The Advertising Show is Going on Brand Discourses Contemporary Metamorphoses and Hybridizations between Information, Entertainment, and Communication

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Abstract—**Advertising messages and, on a larger scale, all brand messages are undergoing grand metamorphoses under the strain of many different rationales. This paper intends to give a global perspective on these metamorphoses, through a semio-communication approach, analyzing them as variants of a massive advertising show finding its logic in what the author calls *advertisingness*.**

Keywords-component: brand, advertising, social networks, socio-semiotics, media

I. Introduction

Brands are ubiquitous in social networks for the last years. This presence is linked to different aims and accompanied by comments. Mainly, the professional point of view focuses on the idea that social media provide the possibility of a conversation based on transparency, equality, and proximity. These professional discourses stress the fact whenever it comes to social media marketing, that these devices enable brands to speak directly with consumers and, thus, avoid communicating only with traditional advertising, they call "paid media."

We intend to question globally brand discourses contemporary metamorphoses and hybridizations between information, entertainment and communication especially through the idea that, instead of distancing advertising, these messages tend to enhance the advertising show and spread the logic of advertising widely as a discourse, or *advertisingness.*

II. Communication Sciences, an Epistemological Point of View on Methodology

A. French Information and Communication Sciences as a Scientific Frame

The analysis we intend to develop here is based on French Information and Communication Sciences contemporary approaches [1], [2]. We choose this analytical basis firstly because we belong to it and secondly because we believe that these scientific approaches deserve to be better known outside the francophone area. We will more specifically mobilize, in French Communication Sciences, researchers are focused on the conceptualization, description or analysis of social, media and market discourses [3]. Their purpose is to comprehend how these discursive pieces, in their broadest sense including speech, images and all kind of media products, circulate between different social and media spaces thus building their media and public exposure. In this respect, commercial, advertising and brand speeches are considered as social discourses carrying out market mediation proceeding.

This specific point of view is neither psychological, sociological nor semiotic; the French information and communication sciences enable to build intermediate positions, which rely on previous analysis. The problematization developed by Barthes and Baudrillard about consumption as a social and symbolic system, basically a system of signification, linked to a sociological system of distinction, although determined by economic aspects [4], [5], [6], [7].

In this respect, our methodology is specifically designed to deal with signs and meanings linked to consumption items and speeches in a specific sociological, economic, cultural and communication background. The research results we bring forward are part of a bigger scale research program about the genealogy and contemporary forms of advertising show. We will concentrate on the analysis of contemporary advertising, branded content occurrences, public discourses and media or professional communications: corporate communication, advertising, journalistic discourse and, more widely, media communication. These communication productions provide a specific point of observation and enable to reach practices [8].

The present paper is based on researches conducted in the long run both individually and collectively with two colleagues from GRIPIC (Interdisciplinary Research Group on Information and Communication Process) from CELSA Sorbonne Université [9]. We developed conjointly and separately a communication sciences approach that gives equal weight to the communication process, the communication products (commercials, brand movies, museums, websites, social networks, and so on) and what professional people (advertising, communication and media people) publicly write or say about them.

This implies to work on openly commented uses to reach practices and thus find a way towards uses, representations, and users creative appropriations. This is different from reception studies as developed in media studies because it does not stick to media uses even if some of the receiver perspectives are taken in charge. We choose a socio-semiotic based approach dealing both with the negotiation of meaning in the process of

interpretation, the ongoing related infinite semiosis, and creative appropriation, or "poaching" as described by De Certeau [10].

B. A Sociosemiotic-based Method: Socio-semio-communication Analysis

In this respect, the choice of intertwining different methods is an epistemological choice [6]. This way of doing things takes in charge what people think, say, do, especially advertising professionals, and compares it, thanks to the socio-semiotic analysis of their communications productions, with what is happening in fact.

This point of view implies what we call "creative methodology" in research. We have to find each time the proper set of methods to question it, theoretically, in a proper way. Using already existing methods is usually the mainstream, but some research topics and objects need dedicated crafted method resulting from a thorough theoretical analysis. Then, it is a major stake to choose the best set and architecture of qualitative methods, not based on statistics or not able to give quantitative results, to question a research topic, in a proper theoretical way.

In this respect, microscale approaches are our choice especially and paradoxically to reach macro analysis. Many very detailed analysis on small elements, which in the end leads to deal with the different big corpus of small things, result in precious and unexpected results we would not have reached through direct macro analysis. Our theoretical position regarding methodology is one of a socio-semio-communication approach. Exploring and analyzing formal and strategic transformations of contemporary brand discourses requires a multimodal methodology respecting their great complexity as research objects. This is one way to keep the pace with the ongoing and never-ending metamorphosis of brand speeches. It makes possible the analyses of different discursive objects with many different forms, aims, and social status. We pose that brand discourses are semiotic artifacts and communication apparatus [11].

To be able to thoroughly analyze these discourses, it is necessary to provide a global and specific context understanding based on different aspects: technical and material conditions of production, socio-economic rationales at work dealing with economics, sociology of organizations, variety of professional players (advertising, communications, marketing, media professionals, State regulation and consumer groups.) From this, we build a semiotic approach of discourses, forms, formats, and contents based on discourse analysis, semiotics, economy, sociology, anthropology, taking into account the organization of companies, agencies, and business as well as culture. This is what we call a socio-semio-communication point of view, dealing with the negotiation of meaning in the interpretation of messages.

Thus, the following research results rely on content analysis mixing socio-semiotic analysis, visual semiotics, semio-linguistic analysis and discourse analysis on different kinds of elements: gathered elements from French and international

brands communications, media and new media discourses dealing with the same brands or themes. To analyze these productions thoroughly, we need both comprehensive and specific context understanding the specificities of brand discourses, or advertising.

C. Advertising, a Discourse Asserting the Existence of the Brand

Brand discourses, and especially advertising discourses, are driven by necessity to establish the existence of the brand. To achieve this goal, advertising messages need first to become messages and find receivers that will start the semiotic process of interpretation leading to the production of meaning and the assertion of existence. One cannot understand fully this specific mission of advertising and its ways to fulfill it without taking into account the number of constraints around it. The production of the advertising message deals with a lot of internal and external significant necessities, such as the cost of media space, the economic imperative and the need to lead to selling, the professional agenda, the social status of advertising, the national and international laws and so on.

From its beginnings, the advertising discourse has been with the brand and the packaging one of the three major market mediations that producers of goods created around the end of the nineteenth century to try to have direct access to consumers. They intended to skip selling intermediaries, like grocers who were taken as an obstacle because they were difficult to convince and to drive. In parallel to this longstanding existing market mediations (retailers, shopkeeper, salesman, market stall holders, and so on), they created these new mediations supposedly much easier to control: the first one is the brand, the second is a device dedicated to selling the product with its brand on it known as packaging and the third is a device to tell the existence of the brand known as advertising. Thus, advertising is fundamentally a discourse of existence for the brand.

This is built around the will to transform the client of a retailer, trusting him or her for the choice of the right product into a customer of a brand asking specifically for it and trusting it. The main point at stake is to have people "accept that the sign takes the place of the thing, the client is willing to buy words rather than objects" [12]. The physical exchange is paired with a symbolic exchange. The branded goods operate as sign values, as proposed by Baudrillard [5], [7], and people buy and consume mostly meanings. The advent of the consumer society [12] is linked to the guaranty provided firstly by shopkeepers, secondly by department stores and thirdly by brands that substitute for the knowledge of the products and this can go as far as replacing the consumption of the goods of the brand with consumption the signs of the brand.

In this process, goods become step-by-step signs that tend to make obsolete the value in use [5] [13] [14]. Eventually, the center of the relationship is not anymore with the seller, or even with the product, the heart of the system is now the brand and its communications products that happen to be, more often than not, advertising. In other words, the foundational and distinctive feature of advertising is its primary mission to tell and assert both the existence and the status of the brand. It has

to ensure the brand identification, awareness, and social recognition.

Hence, advertising messages are essentially legitimizing discourses declaring the existence of the brand. To do that, they first need to exist as a message, which means they need to catch the attention of a receiver. A large number of advertising technics are dedicated to this in the short or long term and try to ensure that the brand is known, renowned, recognized and legitimized.

For communication sciences, a brand is communication by nature and thus, has to be explored as a communication process and mediation, both communicated and communicating. A brand is, at the same time, an economic, semiotic, social and cultural item and is linked with different mediations: historically, as seen previously, a brand is market mediation, it is a social mediation as well participating into distinction and communicating it. A brand is also a symbolic mediation since the sign value substitutes for the value in use. Besides, it is a cultural mediation, in an anthropological way, since it enables a part of our everyday environment to be understandable, acceptable and rooted in a system of values.

Moreover, through advertising, a brand is a spectacular mediation as explained by Baudrillard when he writes that advertising has the virtue of being "playful" and appearing as a "show" that performs social regulation as did the former grand shows offered by the French monarchy. Along with this comes the aesthetic mediation as characterized by Morin [15] who explains that advertising messages specifically manage aesthetic, ludic and erotic dimensions to gain a sort of power of persuasion linked to the pleasure they give for free to the consumer.

It is time to go back to the semiotic nature of brands and advertising. As a semiotic mediation, a brand is a kind of program that frames communication exchanges and interactions [6]. Baudrillard [16] writes that the real language of consumption is the brand, that the whole advertising system is a metaphor for the brand. The brand has to produce connivance and belonging, working through a kind of impressionism in meaning, a kind of great condensation that turns into a unique thing a great diversity of objects. In this respect, a brand has a double function: it flags the product and rallies emotional connotations to serve its sole purpose: the selling or commercial exchange. The brand is, in the perspective of Baudrillard, a super sign.

In this respect, the brand is equally the starting and culmination point of the advertising message based on a constellation of products, items, and discourses that are constantly circulating. A set of constraints pressures massively the advertising messages, which deal with an intricate balance dedicated to the valorization of brands. It acts as a catalyst, a concentrating effect inducing a kind of semiotic precipitate, a condensed message. The preceding implies that the advertising discourse is highly connotative and frankly commercial, working along with the naturalization of its commercial nature, as demonstrated by Barthes [4], [17].

In his text "Le message publicitaire," Barthes explains that advertising messages can vary in their denotation, the message is different from one product or brand to the other. However, they all convey the same connotation, added meaning: "this signified is always unique and is always the same, whatever is the advertising message, in a word, the signified is the excellence of the product." The advertising message is, in a certain way, successful, when receivers understand its connotation.

In this respect, brands appear to work as Barthesian myths [4], activating at the same time potential significations and neutralizing existing ones. This gives brands a significant effect on the symbolic field. They do not hide their selling function; they distort it. Brands are powerful socio-communication matrices that transform everything in a system of signs saturated with consumption and selling.

This explains the upfront presence of connotation of excellence in advertising. Then why not directly say: "Buy my product"? This extra-work on the message, changing it, by professional, the "creative work" is necessary, according to Barthes, to naturalize instead of marking the commercial aim. At the same time, it deeply links the advertising discourse to the great collective, social imagination [18]. The advertising message "condense the richest rhetoric and often reach with the precision of one single word the great dreamlike themes of humanity." They achieve this using symbols and that are widely known, a kind of "already there" language without any extra work needed to understand it.

This means that advertising is interpreted as a whole without differentiation or interpretative articulations as Eco demonstrates [19], [20]. Analyzing the advertising message, he first demonstrates its high complexity, with a building articulated on five levels. Then, he concludes that, given the small amount of time and willingness a person will allow to the understanding of a commercial, it is almost sure that no one does this full and extremely complex interpretative work. Thus advertising messages must be interpreted as a whole and need to use what he calls "already said" elements. In his point of view, these persuasive messages are only accepted because they use already known reasoning to promote goods we already wanted. Brand and advertising professionals assemble messages with "already known" and ready-made elements that society has already codified: "the message only repeats what the user already knows and waits"[19].

Thus, advertising messages must be highly stereotypical and intertextual which links them to the great contemporary collective imagination. Semiotic condensation compels advertising to be stereotypical. We could write: advertising = stereotypy+intertextuality. It is the ideal meeting of industrialized discourses with a great ability to host other discourses, especially those who can be presented as the expression of "social collective you of the text" [21]. At the same time, advertising discourse selects cuts and hypertrophies these given elements.

Since the advertising message is the principal scene of ostentation for the brand, hence it is its best showplace. Its formal patterns enable advertising to "in a given context, [to] show its communication purpose and meta-communication proposition" [17]. In other words, the single presence of a brand in a message has the unique power to transform into a

kind of advertising message. It enters the order of advertising discourse by the work of a semiotic predilection [22]. Whenever a message includes a brand that is the issuer, then the message is advertising at the core, a characteristic we name *advertisingness* [6], [8], [9]. Since advertising messages are made to assert the existence of the brand, the boundaries of advertising seems to expand beyond their traditional, professionally driven, regular definitions into *advertisingness*.

III. THE ADVERTISING CALL: TACTICS AND STRATEGIES OF EXISTENCE FOR THE BRAND

A. The Advertising Call: Specificities of a Brand Mediation

Before going on with *advertisingness* of brand messages, we want to elaborate how advertising is made to achieve its role as a discourse of existence for the brand. It follows two main paths: tactics or strategies, according to the proposed by De Certeau: "I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles," "targets," or "objects" of research.) Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

I call a "tactic," on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances"[10].

Tactics are linked to short-term without capitalization. In this respect, it fits all the technics used in advertising messages to trigger attention. Strategies are the middle and long-term views used by brand managers and their advertising agencies to incorporate the affirmation of the brand on a long-time basis. In our point of view these both ways, strategies and tactics are two versions of the same idea we call *the advertising call* [23].

One of the first advertising practices in Europe was, since the Middle Ages, the advertising call and the almost forgotten personage of the Caller or town crier, then newsboy. He was the one in charge to shout the announcements at first and soon announcements and advertisements. This reminds us that the advertising message, first of all; needs a public; it has to be noticed and then heard, read or seen. Some advertising messages are mainly dedicated to achieve this goal and act as a shout to stop the customers. Before any rhetorical, aesthetical or even selling efficiency, advertising has to exist as a message especially since the main traditional media areas are already kind of saturated.

B. The Advertising Call: Tactics and Strategies of Existence

On a tactical basis, some of the contemporary advertisements are primarily a kind of call since their message both in its forms and contents is a kind of alert made up to establish and keep contact with a receiver. In this respect, advertising professionals devised one particular technic called *teasing*. It works in two steps. On stage one, a message is released without any brand; on stage two, the brand is revealed. In between, people are supposed to be puzzled and wait for the answer. In a completely different way, one can also analyze as an advertising call tactic any choice of provocation. The tactical advertising call can also relay on linguistics means such as the intentional use of grammatical and/or spelling mistakes, the use of a foreign language or the accumulation of highly sophisticated crafted neologisms [6], [24].

To fully understand the strategic level of the advertising call, we need to analyze firstly what we call the advertising *architext*. This is an extension of *software architexts*: " Architextual softwares are a kind of writing of writing. When you write in one of them, somebody has yet written upstream of you the forms in which you can compose a text. From the moment we created the term, architexts have constantly been proliferating amazingly so as to demonstrate their extraordinary power. Architexts shape the forms (word processors, presenters), the exchange of correspondence (mail, chat), the information retrieval (search engines), the intertextual relations (RSS readers), and so on. To sum up, architexts are software objects that go on industrializing the capacity of written forms to shape practices, as explained above, leading in those conditions on a renewed economy of writing"[22].

Extending this to commercial messages, we can say that classical media forms of advertising are architexts because they have shaped it, creating ad formats in which regular messages in press, TV, radio, billboard and even Internet have to match. At the same time, these formats enable us to recognize an ad whenever we meet one even in a foreign language. For example, on the radio, the tone and flow of voices and music change in such a way that, even if we do not understand the language, we do know for sure it is an ad. Some elements become mandatory which results in the establishment of stereotypic advertising forms that program their shaping and reading. It induces a lesser differentiation at the same time and results in a paradox: one recognizes effortlessly advertising which is useful, but at the same time all advertising messages tend to blur in a big advertising continuum that is not good to assert the existence of a specific brand.

This is the point where lasting strategies can try to reverse or counterpart the process either because the message can openly become an "existence teller" or thanks to metamorphoses.

What is an "existence teller" advertising message? This kind of message is explicitly telling, "This is a brand." In fact, the single presence of a brand in an advertising message should, on a theoretical basis, implicitly do the job. Nevertheless, it is possible to enhance this inherent feature turning it explicit. This appears to be a particularly relevant option whenever the brand status is at stake or endangered as in

the following circumstances: the brand is new; brands are not common on this kind of market; the brand name has entered everyday vocabulary; the brand name is changing, the form of the brand name is difficult to read or pronounce. In all these cases, an explicit discourse about brand status is appropriate especially since the message in itself, being not so common, will have a disruptive effect going along with the advertising call [6], [23].

IV. ADVERTISING, *UN*ADVERTISING, AND *HYPER*ADVERTISING: TOWARDS *ADVERTISINGNESS*

Since more than ten years, advertising and brand managers are trying to find new ways to advertise, that they generally name branded content *that* tries to go back to a strong distinctiveness serving a brand. In this respect, professionals try to build a new demarcation between a good, transparent, non-manipulative communication, not far from information and a bad, opaque and manipulative one, in other words, advertising.

This is not exactly a new turn in contemporary communications, especially regarding brands. Nowadays, brands managers are confronted, especially in developed countries where advertising started back in the middle of the nineteenth century as a professional activity, to a social, economic and social context we can describe as complex and unfavorable towards brands in general and advertising in particular. People tend to be increasingly suspicious and even opposed to traditional media advertising. Brands are judged in the light of what their actions, how and where they produce and how they speak. More and more people state they do not like advertising; they try to avoid it and don't believe in it. It is mainly an anti-advertising feeling we can describe especially in countries like France and USA [24], [25].

At the same time, we live in societies where advertising is ubiquitous in everyday life. We wake up with it, have breakfast, go to work, watch TV, surf the web, and so on with advertising. Thus we encounter numerous advertising messages in just a single ordinary day. This situation produces mainly a saturation of space with advertising. Every single media, or so-called media, seems literally packed with advertising.

Working inside and outside these constraints, marketing, and advertising people both in agencies, announcers and media companies, have developed a strong shared belief in the fact that traditional advertising is more and more inadequate, based on the anti-advertising actions, the saturation of space and an economic need for this sector to find growth areas. This last point is particularly crucial since advertising agencies have to face that communications providers are more and more numerous, coming from different fields like media, design or web agencies. They also enter international competition. This is why advertising people try to find the proper pace to keep leadership and work on formats that fit and pre-empt media transformations as well in TV, radio, magazines, and papers or digital media.

In this context, at least two solutions have occurred in professional uses: one is about erasing a maximum of classical advertising features, called *unadvertising* [26], [27]; the other one is about optimizing advertising quality and/or trying to find new media or transforming things into a media for advertising, called *hyperadvertising* [9], [28]. These names come from research results that give afterward point of view giving logic to a broad set of professional practices mainly known as branded content, product placement, sponsoring, and so on. For example, what professionals call brand conversation is currently a case of *unadvertising?*

A. *Unadvertising: Playing with the Limits*

More precisely *unadvertising* refers to communications strategies used by advertising people whenever they want to avoid traditional or regular advertising or downsize it. They mainly use three sets of ways:

- They can enter an already existing media production as in product placement in TV shows, and series, movies, games. They also sponsor broadcasted program.

- They can imitate existing media products as we can see with consumer magazines, branded web series as Ikea *Easy to Assemble*, brand games, or imitate existing cultural products as brand movies ("*Prada* presents A *Therapy*, by Roman Polanski, starring Ben Kingsley and Helen Bonham Carter), books as Recipe books around *Philadelphia*, *Oreos* and so on.

- They can try to benefit from new forms of communication supposed to redistribute communication parts such as blogs, co-produced content and social media. The brand conversation takes place in this last.

B. *Hyperadvertising: Enhancing Advertising Features*

On another hand, *hyperadvertising* is the counterpart of *unadvertising* and acts as hypertrophy of advertising aspects. Nothing about trying to hide the advertising nature of the message, the main point is to maximize advertising presence either in a qualitative way, working on the message and its forms, or in a quantitative way, trying to find or create new media spaces.

In the first case, the work will put the stress on the semiotic densification of the message, mainly through work on aesthetics and creativity. New creative formats are explored as very long TV commercials, exceptional work on very expensive sheets of paper, sophisticated finish, highly studied and unexpected billboard locations.

In the second case, the work is mainly the continuous creation of new media set, trying to use still non-used spaces as street furniture, buildings, café tables, metro tickets and credit cards. Thus, every space can become an advertising media, such as flagship stores, media, and smart cities. Streets or city areas can be transformed, for a short time, in a large advertising display.

Advertising, *unadvertising* and *hyperadvertising* messages multiply the presence of brand messages in everyday life. One at a time, these transformations of advertising messages seem only tactical but, as a whole, they become a great strategic renewal of modes of existence for brand discourses.

V. BRAND CONTEMPORARY SHOWS

A. *The Advertising Show*

As seen before, brands and their advertising messages are spectacular mediations as well as selling mediations. Through this spectacular specificity, they lavish consumers and the general public with an aesthetic pleasure that produces signification and globally impresses. At the same time, this mediation provided by brands is prone to raise the gratitude of the audience.

Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that the spectacular nature of advertisement is neither new nor restricted to some brands. One can identify great spectacular brand shows as well for luxury brands, car brands, and even hypermarket brands or spectacular urban happenings, branded festive, sport or cultural practices. These productions, sometimes designed to enter *unadvertising* strategies usually end up being *hyperadvertising* systems. Other brands are also in small daily deliveries on social media via devices such as *Facebook* fan pages, dedicated to brands. Thus, instead of achieving some perfect *unadvertising* ideal, they create some *hyperadvertising* forms with a strong repetitive omnipresence of the brand, mainly through its totems, its name, and logo [23].

Furthermore, the advertising show is not something new, and it can be retraced through the enthusiasm for advertising posters collectors in France between 1886 and 1896 in France, as much as through the interest of major film directors. People can choose to consume advertising, and especially commercials, as a show, which is evident with The Night of AdEaters, first launched in France in 1981 and now available internationally and offered in adding countries every year. As Baudrillard posed it: "it (advertising) contributes nothing to production or the direct application of things, yet it plays an integral part in the system of objects, not merely because it relates to consumption but also because it becomes an object to be consumed" [5].

During the last decade, three contemporary kinds of productions can be categorized as current metamorphoses of the advertising show: branded short films, spectacular TV commercials and daily social media advertising show.

In the first case, we can say that brand short movies belong to *unadvertising* strategies. Brands are producers of short movies, most of the time ordered from a Hollywood famous director and starring equally famous actors; they broadcast them on the Internet pretending not to seek advertising and consumption. However, advertising is soon obvious through stereotypes, intertextuality and, distortions of the narrative structure. In that respect, these short movies are most of the time genre scenes ("car chase" for Pirelli *Mission Zero*, "psychoanalysis session for Prada *A Therapy*, "typical murder mysteries" for *Lady Dior*) and a prop seizes the forefront: a tire saves the main character, a fur coat does analyze the psychoanalyst, and a purse is at the heart of the plot. In other words, props become heroes as in regular advertising messages. Thus spectators feel the trick and can be not so happy to have been subjected to advertising without prior warning, which is not the case with spectacular TV commercials.

One main example of this last phenomenon is "L'Odyssée de Cartier," celebrating the 165 years anniversary of the brand, internationally released on March, 4th, 2012, as commercial and broadcasted as such during prime time on major French TV channels (TF1, Canal Plus) and American Channels as well (ABC, NBC, CBS), in movie theatre and online. It was launched as a blockbuster with a press release, trailer, a world premiere in the Grand Palais in Paris and multiple steps unveiling on *vogue.fr,* TV Channels, and Cartier *Facebook* fan page. The band provided a kind of documentary movie about the making of. Online and offline general press relayed the launching explaining how extraordinary, out of the ordinary the movie was.

The advertising movie is presented as exceptional in all ways with a significant track record: it is supposed to be one of the most expensive commercials in the international history of advertising, with an exceptional duration (3 minutes and 31 seconds.) Its director underlines the epic scale. The music was recorded in Abbey Road studio with a symphonic orchestra, and so on. The show is outside and inside this commercial. The movie itself emphasizes the luxury of the brand with a highly anesthetized making of the film, dealing with strong onirism. The semiotic densification is evident given the accumulation of cinematographic processes, shooting locations, special effects, as well as trained animals. Thanks to the gathering of all these elements in a little more than three minutes, it ends up being a precipitate of advertising show.

B. *Daily Advertising Show Delivery via Social Networks*

Big shows are essential and highly visible but small shows on day-to-day delivery too. These are new small advertising formats one can follow, once registered as a "friend" of the brand, directly on personal *Facebook* accounts. In these cases, marketing and advertising people commonly talk about markets as conversations. This idea was first presented in 1999 in what is now widely known as the *Clue Train Manifest*. Published on the web by four professionals, this text became a book one year later. Whenever it comes to brands and conversation, professionals regularly quote this text as the main reference and, up to a certain point, as the one that put into shape the setting of marketing conversation.

This is why it is necessary to analyze this specific piece of business literature to understand the roots of the idea of a conversation between brands and customers. It gives access to what advertising producers think and/or claim they do with digital conversation branded content. Firstly, they try to transform the mass of consumers into a collection of individuals to go towards the next step, re-gather them in a new mass, an audience they will be able to observe and qualify. The professional metadiscourses tend to present these productions as an Eldorado of brand-client relationship.

Thus, conversation appears in professional discourses as an ideal of communication. We get a glimpse of a collective professional representation of conversation, reinterpreted in a nostalgic way, related to a pre-industrial Eden of communication: the old farmers' marketplace. This pre-capitalistic conversation is depicted as real and direct far from the description linguists can give of conversation, as a "battle for dominance" [23].

Hence, the marketing conversation is a hybrid production, highly consensual and paradoxical, at the same time innate for consumers and to be learned for brands. It is based on an idea of without hierarchy. Instead of speaking of a "top-down," vertical way, imposing the brand and its advertising messages, marketing conversations are supposed to enable brands and consumers to be equals, in a horizontal way. Thus, marketing and advertising professionals redefine the concept of conversation, without a balance of power and hierarchy, as an irenic and idealized mode of communication. In this respect, professionals give a new demarcation between a good, transparent, non-manipulative communication, not far from information, and a bad, opaque and manipulative one, in other words, classical advertising.

We produced [9], [25] on a long-term basis digital branded productions, a semio-communication analysis, we found that instead of a genuine exchange between brands and people, old branded blogs and dedicated conversational devices (ancestors of social media) appeared to be already entirely mastered by brands and were far from erasing advertising attributes such as logotypes, claims, signature and visual charts. At the same time, on a semiotic point of view, brands appeared as the real auctorial authority. Visually the entire system took birth into the logotype of brands, extending its shapes and main colors (blue and white) everywhere. This was a first clue towards the idea that whenever advertising people try to erase advertising features from communications, they tend, in fact, to extend the signs of the brand everywhere ending in *hyperadvertising* instead of *unadvertising.* The redefinition of conversation is the same on some of Facebook brand pages, it even goes beyond a wide spread of the signs of the brand and provides small brand advertising shows.

A semiotic and content analysis of some *Facebook* brand pages shows the actors (the brand and the public) are both on the same enunciation space, but they do not interact. Most of the time, brands offer while consumers are reacting more than interacting. The brand gives the kick: a photo, a video, a motto, a test, and people react in parallel but not together without much feedback from the brand.

A specific analysis of posts on two analog *Facebook* brand pages: the American brand *M&M's* (sweets) and the French brand *Oasis* (fruit drink.) *M&M's* USA brand page exists since 2008 and has more than ten millions followers currently; *Oasis* brand page is named *OasisBeFruit*, it was launched in 2009 and has been for several years the French brand page with the biggest number of followers (more than three million.) They are similar in the cheerful tone they use in their TV commercials and their products or a part of them (fruit) appear as characters in their commercials.

A semio-communication analysis of the posts on the two brands *Facebook* pages shows that people mainly "like" whatever the brand has posted, they "share" it in some cases and they much more rarely "comment." That is to say, they prefer to press a button rather than writing down something. Whenever they choose to write, it usually goes up to three/four words on average. As a matter of fact, most of the people's reactions on these two *Facebook* pages do not appear as a dialog with the brands or even between participants and the architext of a *Facebook* page isolates the exchanges by automatically closing the direct access to their content and offering instead the number of "like," "share" and "comment." In a way, the architext create the contrary of conversation when it transforms everything into numbers showing plainly an audience counting system rather than a dialogical one.
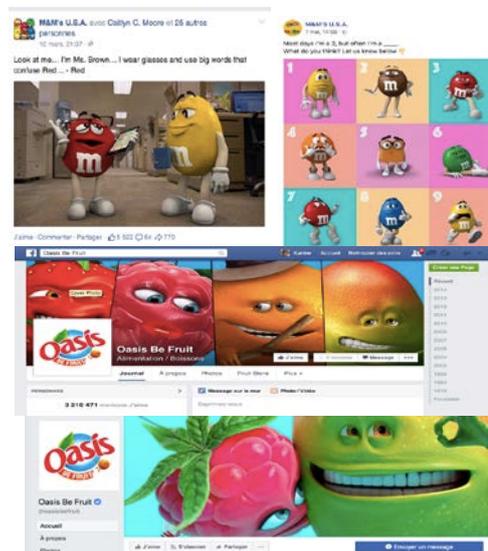

Figure 1. *M&M's* and *Oasis Facebook* pages (March 2015 and May 2018.)

Thus, the only fact that so many people participate on these *Facebook* brand pages makes it important to understand what they do, if they do not dialog as in a conversation with these brands. These brief comments look, in fact, more like answers to the brands' various stimuli: written laugh (LMAO! Hilarious, etc.), enthusiastic appreciation as one can express during a show ("Aaawwww I love it!, "Yay," "i like it!!so gooodddddddd***"), short answers inspired by these brands advertising mottos ("Go yellow," "You go RED"), short declarations of love ("Love m&m," " my favorite is still the one where red takes it all off I miss that commercial," "The best ever *M&M* commercial is the one with Santa," "the absolute best *M&M* commercial ever!!!!!!".)

We can conclude that people participating in *M&M's* and *OasisBeFruit Facebook* brand pages react and behave much more like spectators, an audience watching a show rather than people in dialog. We are facing a *hyperadvertising* show of brands on *Facebook* instead of an *unadvertising* conversation. *M&M's* and *OasisBeFruit Facebook* brand pages are great *hyperadvertising* devices where we can observe a really strong pervasiveness of these brand signs (names, logos, content highly linked to their TV commercials.) The French brand

Oasis does use its commercial catchword "*OasisBeFruit*" (in English!) as its *Facebook* brand page name.

The advertising show is so obvious that participants directly qualify the messages as advertising or marketing discourse produced by professionals: "Simultaneous faint, candle falls to the floor.... the absolute best M&M commercial ever!!!!!!." While being *hyperadvertising,* these communications still attract many participants willing to get on a daily basis an advertising show delivered on their own *Facebook* account. We cannot know for sure that there are consumers or customers of these brands, but they consume their advertising discourses freely [23].

At the same time, participants give their evaluation of these advertising messages and show an aesthetic judgment and specific ideas about what can be considered as a good commercial depending on the brand concerned. The advertising show comes with amateur advertising reviewers who demonstrate a true advertising culture. *M&M's* took this into account and produced both for 2018 Super bowl a commercial as usual and a Critical Review *M&M's* Super bowl movie that plays on the confusion between commercials and short movie available on their *Facebook* page and on their *YouTube* channel *mmschocolate*. *M&M's* also started to extend the range of its shows while showcasing "Sound+Color presented by *M&M's*" during *SXSW2018* or *South by West* festival of music, film and digital. This leads us towards brands that fully play on the advertising show as their main expression.

C. The Full and Endless Advertising show: Red Bull Case

Some brands work on turning everything they touch into an advertising show. *Red Bull*, a brand of energy drink, produces, promotes and publicizes some extreme kind of sporting or musical shows to a young or teenage audience. On its website, the brand offers many shows focused on a continuous festive lifestyle, some risky and extreme physical activities, more often borderline than not. *Red Bull* has established a strong spectacular mediation, and the omnipresence of the advertising show is obvious.

Whatever the type or the form of the show, *Red Bull* gives an extremely aestheticized version of it. Whenever the brand produces or takes part in entertainment, it naturalizes for its young audience one single message being at the same time: "*Red Bull* gives you wings" (its advertising claim) and "*Red Bull* is the best." This is the pretty obvious result of a semio-communication analysis of the online brand communications, especially its website. The corpus has been gathered, respecting Barthes' approach [31], using what we call a core sampling process [23], which creates a kind of snapshot of all the messages of a brand at one point. Regarding *Red Bull*, we chose the official French (February 2017) and American (April 2018) websites that happen to be very much alike in their structures, contents, and tone. Once on the homepage each navigation sign "giving access to different disseminated texts or, conversely, to the reproduction of external texts inside clustered sites" [22]. The global advertising universe of the brand takes shape in capillary action, revealing a huge global structure. This method enables us to reach a "saturated" corpus reached whenever any new web page does not provide anything new: "these "returns" are more and more frequent until one no longer discovers any new material: the corpus is then saturated" [30]. In fact, the sole home pages enable us to reach this stage.

The *Red Bull* corpus gathers *redbull.fr* and *redbull.com*, *Red Bu*ll TV and radio, *redbulletin.com*, et Events, Cartoons, Products and company and a second range of homepages Bike, Adventure, Motorsports, Games, Skate, Dance, eSports, Surf, Musique/Music, Snow, Weightlifting, Festival, Urban culture, Art, Dance, MC battle, etc. The *Red Bull* "world' explicitly addresses mainly male teenagers and young adults on leisure activities with a heavy concentration of risk, spectacularity, and performance. The aesthetic and spectacular mediation provided by the brand is obvious almost to the extent of concealing if one does not know it, the product (an energy soft drink can.) Looking at its set of home pages, one would think that *Red Bull* is a media brand, producing both sport and culture shows and broadcasting them, since most of the space is dedicated to all kind of sports, extreme sport, music and cultural festivals, and so on. The brand messages place is as a mentor coach, providing and explaining to its audience rituals around danger and risk linked to this time of life (teenage) in a safe exploration.

The *Red Bull* case appears to be a kind of extreme commodification of the brand itself. People tend to consume more the signs of the brand than the products, even its flagship product. It appears as a show producer always feeding its advertising claim "*Red Bull* gives you wings" in its the largest extension as a global entertainment factory.

VI.   ON *ADVERTISINGNESS* AND ADVERTISING SHOWS

Unadvertising and *hyperadvertising* strategies enable brand discourses to metamorphose, form hybrids with other types of discourses and, at the same time, extend the scope of their actions and the limits of what can be called advertising. For most of the general population advertising already names an extensive set of messages and devices as soon as they are related to a brand. Thus, we could say that every brand message, whatever the form it takes, is, at the core, advertising since semiotic predilection shapes the discourse, but *Advertisingness* goes beyond this and names both this process and a matrix dimension.

Advertisingness is defined [6], [23], [28] as a set of rationales, all at once social and semiotic, profoundly underlining every brand public speech even if it does not seem like regular advertising. *Advertisingness* is a set of forms of discourses, communication imaginaries and social, collective imagination. It is rooted in the very essence of consumption.

Advertisingness in forms of discourses originate in the initial matrix of "classical" advertising messages (see above), that is to say, specific expressive rationales and semiotic work creating highly connotated messages with apparent commercial intentionality turning *unadvertising* into *hyperadvertising* most of the time. *Advertisingness* is based on a strong, self-asserting brand status, an oversemiotization [6], [31] due to semiotic condensation, and shows a saturation of the signs of the brands, a strong stereotypy, and intertextuality.

Advertisingness deals with communications professionals, researchers and collective imagination and imaginaries [30]. For the main part of the population, advertising is linked to rather dysphoric representations such as messages trying to deceive to lure into buying, the work of the "hidden persuaders" [34], [6]. As seen above, communications professionals mainly try to find a way to transform positively advertising into something like branded information. The idea is to slide the borderline opposing information and communication into a positive market branded information opposed to bad old, classical advertising messages. As for researchers, they can be attracted in the fact of presenting advertising as a matrix of communication in general.

Advertisingness is, in itself, a communication logic. Whatever is the shape of the discourse of a brand, it does step in commercial communication logic, inherent in market mediation: the logic of the aura of the commodity, as mentioned by Benjamin, the "logic of Father Christmas" and the logic of prophecy as described by Baudrillard.

A. The logic of the aura of commodity

Benjamin states that advertising gives access to the collective imagination: "The dream consciousness of the collective [...] awakes [...] in advertising" [35], [36]. Thus advertising takes the aura of the commodity [Baudelaire] to its zenith. The aura of commodity works like a reverse operation of the aura of the work of art [37]. The latter is linked to the authenticity of the unique work and tends to deteriorate through industrial replication. On the contrary, the aura of the commodity is strengthened by its multiplication and circulation mainly using advertising, which is the place of its exaggeration [36]. This aura is a deep characteristic of a market and commercial discourse enabling at the same time to reach a high semiotic condensation and dissemination of the signs of the brand.

B. The logic of Father Christmas and the logic of the prophecy

Baudrillard gives to advertising several functions that build its social and communication logic [5]. Its explicit function is to promote selling; its symbolic and social value is linked to "believing," in a logic of "fables and of the willingness to go along with them": we do not really believe in advertising, but we care for it. Children and adults do the same when they pretend to believe in Santa Claus long after they know that the gifts come from their parents. In the same way, consumers are thankful for advertising for the care it shows. They come into a logic of belief and regression that gives way to a logic of protection and gratification. Thus, advertising is a free show but asks in return the consumer to comply with the social system. Consumption has a normative efficiency that comes from dream, imagination and it enables, all at once, each person to believe, he or she is the sole recipient of advertising and to give him or her collective desires as standard. Advertising refers to "dawnings of objects, dawnings of desires" and enables the advertising message to become a legend in all its meanings.

Baudrillard also stresses the fact that advertising is great at mythmaking [16]. It is neither true nor false, it is, as seen before, a matter of belief. Thus, it cannot deceive, all the more it gives what it says an existence through as a self-fulfilling prophecy: "Advertising is prophetic language, in so far as it promotes not learning or understanding, but hope." This prophetic logic enables brands to exist through all their discourses and strengthen from one message to the other till they become a reality.

One of the main deep logic of the advertising matrix comes from the encounter of Benjamin and Baudrillard theoretical approaches. Then *advertisingness* starts to appear as a strengthening of the aura of the brand to the point of evicting the product for the benefit of its signs and significations. The only presence of a brand in a message ensures the spectacularization of its aura.

Eventually, *advertisingness* is deeply related to the question of mastering communication and the power of representation. In a way, *advertisingness* brings very disparate items back into brand communications. This enables us to understand how contemporary existence strategies of brands broaden the boundaries of advertising in general and extends the scope of brands towards politics. The impact of multiple modes of representation on brand lies in the intensification of its display; it more and more shows of: "To "represent," then, is to show, to intensify, to duplicate a presence" [38] as explained by Marin.

In conclusion, brands strongly activate both types of power due to representation. Brands reach a state of ubiquity and pervasiveness in almost every moment of everyday life thanks to *advertisingness.* This power of presence is crucial since it gives them access to the second representation power effect, analyzed by Marin: "the effect of subject, that is, the power of institution, authorization, and legitimation as resulting from the functioning of the framework reflected onto itself" [38]. *Advertisingness* happens to be at the very heart of logic of power.

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