Advertising at the Threshold:

Paratextual Promotion in the Era of Media Convergence

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Abstract

In the media convergence era, brands are embracing hybrid forms of advertising communication such as branded content, product placement and sponsored TV 'pods', brand blogs, share-able video, programmatic advertising, 'native' advertising and more, as alternatives to, and extensions of, traditional mass media advertising campaigns. In this paper we draw on Genette's (2010) theory of transtextuality to re-frame this phenomenon from a paratextual purview. We suggest that the analogy of the paratext articulates the iterative, ambiguous, participative, and intertextual character of much contemporary brand communication. We describe extended examples of paratextual advertising and promotion that illustrate the fluid and mutually contingent relation of advertising text to paratext, and we outline an analytical framework for future research and practice.

Introduction: advertising as paratext

This paper introduces the notion of the paratext, the text about the text, to the tradition of literary advertising analysis in marketing and consumer research (Brown, 2016a; Stern, 1989; 1993a). Many studies have conceived of mass media advertisements as primary texts that can be subjected to close analytical readings (Brown et al., 1999; McQuarrie and Mick, 1999; McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005; Scott, 1994) but marketing and consumer researchers have largely neglected both the paratextual character of advertising, and the advertising potential of paratexts. Paratexts have been considered secondary to the primary text, as a title, a review, a footnote, a cover 'blurb' or a preface is considered secondary to the literary work to which it refers. Yet, paratexts frame and cue the culturally constituted meanings of texts, acting as thresholds that "shape the reading strategies that we will take with us "into" the text" (Gray, 2010, p. 26). We draw on Genette's (2010; Genette and Maclean, 1991) theory of transtextuality and on developments of paratextual theory in film, television and media

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scholarship (Aronczyk, 2017; Barra and Scaglioni, 2017; Grainge, 2017; Stanitzek, 2005) to show how advertising serves both as text and as paratext to inscribe meanings into the brand.

An advertisement is not only a 'work' in itself that can be understood as a social text (Stern, 1989) the meanings of which extend beyond the 'work' (Barthes, 2000). It is also a paratext that inflects the meaning of an implied primary text, namely, the brand or other entity that it advertises. The significance of paratexts can be seen where, for example, a PR (Public Relations) disaster generates a changed interpretation of a brand through media comment. In one example, a late 2017 Facebook advertisement[1] plunged the Dove cosmetics brand into accusations of racism that threatened to undo a decade of highly successful mass media and viral advertising campaigns that had positioned the brand as an ethical campaigner for all races of women. In a rather different example, British football hooligans took to wearing Burberry baseball caps to matches in the 1990s. The company grew tired of its product featuring in news photographs and footage of football hooligans in action and sought to take back control of its genteel, upper middle class brand narrative, by ceasing production of the caps[2]. These examples, which happen to be of negative PR, illustrate instances where the boundary between brands and the world is revealed as an artefact of paratexts when new paratexts shift brand meaning.

The relationship of advertising text to paratext is not necessarily hierarchical. Aronczyk (2017) suggests that a brand's "boundaries are contingent on the exigencies of the paratext, and the text itself becomes subordinate to the paratext" (p.3). The brand, for Aronczyk (2017), is an empty signifier or an "undefined space" (p.2) the purpose of which is to "create signifieds for itself on an ongoing basis" (p.2). Indeed, paratexts can exist independently of texts, for example where a 'fake' news post circulated in social media is widely re-circulated and becomes seen as a primary source, or where ancient philosophical texts are lost and are known only through the mediations of curators, archivists and editors. A primary text, in contrast, can exist only by virtue of the paratexts that bring it into existence (Genette, 2010). The study of paratexts, then, is the study of meaning. Gray (2010) suggests that "...paratextual study not only promises to tell us how a text creates meaning for its consumers, it also promises to tell us how a text creates meaning in popular culture and society more generally" (p.26). We suggest that the paratext offers a theorisation that

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[1] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/dove-unilever-personal-care-racism-advert-black-woman-white-a7988641.html

[2] https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/burberry-axes-baseball-cap-due-football-hooligan-links/221863?src_site=brandrepublic

articulates the interconnectedness of advertising, news, entertainment and information (and misinformation), under media convergence (Jenkins, 2008; Meikle and Young, 2011).

There will always be those who insist that the 'work', that is, the novel, the poem, the painting, the play, the TV show or movie, the advertisement, or the brand, has an authority of meaning that speaks for itself (Gray, 2010) and cannot be gainsaid by the surrounding constellations of media coverage, social media chat, brand tie-ins, sponsorships, merchandising, viral videos, logos, spin-offs, parodies, franchises, advergames, brand blogs, branded packaging and so on. These are secondary and peripheral, and perhaps trivial, or so the argument goes. What is more, there is nothing fundamentally new about most promotional paratexts, notwithstanding the novelty of their manifestations on digital media. However, our perspective generates insights into the particular ways in which brand stories are constituted through advertising paratexts. The mechanism is more nuanced than simply being one of reinforcement. For example, it can be useful to draw a contrast between transmedia campaigns in movie storytelling, and advertising campaigns, to illustrate the ways in which advertising paratexts challenge the ontological question of what is the text, and what is the paratext.

When the Wachowski brothers killed off Morpheus in the video game The Matrix Online, but not in the movie Matrix Revolutions, it created a negative response from critics and fans who felt that the integrity of the Matrix movie trilogy as primary text was being compromised (Jenkins, 2008). Why should movie fans who are deeply invested in the story have to play a computer game to find out what happens next? The Matrix producers set the industry standard for creative collaboration that integrated the story across media platforms, notably between the movies and the video games. The movie paratexts combined cross-promotion with creative content in this transmedia execution, but they were seen by movie audiences as thresholds through which fans could enter the primary text. The movie text is seen as being ontologically prior to its paratexts, which is in-keeping with Genette's (2010) view of the hierarchical relation between literary texts and their paratexts. In contrast, advertising paratexts typically erase brand meanings that have a correspondence in the world, such as the brand's labour practices, its supply chain dynamics, or even the tangible product qualities, in order to refill the empty space with metaphysical meanings and symbols (Leiss et al, 2005). Advertising textuality is constituted phenomenologically (Gray, 2010). Meanings are constructed in the interaction of text, paratext, and reader.

Literary theorisations of advertising in the marketing and consumer research literature (e.g. Brown, et al., 1999; O'Donohoe, 1994; Miles, 2013; Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004, 2008; Stern, 1990, 1993a; Stern and Schroeder, 1994) have sometimes discussed the paratextual character of mass media advertising, without using that term. O'Donohoe (1997) and Puntoni et al. (2010) showed how advertising can iterate brand meaning through intertextuality and polysemy, while Ritson and Elliott (1999) used an anthropological approach to show how advertising narratives can be used for everyday purposes other than those for which they are intended, such as for social identity positioning. In other words, advertisements are brand texts (or paratexts) that generate additional paratexts through the ways in which consumers engage with, use and talk about them. But, other than incidental mentions of the rhetorical importance of paratexts in framing textual meaning such as in Brown and Schau's (2007) analysis of marketing writing styles, a thoroughgoing paratextual approach to advertising is absent from the marketing and consumer research literature.

In this paper, then, we propose the notion of the paratext as a conceptual route towards articulating, connecting and theorising far-reaching changes that are taking place in both the form and content of advertising within the contemporary media ecosystem. Under convergence, advertising must now compete for its strategic role within a re-balanced promotional mix. All media channels can now be accessed via a smartphone screen, and advertising industry practices are adapting to accommodate the new media consumption patterns (Grainge and Johnson, 2015). Traditional TV 'spot' and print advertising remain relevant but we suggest that the fulcrum of creative advertising strategy is shifting from the brand, to the stories around and about the brand (Brown, 2016b). That is, from the text, to the paratext. A paratextual perspective re-frames the boundaries of what might be conceived as advertising since it blurs the distinctions between traditional promotional mix categories. Paratextual analysis brings the constellation of paratexts that circulate around the brand within the locus of advertising strategy, embracing the "kinetic" (Gray, 2010, p.41) character of consumer textual interpretation under media convergence.

Below, we will briefly elaborate on the analogy of the paratext before offering some extended and diverse examples of the practices of paratextual advertising. We then contextualise this contribution within a brief review of advertising research in order to locate our framework for paratextual advertising analysis. Finally, we will conclude with some comments on the wider ethical and cultural implications of this fundamental re-framing of advertising theory.

Paratexts and their media

Genette (2010), building on the work of Kristeva (1980), conceives of the paratext as a secondary text that depends for its meaning on, yet is distinct from, the primary texts of literature such as novels, poems, and plays. Genette (2010) uses a number of sub-categories of paratext, of which we will mention a few that are most relevant to our analysis. Peritexts are those paratexts occurring physically within the published work, such as title, subtitle, publisher's cover blurb, author's preface, endnotes, font, chapter headings, illustrations, and typography. Epitexts are texts about the text but exterior to it, such as critiques published in literary magazines, abridged serialisations, print and poster advertisements for the book. These epitexts may include hypertexts, texts that are superimposd over the original work, such as parodies or other imitations or adaptations. The paratext is the epitexts plus the peritexts. Peritexts and epitexts may be public, such as publisher's advertisements for a book, or private, such as the private correspondence of the author, handwritten margin notes on original drafts, personal diaries or early drafts by the author, possibly reproduced later in edited anthologies or literary criticism. Some epitexts may be outside the work but produced, in effect, by the author and publisher, such as the interview with the author, which was invented as a marketing device by French publishers in the 1800s and mirrors what Boorstin (1992) called the pseudo event, an event designed purely to be reported upon as if it is news. The published interview is an epitext that might be read by some who never read the author's original work, hence, for those readers, it serves as a primary source of meaning.

Genette (2010), then, focused on the role of paratexts of the literary world. He suggested that the paratext "...is the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public. Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a threshold...between the text and what lies outside it, a zone not just of transition, but of transaction; the privileged site of a pragmatics and of a strategy..." (p.261). Genette's (2010) insight re-frames the primary text (whether novel, poem, or play) as something the meanings of which are not fixed by the author or the publisher, but interpreted by readers, aided by paratexts. The notion of the paratext is extended in film and television studies to include, for example, movie trailers, virals and advertisements, interstitials (brief promotional videos or graphics inserted after the opening credits of a TV show but before the action begins) and 'idents' (graphical brand identifications) that are produced to promote TV shows, movies, movie production houses or TV channels (see, for example, Grainge, 2017; Barra and Scaglioni, 2017). These apparently

secondary paratexts cue and frame the interpretation of the primary text. As Gray (2010) emphasises (referring to Kristeva, 1980), "a film or programme is never the entire sum of the text. The cultural meanings of texts are always contingent on other texts, in a continuous process of 'productivity'" (p. 7). Paratexts, then, frame the meanings of texts in other media in much the same way as they do in paper media.

Genette (2010) acknowledges that the rise of digital communication technology greatly extends the scope of paratextuality. Advertisements are quintessential paratexts, as Genette (2010) and media scholars (e.g. Gray, 2010) acknowledge, but paratexuality crosses the boundaries between traditional marketing communication categories and embraces all dimensions of the promotional mix. For example, much paratextual advertising is epitextual in the sense that it is ostensibly exterior to the primary text of the brand, and is designed to bring the brand into play within news, entertainment and informational media content. Techniques of 'para-epitextual' promotion could include, say, a press and Public Relations officer editing their employer's or client's Wikipedia entry, a brand-financed video produced as free-standing entertainment for social media but having an intertextual relationship with the brand, such as the Dove and BMW examples elaborated below, or a piece of 'native' advertising financed by a brand and published as a piece of ostensibly independent journalism. Thee examples blur the contrived distinction between advertising and PR. Epitextualty and peritextuality serve to deepen the ambiguity of paratextuality. Both can be found in some of the examples of paratextual advertising described below, beginning with a UK campaign for a price comparison website.

Paratextual advertising practices: the Orlov phenomenon

The well-documented (Miles and Ibrahim, 2013; Patterson et al., 2013) career of Aleksandr Orlov illustrates something of the scope of a paratextual advertising campaign. Orlov is a CGI anthropomorphic meerkat who speaks with a heavy Russian accent. He has helped to propel a 'struggling[3]' price comparison website to an estimated £2 billion public stock flotation in just eight years[4]. He was introduced to the British public in TV advertisements for Comparethemarket.com in 2009. Within a year, he had hundreds of thousands of followers on his Facebook and Twitter accounts, a cuddly toy version of him had sold out at Harrods, and he had been credited with boosting advertising expenditure in the entire price comparison

[3] https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/apg-creative-strategy-awards-comparethemarketcom-meerkat-campaign-vccp/930643

[4] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/03/06/bgl-chief-relaxed-float-years-record-start/

industry as rivals were pushed to compete with his phenomenal popularity[5]. By 2017, Aleksandr and his extended family feature as toys, figures, on- and offline games, their home town, Meerkovo[6], is featured as background for their online adventures, they appear in mini-movies[7], video interviews and other content on their websites and YouTube channel, and they even star in their own parodic version of a long-running TV soap opera[8] of which Aleksandr (or rather the brand) is sponsor. The meerkats' acting skills are in such demand that they have been cast with co-star Colin Firth in movie shorts that are tied-in with Firth's latest Hollywood release, Kingsman[9]. These movies activate channels of supportive intertextuality between the brand and the movie. They are ostensibly entertainment videos made for viewing and sharing on social media, but they operate as advertisements, for Comparethemarket.com, for the Kingsman movie, for Aleksandr, and for Firth. They also intertextually extend the running joke that is Aleksandr's elevation from a brand mascot into a media personality. The movies are great fun, as, by implication, is the intertextually present brand.

Aleksandr started life as just another brand character in a TV ad, like so many others (Brown and Ponsonby-McCabe, 2014). His evolution through a dizzying paratextual centrifuge into a multi-media superstar of brand connotation might be partly explained through the creative integration of different literary genres into his storylines (Patterson et al., 2013), and partly through the ways in which his anthropomorphic charm evokes the dramatic resonance of fables (Miles and Ibrahim, 2013). Both explanations point to the richness of Aleksandr's storyworld. Gray (2010) has noted that the key to the success of transmedia storytelling for movies is to furnish the movie (or TV show) with a richly detailed world so that paratextual gateways into the story can be created that provide audiences with enhanced opportunities for emotional investment. In contrast, VCCP, the ad agency that created Aleksandr Orlov, invented a paratextual storyworld with literary intertexts (Patterson et al., 2013) so fertile and involving that the subversion of the primary-secondary textual relation between 'the work', that is, the brand website, and its paratextual advertising, has become part of the comedy. Comparethemarket.com is not a story – it's a website. The Orlovs are the story. A lot of people, especially children, engage with the brand only through their para-social relationship

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[5] https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/jan/16/aleksander-orlov-price-comparison-ads
[6] http://meerkats.wikia.com/wiki/Compare_the_Meerkat
[7] https://www.comparethemarket.com/meerkat/history/
[8] https://www.comparethemarket.com/coronation-street/
[9] http://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/09/14/colin-firth-aids-the-meerkats-kingsman-bar-brawl-compare-the-market

with its anthropomorphic paratexts. The ambiguity of advertising paratexts is such that Aleksandr is both a signifier, and a sign.

Unlike transmedia storytelling executions, advertising paratexts might subsist only in one medium, for example, as a billboard or a paid-for feature article in a print magazine that never appears online. But it is clearly the rise in digital communication under convergence[10] that confers on paratextual advertising the potential for generating a vast web of intertexts in a short space of time. As Grainge and Johnson (2015) point out, under media convergence, the challenge for advertisers is not to create distractions from consumer engagement with the mobile screen through which most information, entertainment and news is now accessed, but to insert brands into this media consumption experience. Paratextual advertising, then, may consist in traditional forms of advertising, but it extends to include many hybrid forms of advertising such as native advertising (promoted media content that looks like editorial), search advertising (also known as Search Engine Optimisation or SEO), brand sponsored blogs, product placement in all media, celebrity endorsement in social media (e.g. sponsored Tweets) and other public relations or branded and sponsored content that features in media stories, share-able video content on social media platforms and many other emerging forms of promotion that hybridise advertising with journalism, entertainment, information, consumer discussion forums, and news. There are many forms of paratextual advertising that pre-date the social media era. Product placement is one example. It has come into its own under convergence since it is a hybrid promotional technique (Balasubramanian, 1994; Lehu, 2008) that appears passive, yet leverages advertising with celebrity endorsement and sponsorship, along with news and sports media coverage. Although paratextual advertising techniques individually are not individually new, we suggest that the notion of paratextual advertising distinctively captures a quantitative and qualitative shift in advertising and marketing practices under convergence, from sales-orientation, towards strategic publicity (Ehrenberg, 2002), often aided by narrative indeterminacy (Puntoni et al., 2010).

In an example of the on- and offline extension of advertising paratexts for movies, Heineken beer has paid for script and visual references in James Bond movies since 1997. The aim seems to be to achieve a semiotic association with Bond's caricature of masculinity whilst also extending the brand into international markets. The campaign for 2015 Bond release Spectre included extended paratexts in the form of tie-in TV and print ads featuring Daniel

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[10] http://adage.com/article/advertising/magna-u-s-digital-ad-sales-top-tv-time-2016/308468/

Craig in scenes from the movie. Promotional packaging in retail settings featured links to downloadable behind-the-scenes footage[11] of the movies, generating mutual intertextuality. Bond is more typically associated with Martinis and Scotch Whisky, so the Heineken brand association with the movie serves as a paratext for the Bond stories, as well as for the brand, inflecting the interpretation of each. However, the movie franchise has little investment in the literary integrity of the book series- the movies are parodic paratexts (or hypertexts) of the books. They are consumed as free-standing paratexts by contemporary audiences who may never have read the books. These paratextual advertisements play on the plot and characterisation of the movie, but they are merely promotional intertexts, not plot developments.

Evolving paratextual advertising practices under convergence

The combination of digital media technology and marketing facing Western consumers has been variously characterised as a participatory (Jenkins, 2008), a collaborative (Shirky, 2010) or an attention (Davenport and Beck, 2001) economy, by the consumption of experiences rather than products (Gilmore and Pine, 2011; Rifkin, 2000), as 'fluid' consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017), as public relations capitalism (Cronin, 2018), and by the economic dominance of the idiom of entertainment (Wolf, 2003; Sayre, 2007), amongst many other characterisations. Paratextual advertising occupies an enabling role in all these characterisations of consumer culture because it inserts brands into media content across the many communication platforms that facilitate participatory, collaborative and fluid consumption, thus increasing brand salience and driving engagement.

For example, digital advertising in general is outstripping TV in global adspend growth[12], and video content shared (and copied, parodied, memed and critiqued) on digital platforms has become an important paratextual technique for brand-building[13]. The brand might have a role in a video as producer/director (in virals or other sponsored content), as star (in contracted product placement or other scripted content) or as script consultant (in 'advergaming' or digital placement in computer games). These paratextual advertising executions create visual brand intertexts across media platforms, increasing brand presence and salience. In contrast, transmedia movie campaigns are not merely a matter of licensing

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[11] https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/heineken-bond-ultimate-man-knows-drink/1361014
[12] http://digiday.com/agencies/charts-forecasting-2017/
[13] http://www.thedrum.com/news/2015/03/30/online-video-drive-44-jump-global-ad-spend-2015-brands-move-budgets-away-tv

the logo, visual identity or brand to a video game or social media content producer. There is a far deeper creative collaboration where, for example, the movie may have script, scene, character and plot integration with the computer game (Jenkins, 2008). Branded content may take many narrative forms (Dzamic and Kirby, 2018; Hardy et al., 2018) but is often, in videos, effectively product placement or sponsorship, but with full creative control for the brand. The ultimate aim of such content, of course, is not merely to entertain or to inform, but to activate the consumer into engagement, through clicks, likes, shares, memes, comment, and perhaps even purchases (Peñaloza and Thompson, 2014).

Take, for example, the 2016 iteration of BMW's series of expensively produced car chase capers, The Escape, aired on their own movie channel[14] and shared millions of times by fans on video sharing websites. The idea is ostensibly to produce an entertainment vehicle for showcasing the sponsor's product, as the Proctor and Gamble 'soap operas' once did, but the narrative sophistication, big name casting and production quality of the BMW movies (notwithstanding their bite-sized length of about ten minutes) are such that they constitute a Hollywood standard of entertainment quite apart from their promotional purpose. The movies are paratexts that blur genre distinctions and confer on the brand a sense of constructive polysemy (Puntoni et al., 2010). The hero is the car, driven by Hollywood star Clive Owen, who plays a Bond-like character, although the car is essential to, and a physical extension of, his character's persona. The movies intertext with the James Bond movie franchise in which the cars often feature, supportively inflecting the brand's connotations of excitement and male fantasy, and blurring the distinctions between promotion and entertainment.

The BMW movies are probably viewed mainly by consumers who recognise the brand, although not necessarily as consumers of it, thus the movies elaborate on the brand meaning, whilst for those new to the brand they offer a point of entry into the brand meaning. Many paratexts can act as prior paratexts, preparing the audience for consumption by cueing a reading strategy. Prior paratexts could take the form of advertisements for new brands or trailers for new movies. Other paratexts, such as the BMW movies or advertisements that enhance, amplify or re-capitulate brand meaning, might be experienced after consumption. Movie paratexts, such as prequels, re-releases, re-makes, director's cuts, DVD bonus features or intertextual references to those movies in subsequent movies, act not as gateways to the primary text as such but, to extend the metaphor, as signposts to certain routes of

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[14] http://bmwfilms.com/

interpretation. Parody is a good example of a paratext (a hypertextual paratext) that changes the reading of the primary text. For example, it is difficult to take the classic versions of movies such as Star Wars or Robin Hood seriously after seeing the Mel Brookes take-offs, and some major advertising campaigns have been withdrawn after consumers posted parodies and take-downs of the ads' pretension. The BMW movies discussed above could be interpreted as parodies of the assumed fantasies of (some) BMW drivers, and the car, which typically conveys salespeople and families rather than special agents being pursued by rogue SWAT teams. However, the action adventure with a BMW driver as hero is unencumbered by a literal primary text so it has free reign to indulge the fantasy. It is understood as an action movie, and as an advertisement, through the silent intertext that is the viewer's implicit knowledge that the movie was created by and for the brand, to sell more cars. Such promotional paratexts simultaneously create and also fill the vacuum of meaning that is a brand.

The BMW movies are by no means the only example of advertising that challenges or subverts the genre conventions of advertising (Cook, 2001) by adopting the idiom of entertainment (Wolf, 2003; or 'info-tainment', Thielman, 2014). For example, in a UK campaign that is current at the time of writing for the Nationwide Building Society, unknown poets recite their works on everyday life straight to camera in TV advertising spots. The Nationwide logo appears, in small type, at the end of the clip. The campaign, entitled 'Voices of the People', was launched in 2016[15] and includes, as well as TV spots, a YouTube[16] channel and a poetry competition. It has since evolved to include poems set to music. This is ineluctably advertising, but although it appears in TV advertising spots, it is cast in the genre conventions of entertainment. It demonstrates a paratextual characteristic of inserting a large helping of ambiguity into an ostensibly know-able category of communication. If the TV spots change the way some viewers think about advertising, and even about poetry, then perhaps they have the capacity to change the way someone thinks about the bank. This is advertising, but in the guise of creative branded content (Hardy, 2017). It takes advantage of consumers' advanced advertising literacy (O'Donohoe, 1997) to reference other advertising texts in a tightly intertextual system.

Understood as paratexts, these hybrid advertising techniques open up a route to theorising shifts in marketing practice of considerable managerial, economic and cultural significance.

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[15] https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/nationwide-strips-back-ads-authentic-connection/1408827
[16] https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=nationwide+voices

To take another example, it is not new for social media memes to achieve far greater audience reach than mass media advertisements. However, the Oreo's Tweet[17] that was more talked about than any of the multi-million Dollar TV ads aired during the 2013 American Superbowl, and the 2014 Oscar's 'Selfie That Broke Twitter'[18] that turned out to be an advertisement for Samsung, were more that effective publicity stunts. Each enjoyed extraordinary audience reach in the multiple millions across mainstream and trade press, social media, television and radio. Both deployed the device of the media paratext in ways that combined with new media platforms to blur the distinction between fake and authentic, spontaneous and planned, and between advertising and User Generated Content (UGC). The Oscars selfie, for example, had the authenticity of UGC, albeit from a user who happened to be a Hollywood star, until the entertainment trade press eventually leaked the truth about the planning behind it. The effect is not achieved simply by creating brand exposure on various media, but by generating strategic intertexts through carefully scripted paratexts that add narrative texture to the brand.

In another example of paratextual advertising, Coca Cola's noted strategic shift from TV advertising to storytelling, announced in 2011 with two animated YouTube videos entitled Content 2020[19], is a substantive acknowledgement of the need for global brands to re-invent their understanding of advertising. The use of the catch-all term 'content' hints at what their advertising is not, rather than explaining what it is. What it is not, is traditional advertising, in spite of the brand's long history of iconic TV ads. Coca Cola is not alone in refocusing its advertising as content (for example Unilever set up a branded content unit)[20] but Coca Cola publicised the initiative in videos on their YouTube channel, creating new paratexts of their shift to paratexts, cleverly advertising Coke's strategic sophistication (to its stakeholders) and its customer-orientation (to its customers).

In an example of what, before social media, would have been just an old-fashioned publicity stunt, the 2013 re-make of the movie Carrie was promoted by means of a viral video, made by the Thinkmodo agency[21], in which a New York cafe was set up as a site of telekinetic

[17] http://www.thedrum.com/news/2016/07/10/marketing-moment-101-oreo-wins-super-bowl-dunk-dark-tweet
[18] http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/03/03/285202850/heres-ellens-star-stuffed-oscar-selfie-that-broke-twitter
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LerdMmWjU_E
[20] http://www.digitalstrategyconsulting.com/intelligence/2016/10/unilever_plans_inhouse_branded_content_division.php
[21] http://www.adweek.com/creativity/horror-movie-stunt-freaky-telekinetic-girl-frighteningly-good-152983/

mayhem[22] for the unsuspecting patrons. The promotional intertext is provided by the female protagonists' angst-induced telekinetic mayhem, which is also the dramatic centrepiece of the movie. In addition, the release date of the movie that was added to the end of some of the videos. The video had a very different look and tone to the more conventional advertising trailers that were produced by the studio. Of course, it was an advertisement in effect, but it could be read as an epitext, an exterior paratext, and hence carried a different inflection to the conventional trailers that spliced actual movie footage with a voiceover. Another noted use of promotional epitexts was as part of the aforementioned Dove campaign entitled 'Real Beauty' that included two of the most shared viral videos of all time[23]. These virals, ostensibly creative projects in their own right, epitextually fed into the campaign theme, which was that conventional cosmetics advertisements undermine female self-esteem. More examples of paratextual advertising include the official trailers for movies The Blair Witch Project and Paranormal Activity which were filmed in the same pseudo-amateurish style as the movies themselves. The trailers achieved a supportive epitextual framing for the movie, which was supposedly edited together by an investigative journalist from found Hi8, black-and white hand-held video and grainy surveillance footage, to lend the movies an impression of amateurish authenticity and blurring the distinction between the real and the fake (Appel and Maleckar, 2012).

The Blair Witch Project brought transmedia storytelling to the attention of Western media in 1999 (Jenkins, 2008) and illustrates well the subtle distinction between transmedia storytelling and paratextual advertising. The primary text, that is, the work, was a horror movie that was made to appear to be a documentary of a real story. This truth-fantasy ambiguity was exploited through many paratexts that featured on a dedicated website, building interest in the movie. The primary text was sufficiently rich and layered with storylines to be a fertile source of paratexts, which of course, also greatly increased the audience reach to the movie's benefit. In contrast, the Dove Real Beauty virals mentioned above are free-standing epitextual vignettes that enrich the primary text of the brand by intertextual implication. Their connection with the brand 'story' is merely contrived- Dove produce cosmetics, which are, after all, intended to make people look better and smell better than we really do. Consumers are cued through the paratexts to read Dove advertising as an

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[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n447GRTCsU
[23] http://adage.com/article/news/dove-evolution-evolution/241971/

ideologically framed subversion of traditional cosmetics advertising, even though it is an advertisement for cosmetics.

Whether paratexts cue the meaning of the primary text, as Genette (2010) suggests, extend the meaning by opening routes to new interpretations (Gray, 2010), or fundamentally subvert the hierarchical relation between text and paratext (Aronczyk, 2017) depends, it seems, on the content, context, purpose and genre. It seems clear, though, that paratextual advertising is radically altering what can be conceived as advertising. The story, not the sales pitch, is the centrepiece of the content, with the brand as an implicit intertextual presence. The only thing that betrayed the promotional intent of the above examples was the branding that identified the source through a subtle (typically) visual sign (though this can be through an aural or other intertextual note in the script, soundtrack or voice-over). This elusiveness, the sense that the content is narratively incomplete, ambiguous or indeterminate, is a key feature of advertising paratexts. Their relationship with the brand is mutually contingent (Aronczyk, 2017) within a web of intertextuality (O'Donohoe, 1997). Gray (2010) notes that the challenge for transmedia executions in the TV and movie industries is to devise paratexts in which "content is still king" (p. 219) in the sense that the integrity of the primary text is retained and deepened through its paratextual extensions. The challenge for paratextual brand advertising, in contrast, is to devise content that offers free-standing narratives that are richer and more compelling than the primary brand text, as Comparethmarket.com has achieved with its meerkats, thereby inserting narrative texture into the ambiguous brand space and opening up enhanced opportunities for emotional investment for the consumer.

The paper has, then, introduced the theoretical background of paratextual advertising, illustrated with a selection of examples. Before describing a framework for paratextual advertising analysis, we must offer some deeper contextualisation by locating paratextual theory within the wider field of research in advertising and, specifically, as an evolution of the literary tradition within marketing and consumer research.

Advertising research and its literary tradition

Gray (2010) suggests that the problem with research into television and movies, has been the TV programmes and the movies. He suggests that the fixation of theorists on close readings of 'the work' has limited the scope of analysis and largely excluded the life of the text beyond the work. This tendency also has a long history in advertising research. Literary analyses of advertising emerged as a theoretical counterpoint to managerially-oriented

theories that represented an advertisement as a mediated personal selling encounter (McDonald and Scott, 2007; Sethuraman, et al., 2011; Dinner et al., 2014; Praveen et al., 2017). The idea that advertising must be analogous to salesmanship in print (Kennedy, 1924) (or radio, or video) is retained in normative practice models of the Attention-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA) model of advertising persuasion. AIDA was adapted to advertising from the psychology of personal selling (Kitson, 1921; Strong, 1929) and continues to be repeated as a theory of advertising in most marketing and advertising text books (e.g. Shimp, 2009; Kotler and Keller, 2015). Stern (1993b, 1994) critiqued as one-dimensional the transmission model of mass communication (Shannon, 1948; Weaver and Shannon, 1963) that underpins the sales model of how advertising 'works' (see Heath and Feldwick, 2008 for another critique). The assumption that an advertisement 'works' as a rational persuasion to buy (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2003) persists as a major theme of business school research (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). In practice, advertising objectives tend to be couched in terms in which sales are themselves intermediate objectives in a longer term goal, such as defending or increasing market share, re-positioning the brand, or simply providing entertaining content in the circus tent that is the brand (Feldwick, 2015).

Alongside the sales-oriented research tradition into advertisements emerged a second tradition, drawing on cultural anthropology and semiotics, that viewed advertisements not as sources of information but as sources of meaning (e.g. Levy, 1959; McQuarrie and Mick, 1992; McQuarrie and Philips, 2005; Mick, 1986; Mick and Buhl, 1982; Sherry, 1987). This tradition connects with literary research into advertising through a focus on symbolism, language, and rhetoric. Stern (1989) introduced the notion of the advertisement as text, while advocating the use of literary methods in marketing and consumer research more broadly (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992; Brown, 1997, 1999, 2016), a call that was responded to with many subsequent studies (e.g. Ahuvia, 1998; Brownlie, 1997; Miles, 2013; Sawyer et al., 2008). Literary advertising research has included analyses of reader-responses to linguistic, musical and visual rhetoric in advertisements (Campbell, 2013; McQuarrie and Mick, 1992, 1996, 1999; Moeran, 1985; Stern and Schroeder, 1994; Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004, 2008; Scott, 1990, 1994: Tanaka, 1994). These tend to focus on a close reading of the advertisement within the dyad of advertisement-reader.

The over-reliance of managerial advertising research on the advertisement-consumer dyad (Ritson and Elliott, 1999) has been challenged by work that emphasises the inherently social character of advertising communication and advertising consumption. For example, Leiss et

al. (2005) conceive of advertising as a symbolic form of social communication the interpretation of which is contingent on a shared cultural knowledge and experience (as does O'Donohoe, 1997). Some studies that develop the idea of advertising as ideological communication focus on close readings of individual advertisements as social texts but also emphasise the social dimension of advertising meaning interpretation (Wernick, 1991; Williamson, 1978). Such work tends to assume that the ideological content of advertisements reflects a kind of unity of motive, when advertising in practice is produced in a collaborative but highly contested process that involves the input of both active and passive agents, including the creatives, planners and account executives, clients, and also research participants (consumers) and regulators (Cronin, 2004; Hackley, 2000, 2002; McFall, 2002). Advertising's ideological effect can be seen from a cultural perspective not as a by-product but as its fundamental mode of operation (Elliott and Ritson, 2007; Holt and Cameron, 2010) which emerges from the interactions of many parties. Sub-cultural consumption practices that may putatively be oppositional to mainstream capitalism (Schouten and Alexander, 1995) can, in part, indicate resistant readings of advertising, reflecting the erosion of the cultural authority of the primary texts of marketing and advertising (Holt, 2002). We suggest that a focus on the paratext as the unit of analysis speaks to these issues by embracing the context of advertising production, by acknowledging the social character of advertising meaning-making, and by adding nuance to the notion of ideology in advertising as something that is constituted phenomenologically as and through textuality.

There is disagreement in the literature over the mechanisms through which advertising inflects brand meaning. The claims of some theorists that brand management is a well-developed science of control over consumer meaning (e.g. Keller, 2011) can sometimes seem to downplay the evidence that brands are living things (Brown, 2016b) the meanings of which are informed and indeed contingent upon cultural practices, events and trends (Holt and Cameron, 2010), along with a helping of serendipity. Aronczyk (2017) suggests that the brand management task lies not in extending the interpretive possibilities for the brand but in "closing off interpretive agency" (p.2), but given the inherent ambiguity of advertising paratexts it is hard to see how brands might achieve this level of hegemonic control. It seems more likely that heterogeneous readings of the often polysemic (Puntoni et al., 2010) paratextual advertisements serve to expand the potential market by opening the possibilities of creative consumer interpretation, thus extending the range of identity projects into which brands and their advertising might be incorporated (Belk, 1988).

Advertisements are designed to reach consumers, non-consumers, shareholders, regulators or other stakeholders with the end of achieving desired changes in sales, market share, votes, visitor numbers, markets, charitable donations, attitudes, or behaviour. The routes through which some of them might achieve their objectives are contested in the research literature. One of the points of confusion has been the notion that advertising is one thing, and yet it is also many things. A paratextual perspective might help to show what unites advertising and promotion, while also offering the potential for a more nuanced account of how the many techniques are differentiated.

A framework for paratextual Advertising analysis

We will now move to a worked example of paratextual analysis adapting Genette's (2010) typology of "spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic and functional characteristics" (p.4) as a foundation. We envisage that the analysis of individual paratexts would be aggregated in order to map the configuration of advertising paratexts around a particular brand. The goal is to arrive at a sense of how the cultural meaning of the brand is inflected by, and refracted through, its paratexts. Paratextual advertising analysis aims to combine a close analytical reading of advertising communication with a cultural level of understanding. We will offer two levels of conceptualisation, firstly Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the wider landscape of paratextual advertising, using the Comparethemarket.com example we discuss above. Subsequently, we provide a framework for more closely specified paratextual analysis.

Figure 1: The paratextual advertising landscape for Comparthemarket.com
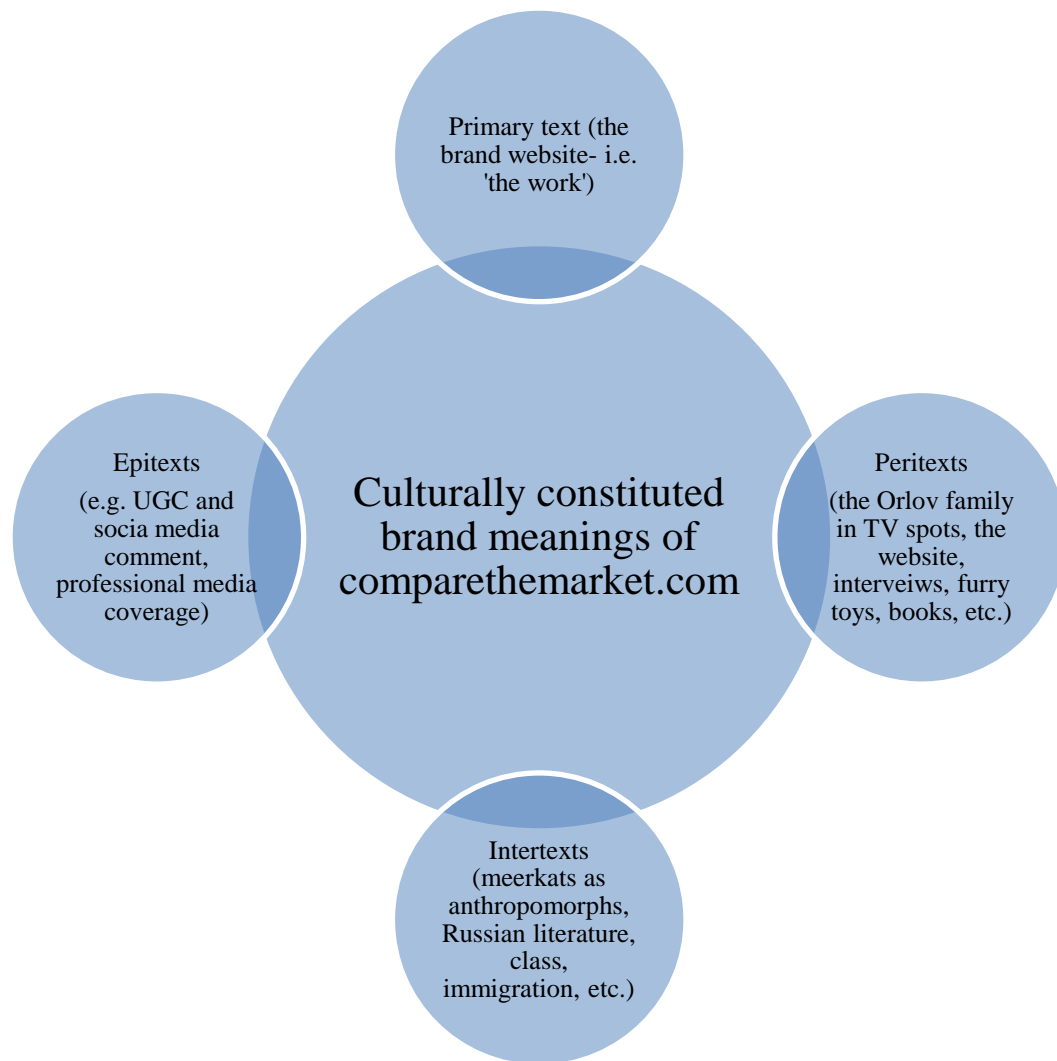
We conceive the elements in Figure 1 to be dynamic rather than static, as they circulate within the vortex of digitally mediated consumer culture, creating new intertexts for the brand. We suggest that one might envision the analysis spanning out from a single paratext, whether this be a piece of discarded branded packaging, a sponsored Tweet, social media meme, an advertisement or a brand blog piece. As a focused example, let us start with a text that is normally a primary text: an autobiography. Aleksandr Orlov's aforementioned mock biography became a best-seller in the UK on its release in 2010 (Patterson et al., 2013). The brand Comparethemarket.com is not mentioned explicitly, being a silent fact "whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received" (Genette, 2010, p.7). The intertextual cueing for the brand is helped in this case by the running joke of Aleksandr's successful (fictional) website,

comparethemeerkat.com, and his annoyance that people confuse it with Comparethemarket.com. There is, therefore, ample opportunity to insert aural and typographic intertexts into the various brand paratexts in addition to other visual and thematic cues. In Table 1 below we have added two analytical categories to Genette's (2010) typology: intertextual references, and intertextual trajectories.

Table 1: A Basic Framework for Paratextual Advertising Analysis

Originating paratext: The mock autobiography, "A Simples Life: my life and times", by Aleksandr Orlov

Spatial characteristics of the paratext: The physical book sits on bookshelves and coffee tables (and in remainders bins) around the country, the audio book has also enjoyed good sales.

Temporal characteristics: It appeared in late 2010, a year after the initial TV campaign. It currently remains on sale and retains a presence on bookselling websites and in published reviews and other media coverage in feature articles, video clips of Aleksandr's TV interviews, etc. Its appearance at the top of the autobiography best-sellers might render it a prior epitextual paratext for new audiences who then have to learn the origin of the story in order to make sense of the book, but for many readers it is merely an extension of the previously known paratexts. It has spawned a series of subsequent Orlov family books.

Substantial characteristics: It is a written text on paper, and an audiobook, of the autobiographical genre. The printed version is richly illustrated with portraits of the eponymous meerkat in heroic poses.

Pragmatic characteristics: The book is dictated by Orlov to his long-suffering assistant Sergei, using the same vocal register and linguistic quirks as the CGI animation in the TV ads and movies. Hence, the character is speaking through the book, to the reader. The reader understands that the author, and the story, are fictions, created by an advertising agency for a brand, and this fact operates as a silent intertext.

Function: The distal function of the book is to advertise the brand. The proximate function is to entertain by extending and deepening the Orlov storylines. It is a parodic para-epitext that heightens the intertextual intensity of the previous and subsequent paratexts. The book

intersects explicitly and implicitly with all the other Orlov output to constitute the web of intertexts around the brand.

Intertextual references: The 'autobiography' intertexts comedically with others in the genre. The literary genres of comedy and adventure (see Patterson et al., 2013) are referenced in Aleksandr's heroic "Journey of Courageousness" from rags to riches, as are elements of Russian literature, with sub-plots of family in-fights, entrepreneurial drive, economic struggle, and issues of social class. The book is dictated to Aleksandr's side-kick, Sergei, in Aleksandr's own comedic voice, complete with malapropisms and tortured translations, clearly referencing the TV ads and movies. The anthropomorphic symbolism of the meerkat (Miles and Ibrahim, 2013) is present in the cover picture and other illustrations of the self-important Aleksandr, wearing a smoking jacket and cravat.

Intertextual trajectories: In addition to social media likes, shares and comment, the autobiography generated much feature coverage in national media that repeated the key words, such as Aleksandr Orlov, Meerkovo (their fictional home region), and their home, Meerkat Manor. One of the triumphs of the agency VCCP in this campaign was to create novel internet search terms that would lead the consumer to the brand website, bypassing expensive-to-acquire domain names such as 'price comparison websites'.

The analytical framework in Table 1 offers a basic approach that could be adapted to any form of advertising paratext. The two additional elements, intertextual references and intertextual trajectories, begin the process of linking the chosen paratext to others in the web of intertextuality achieved for the brand by its paratexts across social media. The analysis tells us the elements of an advertising paratext, but it does not explain why a particular paratextual advertising campaign is successful. To understand this, it is necessary to engage in further interpretive analysis to expand on the final two categories of the framework, the intertextual references, and the intertextual trajectories.

As Patterson et al. (2013) point out, the Orlov paratextual vignettes on all media platforms are exceptionally well-written. Like all good stories they offer a coherent (if improbable) world, replete with narrative texture and observational detail. The autobiography plays on Aleksandr's quest for success and recognition and, as Patterson et al. (2013) point out, it echoes both Russian and British themes of comedy, class, emigration, adventure, and the

bonds of family. Aleksandr's linguistic quirks set him apart as a foreigner to the UK but endearingly so with his habit of earnest malapropism. He is a parody of celebrity, but his stories are of the struggles of everyday life. Miles and Ibrahim (2013) suggest that the Orlov storylines lack the moral conflict necessary to the literary form of allegory but can better be thought of as fables. They go on to suggest that fabular animals leverage a quality of ambiguity rather than metaphor in the service of brands. They are, therefore, ideally suited to paratextual advertising executions. The anthropmorphic qualities of meerkats are not lost on audiences well-acquainted with popular natural history shows that dramatise the struggles of meerkats in the wild, but the joke isn't simply that they have some human-like physical mannerisms. The paratextual storylines create characters that "interact with the audience beyond the broadcast space" (Miles and Ibrahim, 2013, p. 1972) through their various paratexts, having developed from the first TV ad into a "dynamic, evolving fable" (p. 1873). Tellingly, as pointed out by Miles and Ibrahim (2013), a previous attempt to use meerkats as marketing devices for Vodacom in South Africa quickly wore very thin on audiences because the portrayal of the animals was seen as too, irritatingly, human. The value of the Orlovs lies not simply in their anthropomorphic qualities, but in the ingenious creative planning that developed a rich storyworld, elements of which can be intertextually invoked with many different kinds of paratextual advertising execution. The Orlov case is a useful illustration of some of the key practices, principles and also the potential of paratextual advertising. However, the many other examples referred to in this paper indicate that paratextual advertising can come in many forms, no doubt including some yet to be imagined.

Concluding comments: paratextual advertising and ideology

We conclude with some thoughts on the broader ethical implications of a paratextual perspective on advertising. Studies focusing on mass (typically, print) media have drawn attention to advertising's ideological force (Stern, 1993b; Wernick, 1991; Williamson, 1978). Paratextual advertising under media convergence is subject to a speed of circulation, audience reach, and intertextual intensity that is far greater than that accounted for in pre-digital cultural critiques of mass media advertising (Davis, 2013; Powell, 2013; Schwarzkopf, 2011; Wharton, 2015). Under convergence, mass media audiences have collapsed (Jenkins, 2008), the cultural authority (to use Holt's (2002) term) of marketing (and of all primary sources of information) has been eroded, and 'fake news' 'gaslighting' and propaganda are common. There is clearly a need for greater understanding of the role of paratextual communication in destabilising textual authority. Of course, audiences are not compelled to

view or read paratexts, and there is always scope for resistant readings. However, the marginality of paratexts is precisely what makes them a powerful source of ideology. The practices of paratextual advertising can be seen to mimic techniques of political propaganda where, for example, epitextual paratexts lend authenticity to brand meanings that would lack credence were they to emanate from an official head office press release or a mass media advertisement. On the other hand, President Trump communicates through Tweets rather than through longer, thought-through policy speeches or books, giving his own brand as President a paratextual character. Brands might use mass media advertising to try to reclaim their cultural authority against negative paratexts, but whether successful or not this is recognition of the power of paratexts to exploit and accelerate the brand's loss of cultural authority. In politics, news sources that are positioned as non-mainstream, that is, sources that are created as epitextual paratexts, such as social media memes, Facebook pages, websites or internet publications, can generate a powerful resonance with ideologically predisposed audiences. For consumer brands, also, epitextual paratexts (or para-epitextual paratexts that are deliberately created to appear as if they are not part of the official campaign) are a tool of strategic Public Relations that inflects the brand meaning by intertextual juxtaposition. A better understanding is needed of how paratexts function in the phenomenological constitution of ideology in social and other digital media.

For Toffler (1980), each wave of development evolves its own superideology or Zeitgeist which becomes a frame of reference that orients and rationalises values and behaviours. The convergence era has seen the emergence of 'post truth' politics and the establishment of propaganda as a geopolitical tool realised partly through social media. Brands can be understood as myths informed by ideologies (Holt and Cameron, 2010), rather than as bundles of consumer benefits, and under convergence brand advertising permeates media consumption. Paratextuality expresses the Zeitgeist of advertising in the convergence era- we are no longer sold to primarily through discrete and clearly identified 'interruptive' advertising spots, but though the brand intertexts that are present in the countless paratexts that populate consumer cultural experience. As McLuhan (1964) warned, it is important to grasp the totalising effects of media. Paratextual advertising offers considerable potential for brand creativity, as our examples illustrate. However, similar techniques are being used to promote political ideologies, with equal success. As Gray (2010) notes, is would be too much to suggest that all is paratext. Nonetheless, it seems clear that a focus on paratexts locates advertising, marketing and brands at the centre of pressing current debates about the cultural

and political role of media. Future studies are needed to elaborate on the dynamics and the implications of paratextual communication in advertising and marketing, and in the wider spheres of political and public communication.

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