Advertising & Promotion

Chris Hackley *and*
Rungpaka Amy Hackley

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This book is dedicated to our daughter Dulcie-Bella Caitlin Hackley, our little bibliophile.

CONTENTS

List of Photos xi
About the Authors xii
Preface xiii
Online Resources xv

1 Advertising and Promotion in the Post-Digital Era 1

Why study advertising and promotion in the post-digital era? 2
Advertising agencies in evolution 4
Agency operations and the challenges of media convergence 6
Studying advertising: consumer, managerial and socio-cultural perspectives 18
Chapter summary 33
Case study 34
Useful journal articles 35
Further reading 36
Notes 36

2 Advertising Theory 38

Why theorise advertising and promotion? 39
Practice-based advertising theory 46
Cognitive information processing theory in advertising 48
Socio-cultural theory in advertising 57
Levels of explanation in advertising theory: cognitive, social and cultural 67
Chapter summary 69
Case study 70
Useful journal articles 72
Further reading 72
Notes 72

3 Advertising and Brands 75

Branding basics: origins and conceptualisation 76
What advertising and promotional communication can do for brands 83
The strategic brand management process and communication planning 90
IMC planning 92
Limitations to IMC 101
Chapter summary 103
Case study 104
Useful journal articles 105
Further reading 106
Notes 106

4 The Creative Advertising Agency 107

Advertising agencies as cultural intermediaries 108
The enigmatic, iconic advertising agency 112
Pitching for business 119
Account team roles and responsibilities 125
Chapter summary 132
Case study 133
Useful journal articles 135
Further reading 135
Notes 135

5 Strategy and Creativity 137

The creative advertising development process 138
Strategy development for advertising campaigns 141
Communication strategy and advertising strategy 144
Advertising strategy and creative development 144
Media and strategy 146
The creative brief 149
Celebrities and advertising 156
Campaign evaluation 159
Chapter summary 161
Case study 161
Useful journal articles 163
Further reading 163
Notes 164

6 Media and Audience Planning 165

Buying and earning advertising audiences under convergence 166
Media planning – key tasks 167
Media planning terms and concepts 174
Media strategy 179
The media mix – channel characteristics 185
Chapter summary 194
Case study 195
Useful journal articles 196
Further reading 197
Notes 197

7 Social Media Advertising 198

What are social media? 199
The social media advertising market 202
User-generated content (UGC) 204
Advertising on social media 207

Ethics and regulation of social media advertising (SMA) 216
Chapter summary 217
Case study 217
Useful journal articles 219
Further reading 219
Notes 219

8 Digital Advertising: Search and Content 221

Digital advertising 222
Search engine advertising 226
Pay per click (PPC) and search engine optimisation (SEO) 227
Retargeting 231
Content 232
Content 'marketing' – or advertising? 236
Categories of content – hero, help and hub 237
Content strategy 239
Summary points for content advertising 240
Influencers 241
Chapter summary 244
Case study 244
Useful journal articles 246
Further reading 246
Notes 246

9 Non-Advertising Promotion 248

Non-advertising promotion 249
Sponsorship 251
Product placement 257
Public relations 262
Other elements of non-advertising promotion 264
Chapter summary 272
Case study 272
Useful journal articles 274
Further reading 274
Notes 275

10 Global Advertising Strategy 276

Advertising and the global economy 277
Cross-cultural communication 282
Standardisation or localisation of advertising and promotion? 287
Cultural tensions around global brand advertising 292
Advertising and Asian economies 296
Chapter summary 300
Case study 301

Useful journal articles 302
Further reading 303
Notes 304

11 Brands on the Defensive: Ethics and Regulation for Advertising 305

Brands and ethics 306
Ethics and controversy over advertising 317
International advertising regulation 324
Applied ethics and advertising regulation 328
Chapter summary 332
Case study 333
Useful journal articles 334
Further reading 335
Notes 335

12 Advertising Research 337

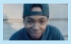
Role and purposes of research in advertising 338
The importance of advertising research 341
Uses of advertising research 351
Research ethics 358
Chapter summary 359
Case study 360
Useful journal articles 362
Further reading 362
Notes 363

Abbreviations 364
Glossary 366
References 374
Index 396

LIST OF PHOTOS

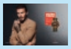
1 VW Beetle: Ugly is only skin deep

2 Nike hijab

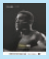
3  Gillette: The best a man can get

4 Omega: The first watch worn on the moon

5 Cadbury’s Smash aliens

6  Tudor: Born to dare

7 Miss Dior: And you, what would you do for love?

8  William Hill: Heavyweights since 1934

9 Comparethemarket.com meerkats

10 John Lewis Christmas ad

11 Simply Be: Beach body ready?

12 Guinness: Good things come to those who wait

13 *The King’s Speech*: God save the king

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chris Hackley has been Professor of Marketing at Royal Holloway, University of London, since 2004, when he was appointed as the university's first Chair in Marketing. His PhD from the Department of Marketing at Strathclyde University, Scotland, focused on the creative development process in top advertising agencies. He teaches, researches, writes and consults on topics in advertising, marketing and consumer cultural policy.

Rungpaka Amy Hackley is Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Birkbeck College, University of London. Prior to that she held Lecturer in Marketing appointments at Queen Mary, University of London, the University of Durham and the University of Surrey. Dr Hackley's teaching and research focus on advertising, branding, marketing and consumer culture theory research. Her PhD entailed a cross-cultural study of young consumers' experiences of TV product placement, and her first publication from her PhD research was the only UK paper cited by the ITV companies in their response to the UK government's first consultation on UK TV product-placement regulation. She also holds a first degree in Mass Communication and a Master's in Marketing. Dr Hackley has presented her research at international conferences in Asia, North America, Australasia, Europe and the UK, and her work has been published in journals such as the *International Journal of Advertising, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Marketing Management, Marketing Theory, Asian Journal of Business and Proceedings of the Association for Consumer Research.*

PREFACE

At the time the first edition of this book was published, in 2005, many commentators were already predicting the end of creative advertising. The revolution in digital communication seemed to be sweeping away the old ways and everything was going to change. A great deal has changed, but not everything, and today creative advertising on mass media has stubbornly refused to disappear. We have framed the fifth edition as a 'post-digital' perspective because digital is no longer a new arrival but traditional mass media have not gone away, and both now operate in tandem as integral parts of advertising's media environment. Digital and mass media now share global **adspend** on a roughly 50:50 basis and integrated campaigns that span traditional and digital media are now the norm. Agencies are recruiting new skill sets from across the cultural and communication industries to adapt the **creative advertising development process** to deliver multi-platform, multi-media executions. Amidst these profound changes in the landscape for advertising, the guiding theme of the book remains the same as for the first edition. This is the conviction that the foundational skills of creative advertising development and account planning continue to lie at the core of the best work in advertising and promotional communication.

A second major theme also continues in the fifth edition, and this is that distinctions between the advertising and promotional disciplines are blurring in the era of **media convergence**. New, hybrid promotional techniques are emerging that further extend advertising's logic across the **promotional mix** and beyond, into entertainment and news media. The book therefore takes a thoroughly inclusive perspective on advertising to include any form of communication that has a promotional dimension, reflecting the broadening scope and cross-disciplinary ethos of advertising work and practices. It does not include personal selling, salesforce management or merchandising, and therefore the focus is not on marketing communications, but the more specific area of mediated promotional communications: that is, advertising.

One of the intentions of the book was and remains to bring out the creative/account planning perspective more strongly than is typical in **managerial** advertising and marketing communications texts. To this end, the book looks not only at the client/account management perspective but also draws on insights from the agency, creative and account team perspectives. This broadened functional scope is supported by a broadened intellectual scope that is informed by anthropological and sociological consumer culture research, and media, cultural and sociological studies, as well as management and business studies.

The fifth edition is thoroughly updated with many new examples, new case material, new topics and two entirely new chapters. Chapter 7 looks at 'Social Media Advertising', while Chapter 8 explores 'Digital Advertising: Search and Content'. Digital themes and examples are featured throughout the book, but they also deserve a more focused treatment, and the new chapters deliver this with critical introductions to these now fundamental areas of advertising practice.

Overall, the text is designed as a comprehensive introduction to the subject for students of advertising and promotion, marketing, communication and management at advanced undergraduate, postgraduate and MBA levels, and also for students of media and communications who are interested in understanding how business and the creative and cultural industries meet in the world of advertising.

Chris Hackley and Rungpaka Amy Hackley
Oxfordshire
June 2020

ONLINE RESOURCES

SAGE online resources

This fifth edition of ***Advertising and Promotion*** is supported by a wealth of online resources for both students and lecturers to aid study and support teaching, which are available at **https://study.sagepub.com/hackley5e**

FOR LECTURERS

- **Incorporate the chapters** into your weekly teaching using the **PowerPoint slides** prepared by the authors.
- **Access the ads** discussed by the author along with **links to relevant websites** for the industry and different agencies through the **Teaching Notes** provided.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION IN THE POST-DIGITAL ERA

1

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the fifth edition by outlining the key themes of the book. It opens by discussing continuing changes taking place in the advertising environment, especially the convergence of media channels via the internet, changes in media funding models and radical changes in media consumption. Clearly, many of these changes will be framed, disrupted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. Advertising practices will have to change and adapt to new realities. In the post-digital, post-COVID era, advertising will still have a key role within re-structured economies. Traditional broadcast 'spot' and print display advertising will continue, as will search and programmatic advertising, branded 'content', 'native' advertising and other forms of hybrid promotional communication designed for social media. The chapter discusses some of the major challenges facing the industry in the post-digital, post-COVID era, and explains why advertising will continue to be an important area not only for commercial and policy practice, but also for scholarly study.

KEY CHAPTER CONTENT

Why study advertising and promotion in the post-digital era?

Advertising agencies in evolution

Agency operations and the challenges of media convergence

Studying advertising: consumer, managerial and societal perspectives

WHY STUDY ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION IN THE POST-DIGITAL ERA?

As we write, in April 2020, the world is suffering its deepest economic shock in perhaps 300 years. The world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to change the environment for marketing, consumption and commerce. Some of these changes will be deep and long-lasting. The communication environment pre-COVID was already post-digital in the sense that digital communication had become a default, co-existing alongside traditional forms of advertising media. The post-digital refers not to a time after digital communication but, rather, to a time when digital communication is no longer radically new or even novel, but is a deeply embedded part of consumer and commercial life, existing in parallel to traditional media.[1] The post-digital era is one in which digital communication is deeply intrinsic to commercial and everyday activities, to the extent that we take it for granted, although this does not imply that traditional forms of advertising communication will cease or become redundant.[2]

By early 2020, before the COVID-led economic recession, of the circa US$650 billion spent annually on all forms of advertising globally,[3] roughly half was spent on internet advertising and half on traditional media. The growth rate of internet advertising spend, and the rate of relative decline of adspend on traditional media, had both begun to flatten (and will probably slow further in 2021 because of COVID). We were seeing an uneasy accommodation in advertising between the all-enveloping internet and traditional media. To some commentators, especially those who had been predicting that digital forms of advertising would entirely eclipse traditional advertising, this was a surprise. The creative agency system, the network of advertising agencies that produce creative advertising for TV, outdoor, radio and print, was undeniably facing unprecedented challenges. Google and Facebook were dominating the market for social media and search advertising as they hoovered up vast revenues from small, independent traders as well as the global brands. This adspend was lost for ever to the agency system. Nonetheless, creative advertising on traditional media stubbornly refused to die. Major consumer brands re-balanced their global advertising budgets to embrace this post-digital reality, creating integrated campaigns that combined online and offline media channels, and traditional and new media.

As national economies struggle back from the effects of COVID in 2021, the commercial world will need to re-learn old lessons using all the available media channels and platforms. To be sure, there are more important things in the world than advertising, consumption and commerce. But these more important things, including health, civility, family, love, peace and happiness, need an infrastructure to thrive, and commercial activity makes an important contribution to that infrastructure. Advertising was the engine of the most profound rise in global wealth in human history, and it has a major role to play in the post-COVID economic recovery. Whether consumer culture will ever have the same intrepid force as it had before COVID seems unlikely – the world has had to learn that ever-increasing wealth is not inevitable, and, in any case, carries terrible consequences for the environment. We will have to be more selective and circumspect, as consumers, as marketers and advertisers, and policy makers, as we rebuild confidence in what commerce can do for the world. Whatever the outcome of this adjustment, advertising, in all media, will continue to be central to economic policy and practice.

The point of departure for all the editions of this book has been the advertising agency system and its craft skills and practices in creating the kinds of promotional communication that became closely identified with the rise of consumer culture under late capitalism. During the post-war boom of the 1950s and 1960s, striking and powerful lifestyle advertising sold new consumer identities linked with consumption of cars, cigarettes, alcohol, clothes, holidays, household goods and more. Creative advertising was central to the development of an ideology of consumerism (Marchand, 1985: Wernick, 1991: Davis, 2013) and it was the primary vehicle for the emergence of the brand as the atom of consumer culture, the unit around which everything else revolved. By 2000, the cultural authority of 'great' creative work in advertising (built on Bill Bernbach's mythologised 1960s 'creative advertising revolution') was already waning (Holt and Cameron, 2010), as media audiences and consumer markets fragmented under the disruption of digital media. Media convergence (Jenkins, 2008) advanced precipitately as access to print media, TV, radio and cinema was distilled behind one, Wi-Fi-enabled screen (Grainge and Johnson, 2015), presenting huge problems of access for advertisers. How would they reach younger audiences who did not engage with traditional media in real time and who resented advertising that interrupted their consumption of media? Social media mega-platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WeChat, QZone, TikTok[4] (discussed in Chapter 7) and many more offered themselves to advertisers as solutions to this problem of access. Advertising could be wrapped seamlessly around and inside entertainment and informational content, while even the less-than-seamless pop-up and banner ads seemed to have a role. The prime-time TV advertising spot had long lost its status as the primary text of the brand, replaced by countless momentary encounters with media paratexts cross-referencing brands on multiple digital platforms (Hackley and Hackley, 2018). The brand no longer controlled its own meaning, if it ever really had, by having control of major advertising campaigns: brands now percolated through social and other media in countless forms of small-scale content and user-generated content (UGC). What was more, social media presented the opportunity to integrate advertising with one-click purchasing and delivery, collapsing the chain of distribution and revolutionising retail. This particular impact of convergence, what is called the disintermediation of consumer supply chains, is especially disruptive for economies. It will continue to have a radical impact on commercial activity, even though supply chains are likely to be re-established as globalism contracts in the post-COVID era.

As the global economy re-starts in 2021 with re-aligned values and priorities, recession-hit and re-structured economies and damaged consumer confidence, advertising in all its forms will once more be central to the renewal and re-invigoration of consumption as a driver of wealth creation. The world will have to learn to be more selective in its consumption, more balanced and sustainable, and advertising will have to align with more conscious and constrained consumerism, and with ever more geographically, economically and technologically differentiated consumer markets. Advertising agencies (along with media agencies, brands and brand consultancies, and the many other elements of the creative cultural industries that play a part in advertising) and the creative agency system will work in new ways. But, we maintain that, in changed forms with new skills and new forms of organising and working, creative advertising, in whatever form that might take, will still be fundamental to brands and to marketing, and advertising in general will be more important than ever as a driver of economic activity. Whether the creativity advertising needs will come from humans or artificial intelligence (AI) and content factories is another question, which we will explore later in the book (spoiler – it will come from both sources). Studying advertising and promotion will still be academically stimulating as well as economically relevant, because it acts as a node point for the human and behavioural sciences – advertising tells us about ourselves.

ADVERTISING AGENCIES IN EVOLUTION

In this chapter, then, we emphasise the uncertainty that the future holds for the agency model and the creative agency system, but we maintain that the advertising agency will remain an important cultural and commercial institution for several reasons. Since advertising agencies began as space-brokers selling classified advertising in the (then) new printed publications some 200 years ago, they have been behind much of what passes for marketing practice today. Market research, branding, opinion polling, strategic planning and, arguably, public relations (PR) were formalised into disciplines and developed within advertising agencies. Advertising agencies worked hand-in-hand with media owners, manufacturers and other producers to develop promotional culture. During the post-war period, ad agencies in the UK and USA evolved ever more persuasive techniques that transformed the realm of consumption (Ogilvy, 1963, 1983; Fletcher, 2008; Griffiths and Follows, 2016). They did not do so in a one-sided application of corporate power, but with the fascinated acquiescence of consumers whom the ad agencies learned to understand (Hackley, 2002). Meanwhile, the various marketing professions fragmented and professionalised as markets grew, developing countless professional bodies, professional examinations and career pathways. Some disciplines that had begun in ad agencies, such as media planning and buying, opinion polling and market and consumer research, were hived off to become independent businesses. Eventually, many sub-disciplinary fields of marketing and promotional communication emerged, such as direct mail and direct response, digital marketing, PR, packaging, sponsorship, out-of-home (OOH) advertising, brand consulting and more. Today, under media convergence, we are seeing the circle turn and advertising agencies are once again under pressure to offer an inclusive set of skills and knowledge to brand **clients** who demand fully integrated campaigns across multiple **media channels** (Jenkins et al., 2013).

We do not wish to overplay the role of advertising agencies in marketing – their influence has been diluted as the marketing professions have expanded in the West during the past 100 years. However, ad agencies remain a key focal point for exploring the core skills, techniques and roles of advertising and promotional communication in brand marketing. A focus on the work of advertising agencies enables us to examine not only what advertising and promotion produces and why, but also how it is produced. This is important. The working practices of advertising have been neglected both by managerial writers, who focus on the intended ends of promotional campaigns, and by cultural sociologies of advertising, which tend to focus on the outputs, the finished ads (Cronin, 2004). This book is written primarily for students on advertising and marketing-related educational courses, many of whom might have an interest in the persuasive strategies and creative techniques of advertising and promotion, but it is also written for those with a more general interest in the topic and hence it draws on a wider range of cross-disciplinary concepts and literature than is found in some managerially oriented texts.

Below, this chapter will offer some comments about the ways in which the changing media environment under convergence has influenced changes in the practices, techniques and organisational priorities for advertising and promotion. It then goes on to introduce the three perspectives of the book. These are the managerial perspective, the consumer perspective and the socio-cultural perspective. Advertising and promotional communication constitute a set of managerial techniques and practices designed to manage demand for brands, commodities, and other commercial and non-commercial entities. The three perspectives allow us to critically examine the topic from the point of view, firstly, of management who have to rationalise and justify communication strategies within organisations. In the book, we ask questions such as what discursive resources do they draw on to do this, and are some techniques more effective than others? Secondly, we take the perspective of the consumer who is now deeply involved as production and consumption merge via the internet (Toffler, 1980) in a thoroughgoing participative economy (Jenkins, 2008) in which UGC and user engagement on social media are active components of integrated advertising campaigns. Consumers are active in co-creating consumption practices (Thompson et al., 1989; Xie et al., 2008; Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder, 2011; Seregina and Weijo, 2017). We do not simply passively receive advertising and promotional communication, we use it to negotiate a sense of location within the multiple branded identities offered to us by advertising (O'Donohoe, 1994; Ritson and Elliott, 1999; Hackley et al., 2018). Astute brands and their advertising agencies do not simplistically impose their vision of the world upon consumers (Gabriel and Lang, 2008; Zwick et al., 2008). Rather, they tap into and develop and/or exploit consumer cultural myths and ideologies as Holt and Cameron (2010) demonstrate with their case analyses of Coca-Cola, Harley Davidson and many other iconic brands. Consumers can and do resist and re-frame the ideas of consumption that are presented to them in advertising by creating, in effect, consumption **sub-cultures** (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Kozinets, 2002; Hackley et al., 2015). Consumers are not dupes – and advertising effects are more complex than often presumed.

With these three perspectives in mind, the book aims to bring in creative and account planning (Hackley, 2003a) perspectives that are typically excluded from both the socio-cultural work on advertising and the managerial 'marketing communications' texts, in order to re-frame the idea of a managerial treatment of the discipline.

AGENCY OPERATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE

The convergence era is with us (Jenkins, 2008; Meikle and Young, 2011). What convergence means is a complex topic, but, simplistically, we can take as a starting point the technological developments, and the associated economic changes, that are enabling all media to be accessed on one device and viewed via a touch-sensitive screen (Grainge and Thompson, 2015). As smartphones become more ubiquitous, the way that many populations of the world access media is changing profoundly. The dynamics of this change are partly driven by the desire of consumers to keep up with the latest communication technologies and the huge popularity of smartphones is generating vast revenues for providers to invest in the next generation of devices (McLuhan, 1964). This is changing the dynamics of the media landscape as more specialist digital media brands emerge to devise new ways of reaching these consumers with advertising and promotional communication on digital content. As devices get more functionality and Wi-Fi availability increases, mobile advertising is the new frontier for brands.

The economic impetus behind media convergence comes, on the one hand, from the shrinking audiences for traditional mass media, and, on the other, the vast potential for digital content to reach tens or hundreds of millions and even billions of viewers worldwide. The internet is a potent force in media and advertising because of its potentially vast audience reach and its capacity for **targeting**, instant response and audience measurement. Another aspect of convergence is genre confusion, where distinct media idioms seem to merge into each other. TV news, for example, once so austere and clipped with po-faced presenters speaking woodenly to avoid emotionalising the news, is now very show-businessy indeed with star presenters, stories chosen and edited for dramatic effect, cutting-edge computer-aided graphics and pacy editing. In some cases, it is also highly partisan, any pretence of neutrality having been long abandoned in favour of playing to the prejudices of a chosen audience. News, in fact, has become a node in the celebrity/entertainment media complex.

Under media convergence, entirely new types of promotional platform have emerged. Influencers, for example, discussed at more length in Chapter 8, include celebrity movie and TV stars and sports stars who have a large social media following and can charge brands for visual appearances or mentions in their content. Influencers also include many people who became famous only though social media, known as celetoids in the celebrity literature (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Rojek, 2012). Influencers wield extraordinary media reach and engagement through having up to 30 million subscribers. They are, in effect, celebrity endorsers, content creators, video stars and advertising media channels rolled into one. The circulation of brands and celebrity within media has accelerated as entertainment becomes an imperative for all media brands. News is sensationalised and show-business gossip has become news. There is a mutual need driving the coalescence of entertainment, marketing and advertising on digital media (Wolf, 2003; Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2006; Sayre, 2007): they all need mass audience views, clicks and shares. Audiences respond to celebrity news, so media brands promote and produce more celebrities (Hackley and Hackley, 2015).

The implications of convergence for advertisers are profound, but there are obstacles to be overcome. These include the technical problems of common software and hardware platforms to carry video, text and audio on all mobile devices, and the fact that consumers don't really like receiving advertisements on mobile and on social media platforms. To get around the latter issue, hybrid forms of non-interruptive advertising and promotion are emerging that are integrated into the editorial media content, such as sponsored content, brand placement and brand-produced videos, blogs and information.

Since the emergence of digital media platforms and, especially, social media, around the year 2000,[5] traditional advertising agencies have been fighting to retain their hard-earned position as the creative hubs of the marketing industry (Katz, 2016). The variety of creative solutions that agencies are expected to offer is greater than ever before as clients demand cross-media campaigns in many promotional genres. Social media marketing, especially, is a priority. Many brand clients expect advertising and media agencies to be able to extend creative campaigns across social media with a huge variety of media content including videos, blogs, viral, advergames and more (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Grainge and Johnson, 2015; Armstrong et al., 2016). As a result, agencies are hiring a wider range of creative expertise including animators, bloggers, scriptwriters, comedy teams, digital creatives and planners, film producers, app designers and model builders, in addition to the traditional two-person **creative team** with their skills in word-craft and visualisation. Advertising remains an exciting profession for the very dedicated but there are enormous challenges facing practitioners.

EVOLVING ADVERTISING TECHNIQUES

Advertising agencies, then, along with brand consultants, media agencies and other emerging players, are renegotiating their relationships with the promotional industries by re-defining the practices of advertising. Hybrid forms of promotional communication that combine elements of sponsorship, advertising, advertorial, brand placement, celebrity endorsement and more are being brought within the scope of advertising campaigns. In addition to the 'spot' advertisement that can be shared across social media, perhaps in cut-down or re-edited versions, a campaign might include brand-sponsored blogs, sponsored Facebook posts, tweets or Instagram posts, viral memes and videos, broadcasts on YouTube Channels, sponsored video blogs, sponsored sporting or entertainment and activation pop-up events, a **native advertising** feature article, or any of the many emerging forms of promotional communication. As we note above, digital promotion on social media is often linked with retail, payment and delivery by a click or two (Pantano et al., 2016; Srinivasan et al., 2016).

Spot advertising during commercial breaks on television or radio, classified and full-colour advertising spreads in press publications, Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising and cinema advertising all retain their high-profile and dramatic impact. But they are now typically only a part of integrated, cross-platform campaigns. The advertising landscape is becoming pitted with many new media vehicles as digital technology reduces start-up costs for print, internet and broadcast media. There are more magazines, television and radio channels than ever before, especially in digital formats. But the audience reach of each individual mass media vehicle has shrunk and this trend is evident all over the world as TV viewing figures and hard-copy newspaper sales plummet. These new media vehicles are not funded by the traditional model, social networking websites being the most striking example. Their business model has been to build ‘traffic’: that is, to elicit millions of users, without conventional advertising, and then to try to devise forms of paid-for promotion that fit the ways their users consume the service. So, for example, you have the use of algorithms that monitor social media users’ patterns of internet use, searches, purchases and browsing searches and target individualised promotions into their newsfeed, known as programmatic or personalised advertising. Other digital media brands, especially news brands, are creating sponsored content that is ‘native’ to the page: called **native advertising**, it takes the conventional ‘advertorial’ and makes it even less easily distinguished from editorial. We will discuss all these techniques in greater depth as the book progresses.

AUDIENCE FRAGMENTATION AND NEW MEDIA BUSINESS MODELS

Media audiences have ‘fragmented’ across the vastly increased choice of media outlets and platforms. Mass media cannot compete with the potential audience reach of digital media brands as viewing, listener and readership figures for traditional television, print and radio have collapsed. For example, in the UK and the USA, some iconic newspapers established for over 100 years have ceased to exist as advertising revenue falls to unsustainable levels because of the drop in hard-copy sales. Newspaper brands that have continued are those that have managed to develop new revenue streams from online content. Fewer consumers are paying for print media and more consumers are viewing and interacting with free-to-access media content on mobile phones, PCs, laptops and other wireless devices such as netbooks, iPads and e-book readers. What is more, even when we do encounter ads in our media consumption, we can avoid them with ad-blocking software or simply by watching on-demand video or box sets (Kelly et al., 2010).

Equally problematic for conventional advertising, the internet offers massive potential audience reach for cheaply made and easily targeted ‘viral’ videos and other promotional content, which cost nothing to place on video-sharing websites such as YouTube but can generate great reach in ‘earned’ media: that is, media space that is generated because of social media sharing and is free of charge to the brand. Mass media advertising remains important for generating profile and accessing particular groups, but a large proportion of under-35s in developed economies access all their news, information and entertainment via the internet. They rarely watch live TV or buy paper publications and, therefore, they are not in the habit of regularly accessing traditional spot or reading display advertising (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014, 2016; Williams, 2016). Millennial media consumption habits are permanent – this and subsequent generations will never consume media the way their parents and grandparents did.

All these changes mean that what we understand by 'advertising' as a genre of communication is changing, and this has as yet uncertain implications for the creative agency system. Advertising has always been a fluid industry in which creative 'hot shops', boutique, specialist agencies and talented individuals could thrive, but the core organisational actors in the advertising environment have consistently been the major 'full-service' advertising agencies. Over nearly 200 years, since the development of mass consumption print publications in the Western world, advertising agencies have proved to be the most flexible and astute of organisational forms in adding skills and techniques to retain their central place in an evolving media environment (Lears, 1994; Nixon, 2003; McDonald and Scott, 2007). They are well used to having to explain exactly what it is they do to add value, and why the client ought to pay for that. But can they deal with the challenges of the post-digital era? What will the top advertising agencies look like in 20 or 40 years? Will they still exist? Will they all be hybrid media/advertising/promotion/digital content creators, as many are becoming right now? Or will there be fewer big agency brands but hundreds of teams of specialists all working under in-house brand managers or specialist brand consultants? Will agencies re-organise to re-focus around creative, digital and integrated media planning, and strip away layers of account management? We are already seeing many of these changes come to pass.

One of the key drivers of these changes is the evolution in media funding models. The somewhat mythologised creative revolution mentioned above that emerged around Bill Bernbach and New York agency DDB in the 1960s occurred in the context of a traditional media-funding model. In Bernbach's day, paid-for advertising generated the revenue to fund media channels. The spot advertising paid for television or radio shows, while the classified and display advertising paid for print publications, with a small contribution from the cover charge. As circulation and viewing figures grew, so did advertising revenue. This funding model set the parameters for advertising, since advertisements had to fit particular genre conditions in order to be suitably differentiated from the editorial content in traditional **media vehicles** such as newspapers and commercial television or radio shows (Cook, 2001). Back in those days, sometimes called the *Mad Men* era after the HBO TV show,[6] the advertising agencies earned revenue from commission on the media space they bought, before their media buying departments were hived off as separate businesses. In the West, and especially in Madison Avenue, New York, the epicentre of American advertising, the agencies grew fat on this system and the clients paid handsomely for what were seen as great creative ideas that could motivate and inspire the newly affluent consumers of the post-war period.

Today, the traditional media-funding model is no longer the natural order of things. In fact, the world of old media has been turned on its head by digital communications technology. Advertising agencies no longer earn commission on media that they buy (with their clients' money). Today, advertising work is usually billed as a professional service, by the hour. The reason, of course, is that mass media have been disrupted by digital communication technology. Media consumption now often occurs via a mobile screen since consumers can access information, news, entertainment and retail choices via a smartphone or other internet-enabled mobile device (Grainge and Johnson, 2015). What is more, consumers are by no means a passive **audience** to the circus of brand marketing: we share, copy, discuss and critique the content we access on social media, in a thoroughgoing participative economy (Jenkins, 2008) in which consumer engagement is an important part of brand strategies (Berthon et al., 2008; Brodie et al., 2013). Under media convergence, media brands such as newspapers and TV and radio channels faced a struggle to generate sufficient funding through traditional spot and feature advertising sales, and many have gone out of business because of the collapse of real time audiences and physical readerships. They have to seek new revenue streams by monetising their digital content, and we will discuss examples of how they are doing this throughout the book. Prime examples, of course, are Google, Facebook and YouTube, each of whom has found that their users will accept advertising wrapped around and integrated into the content. The advertiser-funded media model has been re-invented for digital platforms. For brand advertisers, buying traditional advertising continues to be very expensive because of increased industrial concentration (mergers and acquisitions) in mass media supply, even though the audience **reach** of traditional media channels is far lower than it once was as sales of print publications, along with real-time TV and radio audiences, shrink under the huge magnitude of consumer choice in on-demand services and free-to-access online media.

SNAPSHOT 1.1

Convergence and visual social media

In marketing, visual images are immensely powerful (Schroeder, 2002; Campbell, 2013). The truism that a picture is worth a thousand words is borne out by the huge popularity of Instagram, Pinterest, Tiktok, Tumblr and many other visual social media platforms. The growing area of content (discussed later in the book) makes considerable use of visual imagery for its attention-getting appeal on platforms such as these. Viral videos, infographics and other visualisations that capture a theme, meme or sentiment can be hugely powerful for advertisers. Visual imagery that is shared on social media can help advertisers in two ways. Firstly, it might incorporate the brand and act as a pseudo-advertisement. For example, the 'selfie that broke Twitter' tweeted by Ellen DeGeneres at the 2013 Oscars[7] was in effect a visual ad for the Samsung smartphone, even though the phone was not seen in the selfie. Secondly, images attract attention, and likes, shares and views that give access to a wide audience for algorithm-driven wrap-around and programmatic ads.

In the movie *Minority Report*, actor Tom Cruise walks past advertising hoardings in the street that are equipped with facial recognition software and they address him by name, suggesting brands that he might like to consume right now. The technology needed to do this, automated facial recognition AI systems, linked to vast databases of personal information, and possibly enhanced by sensors that can detect mood states, hunger or thirst, is already available, and some is in commercial use. We will discuss AI in advertising in greater detail later in the book. For the present, we can be assured that such technologies will be used more and more extensively, subject to regional laws and regulations. Traditional advertising, in the form, for example, of a striking 30-second television spot or stunning print display, with **below-the-line** support from sales promotion and/or direct mail and outdoor advertising, is not going away anytime soon. As we have seen above, even in 2020, half of global adspend was still being spent on traditional advertising. Even though real-time TV audiences have dwindled since those viewers who do still watch TV can record, stream and buy on-demand services to watch their favourite shows whenever they like on mobile devices as well as on digital TVs, TV remains an important advertising medium and not only in countries with low smartphone and Wi-Fi penetration. For example, big televised events such as the Super Bowl, the Olympics or the World Cup offer increasingly rare large-scale, real-time media audiences for advertisers. The attraction of live audiences of many millions is driving sports business, in particular, through bigger and bigger sponsorship and TV viewing rights deals.

As noted above, if ad agencies want to keep their place at the centre of the marketing world, they have to respond to the new reality of the convergent media environment creatively by re-organising, by evolving new skills and techniques, and by developing new ways to get business. For example, according to some, the agency website and agency blogs have become the most important sources for new business, as clients and agencies struggle to find time for the traditional **pitching** process. Blogging has, in fact, become a key content marketing strategy and many advertising agencies have embraced this trend on their own websites (Hackley, 2009a; Dzamic and Kirby, 2018). Many other actors in the advertising world are placing digital communication at the centre of their planning process by hiring digital **account planners** in response to the demand from internet providers for many forms of creative content. Still others are adapting to the logic of branding and proclaiming their ability to craft brand stories that will resonate with the relevant consumers and can be shared across social media.

Advertising agencies cannot survive without being able to offer creative digital services, but their problem is that clients do not like to pay for digital. They reason that Tweets or Facebook posts and pages are free, and even social media advertising such as sponsored posts, programmatic advertising and **SEO** (**search engine optimisation**) (discussed in Chapters 7 and 8) don't cost very much. It isn't easy for advertising agencies (or even for specialist digital agencies) to generate revenue from original digital content. Where digital comes into its own, in the form of branded microsites, games, apps and other branded media content, it can be difficult to offer clients a clear sense of its strategic value. What is more, the 'freemium' business model so prevalent among internet brands means that consumers often resist advertising on free-to-use social media websites (Armstrong et al., 2016). Freemium refers to giving away a basic level of information and service in the hope that this will attract clients willing to pay for a higher level of service. LinkedIn, the professional networking site, is one example of this approach. Many advertising agencies themselves are using a partial freemium model by offering case studies and other information sources free of charge via their website in the hope that clients will be attracted to pay for a deeper engagement with the agency (as do many law firms, accountants and other professional services companies). Social networking sites like Facebook have managed to get their users to accept a certain level of click-through, pop-up, auto-play video or banner advertising, while others like YouTube offer a premium ad-free service to paying subscribers. In addition, social media and other news and entertainment media brands make use of 'native' advertising: that is, sponsored content that is 'native' to the page and looks much like normal, non-sponsored content. The value of digital native advertising is that it is more acceptable to the media consumer because it is not 'interruptive' – that is, it does not interrupt the experience of viewing entertainment, reading news features, watching videos and so on, and it implicitly has some of the source credibility of editorial.

Many advertising agencies have re-organised their account teams, for example by incorporating digital planners, or in some cases by cutting out a layer of account management. Others have crossed into new areas – for example, some direct mail and direct response agencies have expanded their service offer, even producing broadcast advertising. Increasing numbers of media agencies are also moving into advertising. As advertising morphs into 'content' they see an opportunity to leverage their specialist expertise in media to encroach on the ad agencies' field of work. Some advertising agencies have developed new revenue streams by re-positioning themselves as ideas companies and developing creative projects as diverse as comics, movies and stage plays. There are ongoing experiments with new agency forms, such as the 'social-media' agency that attempts to handle all the brand communication via the internet.

From the client side, non-traditional styles of advertising are important because of the need to engage consumers in ways that offer a more clearly defined Return on Investment (ROI) than traditional advertising. In particular, clients need their agencies to offer an integrated communications solution that offers value and impact by using different communication channels in a single campaign. For example, this may take the form of a television advertisement supported with dedicated brand microsites containing consumer forums, games, access to company information, and creating presence for the brand in other areas through media coverage, sponsorship, branded apps, direct marketing or sales promotion activities. Within the flux of change in the advertising environment, then, advertising agencies cannot be expected to be the experts in every communication channel but they are in a prime position to generate and co-ordinate new models of creative and brand communications strategy.

CAN AD AGENCIES SURVIVE IN THE CONVERGENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE?

If advertising agencies and the creative agency system are to survive, they have to engage with new client priorities and broaden their strategic and consulting skills as well as develop creative branded content, including advertising, that can translate across new media channels. Many have been energetically doing so and the industry is in a state of flux. Of course, it is easier to say that ad agencies need to acquire expertise in unfamiliar, non-advertising promotional disciplines than it is for them to do so. They sit alongside other communication disciplines such as PR, sales promotion, digital and direct mail, Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising, branded content and others, many of which still have their own professional routes, qualifications and skills sets. Nonetheless, difficult as it may be, the logic of media convergence dictates that the disciplines of promotional communication will also need to converge. The battle is on as to which form of agency turns out to be the most fluent at developing brand storytelling and other creative craft skills that address clients' needs for integrated campaigns. Promotional communication now often entails transmedia brand storytelling that resonates with consumers and translates across media platforms (Jenkins et al., 2013). For example, whiskey brand Jack Daniel's in its storytelling of American's hillbilly sub-culture romanticises the sub-culture of 'hooch' distilling in a small Tennessee distillery and the ideology of masculinity and anti-industrialism that it supports (see Holt and Cameron, 2010). Coca-Cola's 'Content 2020' initiative demonstrates via YouTube videos how the brand intends to develop storytelling across different forms of content into the next decade. Brand storytelling demands creative craft skills such as scriptwriting, narrative development, characterisation, screenplay development and visualisation that span analogue and digital media, along with research, media and planning skills. It is becoming more common for the newer, multipurpose creative agencies to house all these skills under one roof (Grainge and Johnson, 2015).

Looking to the future, advertising agencies might well retain their importance, albeit with a very different agency model than is typical today. Since they began as brokers of classified advertising space in the early print publications, advertising agencies have added many new skills and techniques such as copywriting, creative production, business strategy, brand strategy, consumer and market research and media planning. They have been at the centre of the evolution of marketing as a discipline and they remain in a positive position to continue their evolution in the new, convergent, post-digital media environment.

WHAT IS ADVERTISING?

This is a question with two possible responses – a short one and a long one. The short one is that advertising is a paid-for promotional message from an identifiable source transmitted via a communication medium. This, at least, is a typical, and typically narrow, definition of advertising that distinguishes it from the other elements of the communication mix. Advertising is conventionally seen as one sub-element of promotion, which is itself one of the four elements of the **marketing mix**, the others being product, place (distribution) and price. The marketing mix element of 'promotion' embraces any promotional communication, and can include advertising, public relations, personal selling, corporate communications, branded content, direct mail and direct response, point-of-sale (or point-of-purchase) and merchandising, sales promotion, exhibitions, short message service (SMS) text messaging and other forms of mobile marketing, email advertising, internet banner advertising, all forms of digital execution such as websites, blogs, vlogs and video content, programmatic advertising, social media and more.

There are many forms of advertising communication, and the forms advertising and promotional communication can take have greatly increased under convergence with the emergence of new, hybrid forms of digital advertising. We will explore numerous examples of these in the book. In order to create effective advertising transmitted via print in newspapers or magazines, or on Out-of-Home (OOH) street billboards, on vehicles or on bus shelters, on digital platforms, or on any other medium, ad agencies need to deploy a range of medium-specific creative craft skills. TV advertising still presents the highest-profile platform for advertisers, with live sports events still offering large real-time viewing audiences to advertisers. As seen in the Chapter 6 case study, one of the last major real-time TV advertising opportunities is the American football season finale, the Super Bowl. It has been reported that TV advertisers charged up to $6 million for a 30 second spot.[8] Production costs can be even higher, and much thought and planning goes into making a big-budget Super Bowl TV ad. All forms of advertising require an order of creative content, even if this is simply basic copy and visual to comprise the **creative execution** and convey different kinds of **appeal**. Creativity can make one ad stand out and get viewers' attention by being resonant, whether that is because it reflects an insightful truth for its audience, because it is beautifully made and diverting, or because it is funny, striking or challenging. Even in the post-digital era, when half of global adspend is going on internet advertising of many kinds, much of which is decidedly un-creative, there is a role for creativity. Some of this is generated by AI, of which more later in the book.

And all that was the short answer. The longer answer will take the rest of this book to explore. There are two reasons why the longer answer is important. One is that, to most people, advertising is a word that covers any kind of promotion whatsoever. To professionals in the field, the various promotional disciplines are important because individuals might spend an entire career in one of them as a professional in, say, PR, direct mail, sales promotion or, indeed, advertising. The professionalisation of marketing and management disciplines developed in the post-war period in response to increasing gross domestic product (GDP) in the West and many, including advertising, developed their own professional trade bodies, training schemes, qualifications and scientific techniques (Davis, 2013). But the professionalisation of disciplines is driven by bureaucratic demands and the politics of organisations – for laypeople, for consumers, all promotion is advertising, of one kind or another (Percy and Elliott, 2009). That in itself isn't a good enough reason to conflate the various disciplines of promotional communication under one heading but, along with the next reason, it may be. As noted above, the media infrastructure for advertising is undergoing profound changes driven by digital communication, and this is changing the very way advertising is conceived. Advertising remains an important discipline, but integration of advertising and promotional campaigns across different media channels and platforms is now the default position, with thematically connected creative executions. In many cases, large organisations treat the different communication disciplines as separate functions with different departments handling, say, corporate communications, direct marketing, advertising or sales. Yet in the post-digital advertising environment, and from a management point of view, the logic of integration is compelling. Media audiences now access more media platforms than ever before, and in different proportions. Television, radio, cinema, outdoor, and perhaps print publication brands in some form, will retain their place in the advertising scene, but in forms that are fully integrated with digital media. As we write, there is a shake-out going on in the promotional communication industries, which include not only advertising agencies but also direct mail, sales promotion, media and branding agencies, and **creative hot shops**, film studios and digital agencies. The winners will be the ones that adapt most successfully, and most profitably, to the logic of integrated campaigns under conditions of media convergence.

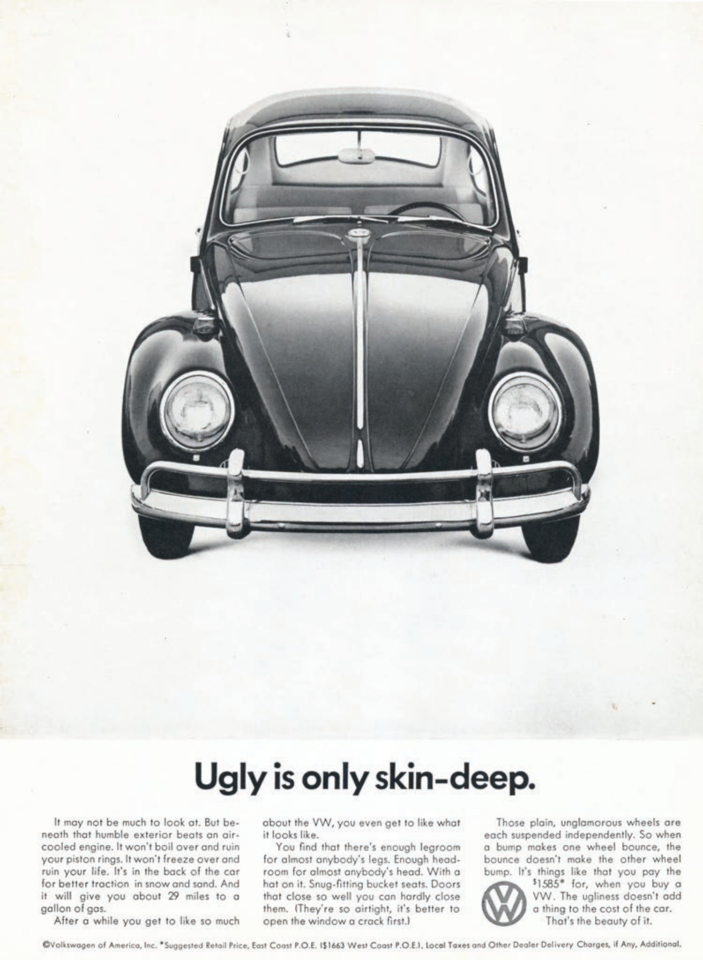
Advertising has changed not only in appearance and media but also in its very nature. Views or page impressions are important but the goal is engagement (Wolf, 2003; Thielman, 2014); that is, likes, shares, posts, any form of consumer action that implies an emotional response. The post-digital economy is inherently participative (Jenkins, 2008). Brand owners want to create content that is subtly branded but will engage consumers, whether that is in the form of a 30-second TV advertisement that is then shared on social media, or a tweet or a viral video, or a piece of branded content on YouTube, or a branded game that can be downloaded as an app on a mobile device … the list is limited only by the digital imagination, and as varied as the technology. In this book, then, the term 'advertising and promotion' is used as an umbrella category for all forms of mediated promotional communication on any media channel or platform.

WHAT DOES ADVERTISING *DO*?

As we have seen, the forms advertising takes are changing, and old definitions are redundant. We can ask not only what advertising is, but also what does it do? Advertising often sells something, but often does not, since a great deal of advertising promotes not only branded products and services but also political candidates and political parties or ideologies, public services, health and safety issues, charities or other non-profit issues. Much commercial advertising is geared not at sales but at brand building: that is, reinforcing the target group's understanding of the brand and its values. If what advertising does is often more complex than typically thought, the ways in which it goes about its business also often evade easy categorisation. Advertising is typically an impersonal communication, distinguishing it from personal selling. Indeed, it is usually defined as a *mediated* communication. And yet, there are many ads that are eye-to-eye sales pitches delivered by actors or celebrity endorsers in a mediated imitation of a personal sales encounter. The hard sell is alive and well, and social media advertising is the quintessence of hard sell, pummelling our timelines and newsfeeds with clickbait and 'calls to action', but there are countless other ads that are entertaining, informative or intriguing, with no attempt to sell evident. Advertising is usually paid for, appearing in a media space set apart for promotional communication. But, increasingly, as noted above, advertisements may be sponsored on social media platforms or shared because viewers actively search out advertisements they may find entertaining or amusing. Earned media – that is, promotional content that is shared, liked, downloaded, clicked and commented on – represent free media for advertisers. The drive for consumer engagement that generates earned media has become a strategic priority for consumer brands, and the promotional element of such content is implicit rather than explicit, and includes sponsorship, **advertainment**, advergames or product placement. As a result of these category-defying advertising practices, attempts to define advertising in exclusive terms are usually more notable for what they leave out than for what they include.

Advertising can sometimes be distinguished by genre elements that set it apart from other forms of mediated communication (Cook, 2001; Leiss et al., 2005; Danesi, 2006). Overheated sales pitches from improbably coiffed spokespersons, deliriously happy housewives singing irritatingly catchy jingles at the kitchen sink, unfeasibly attractive models excited by chocolate confections all spring to mind as advertising clichés of the 1960s–1980s. But then again, many advertisements contradict advertising stereotypes. As we have noted above, American advertising guru Bill Bernbach is credited with inventing irony in advertising in DDB's iconic and self-deprecating Volkswagen campaign of the 1960s. Many advertisements on traditional media began to subvert conventional genres and eschewed the rhetoric of over-selling in favour of postmodern irony, understatement or narrative designed to create presence and generate word-of-mouth for the brand, as opposed to trying to sell it (Sherry, 1987; Scott, 1990, 1994a, 1994b; O'Donohoe, 1994, 1997; Tanaka, 1994). Some in the industry today feel that Bernbach's 'creative revolution' has faded away along with the 'Mad Men' and the swinging sixties depicted in the hit TV series, and has been replaced by sterile business accountability, measurement and **big data** analytics. Others feel that creativity is still around in advertising, but the way it is conceived has to change along with the changes in media infrastructure. Consumers today sometimes like to be passive consumers of entertainment, but often take a much more active part in advertising campaigns, adapting, criticising, re-making and even contributing to story development when brands crowd-source ideas. UGC has transformed the notion of how consumers engage with advertising and marketing. The post-digital consumer doesn't just sit in the back row of the movies or on their living-room sofa passively watching the screen. They are active in engaging with media content, hence the multiple screens phenomenon whereby audiences are often active on several digital platforms at the same time as they watch a movie or some other screen entertainment. Creativity in contemporary advertising is rarely awe-inspiring spectacle but, more often, collaborative, dynamic and iterative as befits the collaborative economy (Jenkins, 2008).

So, a narrow definition of what advertising is can obscure consideration of what advertising does. We might categorise a given piece of communication as an advertisement in terms of its parallels with a vague and fuzzy mental prototype of what an ad should look or sound like, but the norms of advertising media, genres and payment methods are being revised by changes in the industry (see Rosch, 1977, cited in Cook, 2001: 13). Advertising may be a communication that at some level has a promotional motive, but this doesn't prepare us for all the kinds of promotional messages we are likely to encounter. Neither can it prepare us for the subtlety of motive that underlies many hybrid promotional forms, such as a post-match interview with a logo-wearing sporting star, a free download of a trial version of a new



Ugly is only skin-deep.

It may not be much to look at. But beneath that humble exterior beats an air-cooled engine. It won't boil over and ruin your piston rings. It won't freeze over and ruin your life. It's in the back of the car for better traction in snow and sand. And it will give you about 29 miles to a gallon of gas.

After a while you get to like so much about the VW, you even get to like what it looks like.

You find that there's enough legroom for almost anybody's legs. Enough headroom for almost anybody's head. With a hat on it. Snug-fitting bucket seats. Doors that close so well you can hardly close them. (They're so airtight, it's better to open the window a crack first.)

Those plain, unglamorous wheels are each suspended independently. So when a bump makes one wheel bounce, the bounce doesn't make the other wheel bump. It's things like that you pay the $1585* for, when you buy a VW. The ugliness doesn't add a thing to the cost of the car.

That's the beauty of it.

©Volkswagen of America, Inc. *Suggested Retail Price, East Coast P.O.E. ($1663 West Coast P.O.E.), Local Taxes and Other Dealer Delivery Charges, if Any, Additional.

Legendary ad man Bill Bernbach is often credited with showing that advertising audiences will respond to subtlety, irony, and even self-deprecation in advertising creativity. His VW campaigns pulled off the extraordinary feat of selling cars endorsed by Adolf Hitler to post-war American consumers.

Image courtesy of the Advertising Archives.

computer game, free content from a magazine's website you can download to your mobile phone or a 'courtesy' phone call from your bank. Each can be regarded as a promotional communication, or by a lay person as, simply, a piece of advertising. Textbook definitions of advertising are being outpaced by innovations in digital communication technology and by hybrid promotional genres. A realistic study of advertising and promotion cannot hope to put all the parts in neatly labelled packages. And that is no bad thing. Advertising takes the enquirer on a journey that is all the more fascinating because it defies boundaries.

STUDYING ADVERTISING: CONSUMER, MANAGERIAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

THE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

In this book, then, we try to take a 360-degree look at advertising and promotion by taking in three distinct perspectives: the consumer perspective, the managerial perspective and the socio-cultural perspective. Advertising and promotional communication are central to the production of consumer culture (Wernick, 1991; Hirschman and Thompson, 1997; Powell, 2013). It is important for us to educate ourselves about this decidedly contemporary form of communication because of the influence it has on our lives. It is equally important to appreciate that consumers are fully integrated into the consumer culture process. The culture industry revolves around the meaning-making practice of consumers and the most successful brands use their advertising to follow the contours of consumer cultural myth and ideology (Lash and Lury, 2007; Holt and Cameron, 2010). Of course, even though the power of a single advertisement to change individual attitudes or behaviour is frequently exaggerated or misunderstood, advertising is clearly a powerful managerial tool that articulates organisational strategies. Students of business and management, and of other social science disciplines, might profit from learning something of how and why this tool is deployed, or at least how and why it is justified in organisational boardrooms and planning meetings.

As a consumer, take a moment to think about the advertisements you have seen or heard this week. At whom do you think they were aimed? What, exactly, were they trying to communicate? How did they make you feel? Did you immediately rush to buy the brand? Did you tell your friends about the ad or share it on social media? Which medium conveyed the ads? Did you see them on a passing vehicle, on outdoor poster sites, on the television, hear them on the radio, read them in the press, see them on your social media newsfeed, or on some other website? Did you see other forms of promotion on your clothing, smell them in a promotionally enhanced shopping environment, see them on product packaging, on an air balloon in the sky or on the back of a bus ticket? It is difficult to remember more than a few of all the hundreds of promotions we experience each week, at least if we live in urban areas and have access to televisions, smartphones, tablets and computers. Advertising has become such a feature of daily life that sometimes it seems as if we hardly notice it. Advertising often seems to pervade our cultural landscape and we carry on our lives taking it for granted.

We are struck, then, when particular promotional campaigns become topics of general conversation, whether that conversation is critical or approving of the campaign. For example, Coca-Cola aired a TV ad during Super Bowl 2014 in which people of many ethnicities were filmed to a soundtrack of 'America the Beautiful', sung in eight different languages. The ad caused a storm on social media with many supporters lauding its multicultural theme, but many others claiming that it did not reflect their idea of a predominantly white, English-speaking America. Of course, this storm of controversy was the tip of an iceberg of discord around race, nationality and identity, which has been playing out in American politics, as in politics around the world, and continues to do so. In mid-2017, Nike announced its first high-performance sports hijab, the Nike Pro Hijab. The social media comment has included high praise for the product from Muslim sportswomen, and fierce objections from some consumers who threatened to boycott the brand. In late 2018 Nike used controversial American footballer Colin Kaepernick to star in their 'Just Do It' campaign,[9] highlighting his stance on the Black Lives Matter movement and, in spite of the many complaints, generating a positive bottom-line result as the campaign dovetailed with Nike's edgy and progressive brand image, whilst Gillette's 2019 'The Best a Man Can Be' campaign[10] was equally divisive amongst its target market for its support of the #MeToo anti-sexism movement.[11] What all of these examples show us is that even though brand advertising is usually dismissed as a trivial, mendacious and irritating form of communication, there are times when it catches the cultural zeitgeist and articulates issues of social importance, and social tension, in ways that other media genres rarely do. Of course, one can ask how culturally important debates about the Coke ad or Nike's hijab are, since, ultimately, we are talking about fizzy drinks or an item of clothing. Yet, the fact that, through advertising, the business of selling fizzy drinks can become entwined with some of the most pressing social and political issues of our time says something about the cultural force of brands, and of advertising. It is at times like this we realise that advertising occupies a contradictory social space – we take it for granted, and yet it is sometimes a disruptive and incendiary form of cultural communication (Cook, 2001).

Advertising is, of course, so potent precisely because it is taken for granted. There are frequent press features that reflect our puzzled fascination with the latest iconic or controversial ad. The TV show dedicated to the funniest or most outlandish ads has become a mainstay of popular TV programming in many countries. Advertising has become part of mainstream entertainment, while entertainment media make use of advertising styles and techniques, reflecting advertising's dynamic character as a perpetually evolving form of social communication (Leiss et al., 2005). The hard-sell ads remain, but there are also new narrative advertising forms of ever-greater subtlety and variety. Sometimes, deliberately or through serendipity, these advertisements tap into and articulate acute cultural conflicts and, as Holt (2002) suggests, these can sometimes be understood as conflicts of identity. Brands tap into consumers' senses of cultural identity and it is advertising that often articulates this most powerfully. As consumers, we might resist the commercial pressure to express our sense of identity through branding, but it is clear that advertising can excite us with the possibility of new identities (Olsen, 2016).

Nike's Pro sports hijab created controversy when it was announced as a new addition to their product line in the USA, but it has become one of their most successful global products https://news.nike.com/news/nike-pro-hijab.

SNAPSHOT 1.2

Creative campaigns that challenge advertising genre conventions

The genre conventions of what an advertisement should look or sound like are being eroded (Cook, 2001). Contemporary advertising often departs from the conventional sales narrative (Blake et al., 1996) to tell a story that may be only tangentially linked to the brand. For example, UK bank Nationwide created a 2016 TV advertising campaign they called 'Voices' that consisted of ordinary people reciting their poems about their everyday lives directly to camera. The TV spots, made by creative agency VCCP, ended with modest visual branding, but the casual observer would have a hard time to understand that the film was, in fact, an advertisement. The spots told a story in the form of poetry, a story that had nothing to do with banking. They were (the campaign is still current at the time of writing in 2020) supported by a YouTube campaign in which anyone can upload a video of their own poem recitation in a national competition. The campaign has won industry awards and accounted for some 20 per cent of switched bank accounts in 2018, earning a return on investment (ROI) of £2.66 for every £1 spent.[12] The strategy was presumably to generate a sense of authenticity for the brand, to encourage consumers to believe that the bank was interested in supporting individuals with its services, in a way that deviated from typical advertising clichés. Such creative campaigns are presented as entertainment: they tell a 'story' about the brand by inference, not necessarily in a conventional narrative arc, but in a way that is intended to engage the consumer emotionally. Media content that is entertaining and engaging gets shared and discussed on social media and this gives the brand an increased share of media voice, even if the conversation isn't specifically about the brand itself. In an earlier example, in mid-2013 former footballer David Beckham starred with digital reproductions of himself in a piece of promotional content for sports TV broadcaster Sky Sports. Beckham does dozens of these passive and implicit endorsements, and brands pay him handsomely (Said, 2013; Hackley and Hackley, 2015). The lack of an overt sales orientation in advertising is designed to build goodwill, presence and authenticity for the brand, and this can translate in the long term to sustained or increased market share, as the Nationwide example illustrates.

THE MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE ON ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

The managerial perspective is complementary to the consumer and socio-cultural perspectives, since our understanding of advertising is incomplete without an insight into the material conditions from which it emerged (Alvesson, 1998; McFall, 2004; Kelly et al., 2005). In other words, to understand what it is and how it operates, we also need to understand why it is there in the first place. For organisational managers, advertising and promotion are seen as indispensable tools for supporting a wide variety of marketing, corporate and business objectives. There is plenty of scepticism about advertising from clients: brand managers are usually under pressure to account for their advertising budgets by linking them to increases in sales or market share in the short to medium term. They often have little use for theories of advertising. This is understandable, because in the long term they are in a different job, or out of a job. Many others in the marketing business feel that they have to match competitor adspend for fear of losing market share if they don't. Brand advertising campaigns are driven by carefully selected aims and objectives designed to achieve benefits to the organisation that is paying for the advertising. However, it is fair to say that some advertising expenditure is driven by organisational politics and competitive neurosis. It can be important for some brands in competitive markets to match competitors' advertising budget in order to maintain market share. While the managerial motives behind advertising can sometimes be confused or obscure, the force of advertising lies behind many of the world's major brands (Kover and Goldberg, 1995; Holt and Cameron, 2010). Even though there are many documented advertising success stories, there are persistent questions hanging over advertising's effectiveness and the genuine return it delivers on investment. As we shall see later in the book, these questions are not necessarily resolved by social analytics. As a consequence, the advertising budget is often the first to be cut in difficult economic times and mutual insecurity can colour the relationships between clients and advertising agencies. Like a star-crossed relationship, most high-volume consumer businesses can't live with advertising, and they can't survive without it.

HOW DO MANAGERS THINK ADVERTISING WORKS?

Advertising's ability to persuade people to buy products and services in the short term is often overstated. Instead, it is often used in much the same way as publicity, to generate and maintain market presence and to reassure consumers, while also reminding shareholders, employees and competitors that the brand remains salient (Ehrenberg et al., 2002). The efficacy of market targeting, segmentation, persuasion and brand loyalty may all be overstated at times, as consumers are creatures of habit (Sharp, 2010). A strategy of long-term brand building may not always grab the imagination of the brand manager who has weekly sales charts waved in his or her face at the regular board meetings, but soft sell can translate to sales simply by being remembered in the right way by enough consumers. Human beings have a short-term memory capacity of about six or seven items (psychologists call this Miller's magic number seven, after George A. Miller's theory about short-term memory). It used to be axiomatic in advertising practice that consumers would typically make a choice between three alternatives for most purchases, and the internet increased this to five. Most purchases are not researched exhaustively, so we will often choose from the brands we can recall without effort, and which are easy to find. Factor in consumer markets of many millions of people, and it seems self-evident that the most memorably, and the most persistently, advertised brands will take the top few places in the market, provided they are readily available, competitive in quality and subjectively seen as giving value. Given the possibility that sales dynamics might conform to some degree to this kind of loose model, the aforementioned shift from advertising towards non-advertising branded content is easily explained. We should add that this 'model' of how advertising works is not one of the many that compete for space in the top journals. It is derived from informal conventional wisdom in the advertising industry and, if it has any credence, it has several implications, which we go into in the next chapter. For now, we can simply leave it as given that in spite of the multi-million dollar scientific research projects that have been conducted into how advertising 'works', there might just be a fairly prosaic general explanation for the sustained success of the top brands in each market. Good advertising is novel, striking, fun, relevant and not boring. To use the analogy of one veteran advertising guru, Paul Feldwick (2015), the brand is a circus, and the job of advertising is to keep the crowd entertained. Of course, this axiom applies to creative advertising, whatever form that takes. The guiding logic of programmatic social media advertising is more utilitarian and behavioural, and we will address these different rationales for advertising as the book progresses.

It must be acknowledged that the purposes advertising serves may differ somewhat under different economic and cultural conditions. In the USA, for example, TV advertising seems to serve its economic function to communicate offers with typically direct and forthright advertising, much of which is focused on relatively local markets. The huge size of the country, the competitiveness of its markets compared to smaller countries' such as the oligopoly-dominated UK's, and the fragmented nature of its media markets frame the style and content of its advertising, Super Bowl advertising being the exception (see the Chapter 6 case study). In the UK, on the other hand, TV advertising tends to be less direct and more of a soft sell: it tells branded stories, as does the Nationwide example described above, and that may be because UK consumers are already familiar with many of the offers in our oligopolistic supermarkets, we just need them to be made to seem more interesting so we'll keep buying. Another difference between the advertising markets in the UK and the USA is that state-controlled, non-commercial media outlets (mainly the BBC) occupy dominant positions in the UK media infrastructure, limiting the capacity for advertising and also perhaps limiting the capacity for consumers to tolerate it. That is not to suggest that there are no offer-based retail TV advertisements in the UK. We are simply suggesting that creative advertising appeals, and consumers, are subject to regional variations.

There will always be examples of TV ads that capture the public imagination and build brand presence out of all proportion to their budget, and of branded content that achieves millions of social media shares in days, but these are rare. The truth is much advertising needs only to be good enough in order to maintain market share and brand presence, and it is quite rare for entirely new brands to break into the top few places in established product or service markets because of the financial and technical barriers to entry. While all this is a simplification, it might help explain the popularity of some leading brands of fast food and household detergent whose ubiquitous advertising campaigns are often excoriated for their cliché-ridden narratives and deplorable creative standards, but they are hard to forget and they seem to play a part in the success of the brand. Besides, a huge advertising budget can act as a barrier to entry, even if the advertising is rubbish, thus it can protect incumbent market leaders from competition. In general, advertising strategy needs to be understood in the context of the needs of the brand and the local competitive conditions under which it operates. Advertising sells stuff, but how it does so is a complex matter.

THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN BRAND MARKETING

It is important to appreciate advertising's place within an interconnected tissue of mediated communication. Marketing communications in general, and advertising in particular, are a major source of competitive advantage in consumer markets (Shimp, 2009). Other elements of the marketing mix occur prior to promotional communication, yet it is the communication that stamps the brand identity on a market. In a world of near-instant communication and rapid technology transfer, it is difficult for brand owners to police their global intellectual copyright. The brand has to stand out as a communication, so that consumers will recognise it and actively seek it out for the symbolic values it represents (Gardner and Levy, 1955). In this way, successful branding creates a quasi-monopoly and a basis for earning what economists call 'supernormal' (i.e. higher) profits. In a sense, it is a mere tautology to draw an equivalence between the most successful brands and their promotion. It makes sense for the most successful mass-market brands to protect their market share by spending more on advertising than rivals can afford. Coca-Cola, for example, seems to owe much of its success to its advertising (Holt and Cameron, 2010). Much of the advertising paid for by major brands is not about persuading individuals to buy, but about building a market presence (Sharp, 2010) and, in the case of some iconic brands, a cultural presence (Holt, 2004). Many people have never owned a Mercedes, shaved with Gillette or walked in Jimmy Choos, but many of those people would be able to describe the brand values if asked, and they might buy it if they had the means to do so. All the totality of communication about and around a brand informs the cultural meaning of that brand for both consumers and non-consumers.

Brand management is a painstaking art and attention to detail is often paramount for brand management. Decisions on pricing, design, packaging, distribution outlet and even raw materials are often taken with one eye on the brand's core values and how these might be perceived in the light of media coverage of the brand. The term media coverage now includes citizen journalism, internet publications, weblogs, video blogging, chatrooms, Facebook pages and scores of other social media forums, as well as copy produced by professional journalists for established print publications, brand blogs or other digital publications. It is an overstatement to argue that communication is all there is to brand marketing, but it is a truism that advertising and marketing communications have assumed a key importance in the destiny of brands and their producing organisations (but see Wells, 1975; Schultz et al., 1993).

Advertising alone does not make the brand but the successful consumer brand is, nevertheless, closely identified with its portrayal in advertising and other marketing communications media. The brand 'image' and its symbolism have come to represent dynamic and enduring sources of consumer interest (and company revenue) that brand management are keen to try to shape or control (Levy, 1959; Ogilvy, 1983). Marketing communications do not simply portray brands: they constitute those brands in the sense that the meaning of the brand cannot be properly understood in separation from the consumer perceptions of its brand name, logo, advertising, media editorial, portrayal in entertainment shows, peer comment on social media and the other communications associated with it. Whether brand A is better designed, more attractive, easier to use or more useful than brand B is frequently something that cannot be decided finally and objectively. It is usually, to some degree, a matter of opinion. This is where advertising acquires its suggestive power. It occupies a realm in which consumers are actively seeking suggestions to layer consumption with new social significance. Advertisers offer us this symbolic material. As consumers we are not passive dupes being taken in by exaggerated claims: we are complicit in our own exploitation. We get something out of being sold intangible dreams and unrealisable fantasies. We find that life becomes more interesting when our choice of deodorant or sugar substitute becomes a statement of personal identity and lifestyle aspiration. We must do.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (IMC) AND BRAND TOUCHPOINTS

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) has become a feature of many textbooks (Schultz et al., 1996; Shimp, 2009) but the industry has long since treated advertising and promotion campaigns as necessarily multi-channel and multi-media. Given the collapse of real-time mass-media audiences, and the extraordinary reach of many digital platforms, integration of platforms and channels in a single campaign is necessary in order to achieve the scale and reach that brands need. The most visible aspects of commercial communication for consumers are probably advertisements placed in **above-the-line** media such as TV, outdoor, the press, cinema or commercial radio, along with major digital content or influencer campaigns. But organisations know that consumers' experience of brands is integrated in another sense: consumers will not normally distinguish between different communication channels when they think of a brand or an organisation. The extent of brand touchpoints with which consumers can engage is multiplied exponentially by social media (Hackley and Hackley, 2018). So, organisations need to be conscious of the way that their various communications can be interpreted and of how these interpretations might interact with those from other communication sources.

For example, as consumers encounter corporate communications through vehicle liveries, letterhead design, corporate advertising, staff uniforms, telephone conversations with organisational staff and press coverage of the organisation's activities, and reproductions of all these in social media imagery and user-generated content (UGC), they will assimilate these experiences into their overall understanding of the brand. They will also assimilate news coverage, social media chatter, blog comment, press and PR and any number of other sources into their aggregated idea of a brand. Corporate identity is a distinct field of research and practice but much of its importance lies in the connection consumers make between corporations and their brands in an IMC landscape (Melewar and Wooldridge, 2001). In a promotional culture media brands interpenetrate each other and commercial logic permeates media content. It is in this multi-dimensional mediascape that brand managers have to try to maintain some kind of stability of meaning for their brands. Social media have facilitated consumer activism and engagement around brands as never before, and control over the brand image is now a highly nuanced and iterative process. To this end, the integration of different but thematically linked brand communications across a number of media channels is now a default position for most promotional campaigns.

Other signifiers of brand meaning can include price (Veblen (1970 [1899]) or the architecture and floor design of retail stores. In the early 1900s US department store retailers were well aware of the power of impressive architecture in creating environments that inspired consumers to consume (Marchand, 1998). The interior design of retail outlets is also a powerful signifier in the marketing process. Retail organisations often commission detailed research into in-store consumer behaviour in order to help the design to cohere with the brand image of the store and to enhance sales per square foot of floor space. For some fashion retail brands, such as the clothes brand Abercrombie and Fitch, every detail, from the volume of in-store music (60 decibels) to the look of the 'models' (i.e. retail assistants), is part of the brand symbolism.[13]

As consumers, then, we understand brands holistically by assimilating meanings from many diverse channels of communication. These brand paratexts (Hackley and Hackley, 2018) can include media editorial, visual imagery from memes, social media posts and blogs, and also customer service encounters either digitally or in person, television and press advertising and retail store displays, brand logos wherever displayed, news and opinion, product design and price. All these paratexts converge to inform the consumer's understanding of a given brand. Brands subsist symbolically as a nebulous and mutable, yet enduring, memory of many kinds of consumer experience. Brands have a tangible, concrete reality, of course: they are created through human and technological processes, they require resources and they usually have a tangible manifestation, even if they are digital brands such as Facebook (the laptop or smartphone), Uber (taxi cabs) or Airbnb (rentals). Most importantly, a brand also has a secret life, as symbolic abstraction. This abstraction, sometimes called the brand image, in ad man David Ogilvy's (1983) term, acts in concert with its more tangible dimensions to frame and cue the overall idea of that brand.

The integrated perspective of this book does not intend to conflate disciplines or media channels that are, rightly, considered by managers to be separate and distinct. Rather, it acknowledges the blurring and convergence of communication media sources in consumers' outlook in the post-digital age. It also acknowledges that communications act interdependently: ideas can be reinforced through more than one channel, providing more than one route to consumer activation. Brands are invariably located within a context (Hackley, 2013a) and that context inflects their meaning.

SOCIAL MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

The managerial perspective in advertising and promotion is not confined to profit-making activities. 'Social marketing' is a genre of promotion that addresses issues of social concern, and is typically funded by charities, lobby groups and government departments (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971; Kotler and Roberto, 1989; Szmigin et al., 2011). Campaigns for public policy ends, such as improving road safety or reducing alcohol consumption (Hackley et al., 2015), are amongst the non-commercial aims of advertising campaigns. Many public services, charities and government departments use advertising campaigns to try to promote their causes or to change behaviour or attitudes. Social marketing, and specifically social advertising, can sometimes shout louder than commercial advertising. In terms of impact, it can do so by shocking audiences into paying attention (controversial advertising), at least for the duration of the first ad. Social campaigns are allowed by the regulatory authorities, at least in the UK, to push the boundaries of tasteful depiction further than brand advertising, because of their ostensibly virtuous motives. Ads on UK television depicting car crashes, child abuse and drug taking have been pretty hard-hitting, but their aims of reducing car-crash injuries, violent or sexual abuse of children and addiction to illegal drugs are deemed by the UK advertising regulator, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), to be worth supporting and therefore they are allowed to be quite shocking. Whether or not shocking social advertisements are actually effective in achieving their aims, or in merely getting PR profile for the cause, is a difficult question to answer.

In some cases, social marketing and advertising have been turned to commercial use, where a brand decides that linking its values with a cause or a particular charity might help its commercial brand **positioning**. For example, Unilever's Dove brand in the UK has created a long-running and successful campaign based around the idea that women are misrepresented in cosmetics and personal care products advertising. The Dove 'campaign for real beauty' includes a charitable foundation supporting women's interests and promotes the idea that 'real' women need not try to conform to the idealised stereotypes of typical, Photoshopped cosmetics advertising (see the Chapter 10 case study).

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON ADVERTISING

One of the nice things about teaching advertising is that it is such an immediate part of daily experience. As a result, it is relatively easy to gain a sense of student engagement with the subject. Few people do not have opinions on advertisements they have seen. This can give the subject of advertising great resonance as a subject of study that is suitable for a wide variety of practical and theoretical treatments. Beyond the classroom, advertising can occasionally have an astonishing power to grasp widespread attention and, in a few celebrated cases, change entire markets. For example, the legendary 'Laundrette' ad that agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty (now BBH London) created in the 1982 campaign for Levi's 501 jeans[14] used American provenance to revolutionise the denim jeans market in general and sales of Levi's in particular for the following decade. It has been claimed that the campaign increased sales of denim jeans by some 600 per cent. Other campaigns have become so talked about they have changed language – for example, when a campaign for Budweiser beer increased market share for the brand and earned valuable free publicity simply because they added a word ('Whassup')[15] to the vernacular of American English (and even earned a listing in *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English*). The cultural resonance of the ad was reflected in the fact that a parody of it was re-created with the original cast in 2008 as a political ad supporting the Obama presidential campaign. The brand was not mentioned, and neither did it play any part in the ad, but viewers would have been well aware of the brand the ad connoted.[16] Advertising has the potential to capture the popular imagination in a way that feels like a very intimate part of people's lives. Social media now leverage this aspect of advertising, the potential to be talked about, adding an air of cultural charisma to advertising as the most enigmatic of creative industries. For example, in 2015 a picture depicting a dress the colour of which was a matter of argument became a popular social media meme. The UK-based charity, the Salvation Army, produced an anti-domestic violence social advertising campaign, 'The Dress', depicting a bruised and battered woman wearing a similar dress with the strapline, 'Why is it so hard to see black and blue?'[17] An amusing social media meme and the personal tragedy of domestic violence were linked through advertising in a hugely unlikely but striking juxtaposition, illustrating the extraordinary capacity for advertising to sometimes punch above its weight in cultural impact.

Advertising and promotion, then, constitute a vivid cultural presence in market economies, influencing and inter-penetrating social and cultural values. This is important – too many academic studies conceive of advertising in terms of a narrow cognitive influence on individual consumer decision making, but advertising does not exist in a cultural vacuum. It is ineluctably a form of social communication and the socio-cultural perspective draws on concepts and theories from **semiotics**, cultural anthropology, literary studies and sociology to try to articulate the various ways in which advertising mobilises, exploits and contributes to cultural meanings (Leiss et al., 2005). Advertising agencies know this, and most duly employ people from many disciplinary backgrounds, including cultural anthropology, ethnography and sociology, alongside history, philosophy, psychology, literature, art, aesthetics and business graduates (Hackley, 2013b).

INTERPRETING ADVERTISING: HUMOUR AND HYPERBOLE

One peculiarity of advertising is that consumers are expected to be able to distinguish between untruth and humorous hyperbole, but the advertisers make every effort to blur this distinction. This is just one reason why this sophisticated communication form is rightfully a part of literary academic study. The interaction of consumers with advertising and promotional communication is usually too complex and subtle to be thought of as, simply, a matter of either fact or fiction. If an ad implies that a man's sexual attractiveness and social status will be enhanced by shaving with a Gillette razor or deodorising with Lynx body spray,[18] surely this is merely preposterous rather than untrue? Who would possibly take such an idea seriously?[19] To be sure, consumer perceptions and beliefs about brands are self-sustaining to some degree: we believe what we want to believe, sometimes in the face of contradictory evidence. Did doctors ever really think cigarette smoking was good for our health?[20] Are we slimmer because we put calorie-free sugar substitute in our coffee? The global rise in obesity rates since the diet-product industry took off would suggest that the answer is no.[21] It can hardly be denied that there is an important element of wish fulfilment in what we choose to believe in advertising. The advertisers provide the suggestion, and, as consumers, we complete the gestalt. Gestalt psychology refers to the way people complete the circle of meaning from partial cues or prompts. In other words, our inference goes beyond the evidence. Advertising plays with the grey area of meaning, using implicit **connotation** and suggestion as well as making explicit claims (Tanaka, 1994; Cook, 2001). The socio-cultural perspective attempts to delve beneath the literal interpretation of advertising messages to access their symbolic codes and generate insight into their cultural meaning (Mick, 1986; Sherry, 1987; Danesi, 1994; McCracken, 2005).

Researchers have drawn attention to the rhetorical force in advertising of what is implied rather than explicitly stated. Tanaka (1994) argues that 'covert' or implicit communication allows advertisers to make claims that they could not get away with making explicitly. The point here is that implicit communication is not accidental or incidental to advertising but a carefully considered element of advertising creative strategy. As McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) note, some advertising messages that would be illegal if verbalised can, instead, be implied visually. Crucially, researchers say that we do not have to consciously believe implied meanings in ads for them to register with us: we only have to understand what the implied message is in order for it to appear persuasive.

Advertising's economic purpose is to communicate offers to facilitate consumer choice and market competition and stimulate demand, but for it to perform this function well, it demands a relatively sophisticated level of discernment from consumers who have learned the reading strategies demanded by advertising (for example, see O'Donohoe, 1997). Advertising is rarely a significant part of the school curriculum, yet negotiating a way through the advertising landscape is important to the economic and social competence of citizens. Advertising is often accused of exploiting the vulnerable, the less educated, the very young, the very old and those with access to fewer resources. Advertising professionals are sometimes characterised as unwitting tools of capitalist domination, smoothing the way for global corporations to exploit the world's consumers. What cannot be doubted is that advertising is worth studying, for all these reasons and more, yet the ways in which advertising texts communicate are still relatively poorly understood and under-examined, especially as regards the roles of implicit meanings, such as irony and humorous hyperbole. Who can doubt that this is so at the time of writing when 'fake' news, propaganda and outright untruth dominate discussion of political advertising and promotion. There has never been so much information available to any who can use the search function on a smartphone, yet the confusion is palpable as voters try to negotiate their way through the claim, counterclaim, smear and innuendo that characterise much contemporary political advertising. Advertising has been accused by some of contributing to this confusion by normalising the crass persuasive strategies of brand advertising until voters can no longer relate to reasoned political argument.

FUNCTIONALITY, SYMBOLISM AND THE SOCIAL POWER OF BRANDS

In order to understand the role of advertising in brand marketing it is important to focus not only on the promotional sales message but also on the symbolic meanings incorporated into the brand (Gardner and Levy, 1955; Levy, 1959; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Belk, 1988) as we discuss in Chapter 3. Brands have functionality – they do something for consumers, they solve problems. They also have a symbolism that is largely articulated through advertising and promotion. Brands communicate symbolically in the sense that they are signs or combinations of signs (words, music, colours, logos, packaging design, and so on) that convey abstract values and ideas. For consumers, the world of marketing is a kaleidoscope of communication, the component parts of which are impossible to disentangle. When commentators say that marketing, and marketing communications, are inseparable, they are making an important point (Schultz et al., 1993: 46; Leiss et al., 2005; Shimp, 2009). Every aspect of marketing management (price, distribution, product design) can carry powerfully suggestive symbolism. In an important sense, consumers occupy a symbolic economy in which the meaning of symbols is negotiated and traded through a mediated market. Marketing in general can be understood as the management of meaning, and marketing meanings are mobilised primarily through advertising and promotion, in all their forms (McCracken, 1987, 1990).

Anthropologists have long noted the importance of ownership and display of prized items for signifying social identity and status in non-consumer societies. In economically advanced societies, brands take this role as a 'cultural resource' that enables and extends social communication (Holt, 2002: 87; see also Belk, 1988; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; McCracken, 2005). The influence of brands is such that even resistance to brands has become a defining social position. The 'social power' of brands refers to the meaning that goes beyond functionality and is a symbolic reference point among consumers and non-consumers alike (Feldwick, 2002: 11). This symbolic meaning is powerfully framed by advertising and sustained through other forms of communication such as word-of-mouth, public relations, product and brand placement in entertainment media, sponsorship and package design, and through the brand's presence in social media (Hackley et al., 2018, 2019).

Those marketing professionals more concerned with logistics, supply chain management, order fulfilment, customer service operations, quality management, production engineering and the many other concrete and prosaic activities that bring products and service to the market might not experience marketing in such terms on a daily basis. Brands are material entities and they have functional attributes. But they operate in a consumer plane in which the functional and the symbolic interpenetrate. We might convince ourselves that our purchases are based on a cold-eyed appraisal of a brand's material and functional qualities, but the market dominance of some brands over other, equally functional but less symbolically resonant ones tells a different story. One marketing legend holds that Pepsi consistently beats Coke in blind taste tests. Whether or not this is true in all cases, it articulates the truism that a brand is far more than a tangible product.

The functionality of a brand, then, refers to what it does: the symbolism of a brand refers to what it means. One is not necessarily implied in the other. Advertising and promotion are central to the creation and maintenance of the wider symbolic meaning of brands. This wider meaning can give brands a cultural presence that goes beyond purchase and ownership. Brands such as Marlboro, Mercedes-Benz, Gucci, Prada and Rolls-Royce have powerful significance for non-consumers as well as for consumers. Branded items are recognised, and they carry a promise of quality and value. But the symbolic meaning the brand may have for friends, acquaintances and strangers cannot be discounted as a factor in its appeal. For example, a simple item of clothing such as a shirt will sell in far greater numbers if it is bedecked with a logo that confers a symbolic meaning on that item. Wearing a branded shirt, as opposed to an unbranded one, can be said to confer a symbolic status on the wearer because of the values of affluence and social privilege and taste the brand represents (Schor, 1998: 47, cited in Szmigin, 2003: 139). As with implied meaning in advertisements, we may be fully aware that this, seen literally, may be a risible or preposterous notion, but that does not necessarily undermine the communicative force of the brand's symbolism. Brands have a cultural resonance that is not limited to their materiality (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2005; Danesi, 2006: Campbell, 2013).

Marketing is replete with symbolism in many forms. Marketing activities of all kinds can be seen to combine signs that resonate with cultural meanings (Williamson, 1978; Umiker-Sebeok, 1987; Barthes, 2000). The futuristic design of a Dyson vacuum cleaner or the clean, aesthetic lines of an iPod have the powerful appeal of implied values that are very important to the consumer. A Rolex watch might be a well-made jewellery item with time-keeping utility but the Rolex brand is best known as an ostentatious symbol of wealth. Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, California, Madison Avenue, New York, and Knightsbridge, London, are home to many designer stores because these locations have become culturally identified with prestige retail outlets. The location and architecture of the retail outlet, as well as the price, can often carry a powerful symbolism for the brands.

ADVERTISING AND ETHICS

Advertising is a topic that often inflames public debate, dissent and disagreement. Advertising is blamed, by some, for many social evils. It is blamed for causing obesity, anorexia, bad manners, reckless driving, excessive drinking – the list is long. Yet, paradoxically, advertising is also widely regarded as trivial. It tends to occupy a lowly status in our cultural hierarchy, beneath popular art, literature, movies, even stand-up comedy performers. Yet its lowly cultural status is belied by our fascination with it. We enjoy TV shows about the funniest ads and we often talk about the latest ads in our daily conversations. Cook (2001) notes this duality about advertising's cultural status. It is regarded as both trivial and powerful, banal and sinister, amusing and degrading. Even though advertising is a familiar form of communication in developed economies, we still struggle to come to terms with its contradictions. In spite of its putative triviality, it is clearly a powerful cultural presence.

Although the level of popular interest in advertising is great, there is little consensus about its role in society. Some argue that it corrupts cultural life with its insistent, hectoring presence cajoling us to buy ever-greater quantities of goods and services. Advertising intrudes into ever more social spaces, both public and private. Many schools, especially in the USA, now accept fees to give exclusive rights to commercial organisations to advertise and sell their goods on campus. Even religious observance is not immune from advertising's influence. Advertising-style slogans in brash colours promoting religious observance can be seen outside many places of worship. Evidently, advertising influences the communication norms of the very culture of which it is part. But while some have a political objection to advertising in all its forms, many people are irritated not by advertising in general but by what they see as its excesses, whether these are to do with its ubiquity or with the offensiveness of particular creative executions. Even acknowledging advertising's unique ideological force in promoting consumerism as a lifestyle, legitimising capitalism and framing everyday experience does not necessarily imply an extreme anti-advertising stance (Williamson, 1978; Marchand, 1985; Elliott and Ritson, 1997; Wharton, 2015). Few can deny that advertising is intrinsic to the creation of wealth. Many would argue that it has an equally significant role in the free and untrammelled expression of ideas, a socially progressive exchange of 'ideas for living', to adapt John Stuart Mill's[22] phrase. In the USA, advertising is protected under the first amendment of the constitution as a branch of free speech. Of course, there are also counter-arguments that position advertising at the nexus of a capitalist system of domination that commodifies social relations and stifles human creativity rather than articulating it (Lash and Lury, 2007; Davis, 2013).

Even for many who accept the economic inevitability of advertising, though, its forms and styles provide particular sources of annoyance. 'Pop-up' internet ads, autoplay videos, programmatic algorithms that link ads to our social media browsing, uninvited SMS texts and email 'spam' are a continuing irritation for many internet users. Unwanted junk mail annoys millions of householders daily. Roadside poster sites are sometimes accused of polluting the urban environment or even of distracting drivers and causing road accidents. In addition to intruding on our private time and visual amenity, advertising can be a source of ethical transgression. Organisations are often accused of using advertising unethically for commercial advantage. There is persistent criticism of advertising's effect on children's health and moral development, a topic discussed at greater length in Chapter 9. The rise of 'pester power' as a marketing technique and the distortion of childhood values into those of adults are two of the trends that ad agencies have been accused of initiating, or at least exploiting. All these issues reflect concern with the social responsibility, **ethics** and regulation of advertising.

The diversity of views advertising attracts reflects its role at the centre of what Wernick (1991) called 'promotional culture' (see also Davis, 2013; Powell, 2013). Within promotional culture, we grow accustomed to spending significant sums of money on items that are not essential for survival. For example, in the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic hitting some countries, the response from consumers was panic buying, often of items that didn't seem to make much sense. In the UK, people cleared supermarkets of toilet paper roll. There was no shortage, and none was likely. This was an irrational response from scared people who consumed unreflexively to assuage their panic. We have been taught by consumer culture to associate happiness with consumption. Indeed, in many ways, we define our identity according to the cues we receive from advertising (Hackley et al., 2019). As advertising and promotion make continuous consumption of inessential branded items a culturally normalised practice, other competing cultural values that encourage abstention from consumption are relatively reduced in status. Today, in advanced economies, over-indulgence is the norm and waste is everywhere, in spite of powerful movements against environmental waste and resistant to the global dominance of consumer culture. Changes in cultural norms and practices of consumption in some countries (such as, in the UK, the relative decline of families eating home-cooked meals together at a set time) to some extent may reflect the influence of promotional culture. Deeply held values and practices are undermined and finally overthrown, partly, though not entirely, under the influence of advertising. Advertising's apparent triviality as a sub-category of popular art should not distract us from its profound cultural influence in framing and changing, as well as reflecting, the way we live.

According to some critics, advertising offers the illusion that one can live 'the good life' by buying material goods (Belk and Pollay, 1985a). Yet advertising is also an easy target to blame for moral weaknesses of greed and selfishness that have characterised humanity since its beginnings. Advertising and promotion are, in the end, necessary to economic growth, wealth creation and consumer choice. How we manage the advertising that we make and see has deep implications for the wider world in which we live and it is incumbent on consumers, managers, advertising practitioners and policy makers to have a better understanding of the ways in which advertising wields its influence, in order to make informed choices about advertising policy, regulation and practice.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the broad themes of the book. The perspective is grounded in creative advertising and the creative agency system, but this advertising environment is now deeply integrated with digital communication to the extent that about half of global advertising expenditure is spent on internet advertising and half on traditional media. The book takes a broad perspective to examine the advertising environment holistically, from the perspective of consumers, managers and social scientists, and it embraces different theoretical perspectives to do so. One key theme concerns the blurring of boundaries between promotional mix disciplines (PR, advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship, etc.) and the shift towards regarding all promotional communication as forms of 'content'. The opening chapter has offered an outline of the way the book will navigate this complex area.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1 Make a list of all the forms of advertising and promotion that you have encountered or heard of in the last month. Does the list surprise you? Can you think of any social spaces that have not yet been exploited by advertisers?

(Continued)

2 After reading this chapter, has your view of advertising's social impact changed? Make a list of arguments in favour of advertising and contrast it with a list of arguments against advertising. Convene a study group to discuss their implications: can the opposing viewpoints be reconciled?

3 List all the communication sources you can think of that might potentially influence your perception of a brand. Can you think of ways in which your perception of three brands has been so influenced? In your view, which communications channel was most influential in forming your impression of the brand? Why was this?

4 Gather all the promotional material you can find for two brands. What meanings do you feel are implied by the imagery, the typography and the other features of these promotions? Could the meanings be interpreted differently by different people?

CASE STUDY

A rose by any other name – video content and advertising

Video content is a major category of contemporary advertising, taking about US$1 billion a year, which is up to one third of the entire adspend on internet advertising. About half of all online traffic is on mobile devices, and video content (or, if you prefer, video advertising) has tremendous reach and impact. Over the top (OTT) video[23] is streamed over the internet in a disruption of satellite, cable and terrestrial broadcasting. Three video on demand (VOD) models dominate: subscription VOD (e.g. Netflix), transactional VOD (e.g. Amazon) and ad-supported VOD (e.g. YouTube). In many cases, consumers and families watch the entire video in much the same way people used to have to watch TV ads in traditional TV spots, but with OTT video ads can be precisely targeted and measured with detailed metrics. Videos can be enhanced with cinematographic techniques (such as Cinemagraphs) that give the video appealingly high production values. Of course, digital attention spans are often short and many videos are short, featuring on platforms such as Instagram Stories, Twitter or Facebook. However, there is also room for the longer feature video. For example, in late 2016 BMW launched *The Escape*[24] co-starring Dakota Fanning and Clive Owen, as a homage to its industry-changing movie series of some 15 years before, called *The Hire*, which also starred Owen. *The Escape* is a short but stunning action film, which happens to also star the new BMW 5 Series. In effect, it is a product-placement opportunity with full creative control. The movie was followed up with another, *The Small Escape*, in 2019.[25] In 2012, Jaguar got into the movie business too, to accompany the launch of its then new F Type model, with an action sequence starring *Homeland* actor Damian Lewis, and a soundtrack from Lana Del Ray. In 2020 Jaguar followed up with a more conventional piece of advertising video content but using equally high production values.[26] Mini action movies like *The Escape* can be launched on 'owned' media (the brand's own YouTube channel and websites) and achieve huge social sharing and media comment. From a strategic marketing perspective, the exposure in a self-made movie must compare well with, for example, exposure in a

Bond movie (in which BMW cars have been historically well represented) but with the added benefit of total creative control for the brand.

At its best, video content evinces all the things great advertising should be about. It's a blank slate, or a blank screen, waiting to activate consumers through great writing, creativity, wit, technical adroitness, visual and musical imagination, and spectacle. The fact that video content is not an advertisement, as such, but an entertainment, adds authenticity to its creative appeal. Video content has to be regarded by audiences as credible and resonant, and if it is, then this reflects positively on the brand. In a sense, video content tells stories that are not only self-contained, but are also iterative stories about the brand – Jaguar and BMW movies are ongoing stories of the brand values, reflecting fantasies of speed and adventure. In this broad sense, some video content can be thought of as a migration of transmedia storytelling from movies to advertising (Pratten, 2015). Transmedia storytelling normally refers to developments or chapters of one story that are told across different media channels. However, brand stories that are not connected to each other narratively are connected by the brand. Every video about a brand can be understood as a paratext – a secondary text – that refers to a primary text – the brand (Hackley and Hackley, 2018) – and inscribes meanings into the empty space that is the cultural construction of the brand.

Case questions

1. List all the examples of branded video content your group can think of. Which do you feel were commercially more effective? Why?
2. Social media shares, likes and comments have become more than merely an extension of viewing or reader figures for an advertisement, but a proxy for consumer engagement. In what ways do you feel that social media shares of video content might reflect benefits to brands?
3. Bought media space refers to advertising space that has been paid for by the brand. Earned media space refers to social media shares of a piece of promotional content, such as a video clip. Compare and contrast the benefits to advertisers of bought media space and earned media space.
4. Design a concept for a social networking website. How would you make your concept popular, and, if you were successful in building significant traffic, how do you think you could monetise that traffic ('by selling the site to Google' isn't an acceptable answer).

USEFUL JOURNAL ARTICLES

(These Sage articles can be accessed on the companion website.)

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NOTES

1 See a short introduction to the post-digital and advertising here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS9b2ogXZHQ&list=PLruy413USLjTD8q2uiWql3G8p5p66ZElD&index=9&t=0s&app=desktop

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2

ADVERTISING THEORY

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter is concerned mainly with theories that attempt to explain the influence advertising and promotional communication may have over consumers' attitudes and behaviour. The chapter opens with a discussion of the uses of theory. It then outlines three overlapping traditions of advertising theory. These are: 1) managerial theories that originated from advertising practice, including social media and digital advertising; 2) academic theories from communication and psychology research that were imported into advertising practice; and finally 3) academic theories that have been largely dawn from sociology, literary studies and cultural anthropology to try to explain advertising from a broader perspective. The chapter highlights some of the continuing contradictions raised by advertising theories as they play out both in academic research and professional practice.

KEY CHAPTER CONTENT

Why theorise advertising and promotion?

Practice-based advertising theory

Cognitive information processing theory in advertising
Socio-cultural theory in advertising

Levels of explanation in advertising theory: cognitive, social and cultural