (p. 38), some find the advertisement annoying, and some experience discomfiture (p. 39). The participants experience certain emotional states in response to an advertising message. One of the female participants in the study "had no difficulty imagining herself into the text and derived much pleasure in doing just that" (Stevens, Maclaran and Brown, 2003). Thus, 'traditional' advertising can enable

people to become participants, rather than mere spectators. Viewers can be immersed in the story of 'traditional' advertising and the ability of 'traditional' advertising to provide such experience makes it interactive.

'Traditional' media may involve a simulated environment (Escalas, 2004) and "dream world" (Stevens, Maclaran and Brown, 2003). It may invoke certain reactions, make one feel irritated, pleased and/or annoyed, and bring pleasurable or unpleasant feelings (Stevens, Maclaran and Brown, 2003). Turning back to the definition of Pearson (1996) given at the beginning of this section, it becomes evident that readers are getting involved with 'traditional' advertising as any feeling (including indifference) that consumers may have towards the advertising message is an experience.

FIFTH DIMENSION: 'CONTROL' OF CONSUMERS

New computer and broadcasting technologies enable viewers to "gain greater control over their information environment" (McQuail, 1997). It is believed, that 'traditional' media does not give control over the content and form of the message to the audiences. This is why, according to Van Raaij (1998), 'traditional' media is doomed to fade away. In his article *Interactive Communication: Consumer Power and Initiative*, Van Raaij (1998) anticipates the gradual obsolescence of traditional marketing approaches (p. 1).

Traditionally, it is assumed that the control of the media belongs to the sender. Van Raaj (1998) writes, "The sender determines what will be printed or broadcast and in which order and speed the television programme will be broadcast" (p. 2). Since the increasing availability of the Internet, many researchers (Andrejevic, 2002; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000; Van Raaij, 1998) have underlined the significant shift of control away from the 'sender' towards the 'receiver' of messages. Van Raaij (1998) notes that marketing communication instruments have been undergoing changes from "sender-dominated and non-interactive to receiver-dominated and interactive instruments" (p. 4). He further asserts that "with interactive media, both parties (sender and receiver) have control" (ibid).

As discussed above, audiences take part in the creation of meanings of advertising messages (Mick and

Buhl, 1992; Ritson and Elliot, 1995; Stern, 1994). Audiences interpret advertising messages in their own ways and these meanings may differ from the meanings intended by the 'agency' and the 'sponsor'. The 'consumer' participates in the advertising message construction process. In this sense, the audiences truly have control over the content of 'traditional' advertising.

Another aspect that has been omitted by those researchers who indicate control over advertising content by consumers as the distinguishing characteristic of interactive advertising is that the 'sponsor' and the 'tested consumer' are the early consumers (as well as producers) of the advertising message who can influence the process of message creation (Miles, 2007; Stern, 1994). Therefore, consumers of so-called 'traditional' advertising can perform the function of controllers.

SIXTH DIMENSION: 'TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION'

Many practitioners and theoreticians describe interactive advertising as a two-way communication (Van Raaij, 1998). As discussed earlier, in their definition of 'interactive' advertising, Leckenby and Li (2000) underline mutual action between consumers and advertisers. The notion of 'mutual action' that is used to describe 'interactive' advertising is often opposed to one-way communication which is used to define so-called 'traditional' advertising (Ko, Cho, and Roberts, 2005, p. 59; Van Raaij, 1998, p. 3). Yet, as suggested by Chang (1996), by addressing the etymology of 'communication' the word can be traced to the Latin word *munia/muntare* "a root connoting mutual help, exchange (as in *munus, mutuus*), and interaction among those who belong to the same community (as in *communis, communitas*)" (p. x). The term "one-way communication" becomes self-contradictory and "two-way communication" becomes tautological as the word 'communication' implies exchange and two-way contact. Therefore, the so-called 'traditional' advertising (just like any form of communication) is 'two-way communication'.

Another argument which supports this statement has been suggested by Miles (2007). He draws the readers' attention to the interactive relationships between the 'sponsor', the 'agency', the 'tested consumer' and the 'agency'. As outlined above, the 'sponsor' and the

'tested consumer' or 'focus group'¹ are the early consumers of the advertising message who provide feedback to the 'agency' which further may lead to the revision (or absence of changes) of the advertising message (Miles, 2007; Stern, 1994). This is why relations between various elements involved in the message construction process can be defined as 'two-way communication'.

SEVENTH DIMENSION: 'FEEDBACK'

Many researchers characterize 'interactive' advertising as that which provides feedback (McMillan and Hwang, 2002; Straubhaar and LaRose, 1996). In interactive advertising, the message can be delivered to a consumer, and the consumer can respond back to the advertisers, providing comments, feedback, and/or personal information [...], participating in a series of on-line discussions or forums, completing site or product surveys, writing new-product proposals, requesting on-line problem diagnostics, and so forth (Cho and Leckenby 1999; Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005). Interactivity can therefore be seen as facilitating the process of acquiring information about consumers by marketers. Interactivity enables the shift from the situation when marketers had to extract the information from consumers to the situation when consumers themselves provide information to marketers.

Consumers' interpretation of advertising messages can be markedly different; "texts may be ignored or engaged, disdained or enjoyed" (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999), but in any case, viewers react to advertising messages. A refusal to watch commercials, ignoring them or the sceptical perception of advertising messages – these are all forms of reaction or feedback as much as buying a product, or looking for more information about it. But we must not forget that selling a product is the main goal of advertising (Bly, 1985; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000; Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2003). In *The Copywriter's Handbook*, Bly (1985) says that, there is a creative challenge in writing copy that sells. This "selling

challenge" is a bit different than the artistic challenge: instead of creating aesthetically pleasing prose, you have to [...] uncover the reasons why consumers would want to buy the product, and present those sales arguments in copy that is read, understood, and reacted to – copy that makes the arguments so convincingly the consumer can't help but want to buy the product being advertised (p. 5).

To induce a reaction is the main task of advertising. Buying the product or service (as well as not buying) is one form of reaction by consumers. Indeed, audiences may react and respond to 'traditional' advertising and it can happen immediately (for instance, in an airplane during a flight, the passengers receive a catalogue of the products which they can purchase immediately). But the important point underlined by some researchers (Dellaert and Kahn, 1999; Kay, 1990, McMillan and Hwang, 2002; Nielsen, 2000; Vora, 1998) is that the advertiser of 'traditional' commercials may not learn the response of viewers immediately, but much later through, for example, survey results, while 'interactive' advertising is primarily defined by the "short time feedback interval" (Van Raaij, 1998). McMillan and Hwang (2002) state that, "Speed of response is a central concern of both developers and users of interactive media" (p. 33). Thus, the debates are now deployed not around the aspect that customers can *give* their reactions immediately, but around the aspect that producers can *get* the reactions immediately. Yet, first, in the majority of cases getting feedback (regarding either 'traditional' or 'interactive' advertising) requires certain time, second, if one thinks of the 'sponsor' and the 'tested consumer' as the early consumers of advertising message (Miles, 2007), the 'agency' does have an opportunity to get 'immediate' feedback about the advertising message because before the advertising message is presented to the 'actual consumer' it is demonstrated to the 'sponsor' and the 'tested consumer' therefore, the 'agency' can get their reactions immediately after presenting the advertising message.

Thus, this study has investigated various dimensions ascribed to 'interactive' advertising. This investigation has disclosed a fundamental problem within the theory of interactivity that does not reside from the elusiveness of the concept of interactivity (Bucy, 2004) but rather from omitting that interactivity is an inherent feature of advertising communication. The aim of this study is not to provide another definition of interactive advertising but

¹ "Small number of people (usually between 4 and 15, but typically 8) brought together with a moderator to focus on a specific product or topic. Focus groups aim at a discussion instead of on individual responses to formal questions, and produce qualitative data (preferences and beliefs) that may or may not be representative of the general population" ("Focus Group").

to encourage to move away from a conventional division interactive vs. traditional advertising and to look for a more relevant concept.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the current study was to question the conventional division between 'traditional' and 'interactive' advertising by showing that the dimensions ascribed to 'interactive' advertising are also inherent to 'traditional' advertising. The study has analysed some dimensions of interactivity such as active engagement in advertising processes, physical action and reaction, involvement, control of consumers, two-way communication, and feedback and showed how these dimensions of interactivity revealed themselves in 'traditional' advertising as much as they did in so-called 'interactive' advertising.

Defining and interpreting the meaning of the advertising message, constructing and co-creating meaning and producing experiences are some of the actions the viewer can be engaged in while perceiving an advertising message. Both 'traditional' and 'interactive' advertising require certain physical actions from the viewer. 'Traditional' as well as 'interactive' advertising are able to involve consumers into different experiences. A viewer can experience certain emotions, such as tension, relief, or pleasure; can be involved in simulated environment; and can be involved in the meaning creation process of advertising. 'Traditional' advertising involves consumers in message interpretation and construction processes. In this sense, consumers have control over the content of advertising messages.

The claim that 'interactive' advertising is 'two-way communication' and 'traditional' advertising is 'one way communication' was disproved by addressing the etymology of the word 'communication'. It was shown that the term 'two-way communication' is tautological and the term 'one-way communication' is contradictory, because the word communication implies mutual exchange. The main goal of any type of advertising is to sell a product or service. Consumer's feedback is purchasing (or refusal of purchase) the product or service by the target group. Thus, 'traditional' advertising can gain feedback and in some cases, it can happen immediately.

The study argued that interactivity is a quality of any type of advertising. Furthermore, the author challenged

the assumption which defines advertising as 'less' or 'more' interactive and claimed that interactivity cannot be measured and used as a feature for dividing advertising in groups. This study neither suggests viewing interactivity as a characteristic of the consumer (Schumann, Artis and Rivera, 2001) nor as a characteristic of the medium (Dickinger and Zorn, 2008; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Rafaeli, Sheizaf and Sudweeks, 1997) but rather as a nature of relationships between various parties involved in advertising communication.

This conclusion may evoke fair bewilderment, "Where is continuation of the argument? And what can be done to bridge this mislabeling of two types of advertising?" Considering that previous research in this area has not undertaken any attempt to clear up the core problem related to the theory of interactive advertising it can be said that the distinctive contribution of this study is that it is first to highlight the problem. This article is an attempt to move the theory of interactivity from its 'preliminary phase' (Bucy, 2004) of providing new and new definitions, dimensions, classifications, and scales for measuring interactivity by problematizing these definitions and dimensions of interactivity. As Charles Franklin Kettering (1876 to 1958), an American inventor, engineer, businessman, and the holder of *hundred forty patents*, says, "a problem well stated is a problem half solved". Maybe, for many academicians and practitioners, this half solved problem would not be a very comforting solution and an attractive achievement, but I think this paper may direct many researchers before they decide to advance a new dimension of interactivity.

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