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ANALYSING COMMERCIALS' SUCCESS FROM A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

From a social constructivist perspective (SCP) we analyse TV-commercials' success. We address the following questions: Does the customer co-create meaning, and, more specific, is a commercial more successful if a customer plays a co-creating role? If so, both the customer and her experience, as well as the commercial, play a significant part in explaining the commercial's success. As independent constructs to explain commercials' success we used storytelling, indicating the commercial's part, and experiential conclusiveness, indicating the customer's part. We found support that the customer and seller via the commercial co-create meaning and coordinate their activities.

Keywords

Storytelling, Commercial, Social constructivism, Co-creating meaning

Analysing Commercials' Success from a Social Constructivist Perspective

Abstract

From a social constructivist perspective (SCP) we analyse TV-commercials' success. We address the following questions: Does the customer co-create meaning, and, more specific, is a commercial more successful if a customer plays a co-creating role? If so, both the customer and her experience, as well as the commercial, play a significant part in explaining the commercial's success. As independent constructs to explain commercials' success we used storytelling, indicating the commercial's part, and experiential conclusiveness, indicating the customer's part. We found support that the customer and seller via the commercial co-create meaning and coordinate their activities.

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Introduction

How commercials work is by no means a new question. But there are some new challenging statements based on the evolving paradigm of social constructivism, for example: "Successful advertising results in the co-creation of personally relevant stories by consumers. Consumers, not agency creatives, are the primary authors of these stories and that leads to meaningful communication." (Zaltman 2003). Or "A good slogan is not to be invented, but to be discovered" (Jung & von Matt 2002, p.307). Here a new role has been assigned to the customer, namely that of a co-creator of the meaning of advertising. Our investigation addresses the following question: Does the customer co-create meaning, and more specific, is a commercial more successful if the customer plays a co-creating role. In this role the customer is not only the receiver of an advertisement but she is also a part of the meaning making communication process. The customer does not get the meaning or idea of the product or brand from the advertisement alone, but also from her former experiences. Even the perception is based on former experiences, as Dowling (1998)¹ explains: "Visual perception is 'reconstructive and creative. ... The image that falls on the retina is a two-dimensional, yet we live in a three-dimensional world. ... Not only does the visual system the information impinging on the retinas, but it draws on visual memories and experience to construct a coherent view of the world." According to this view, the meaning of a commercial is co-created by the commercial itself on one hand, and the customer and her experience on the other hand. Following this view we have to look onto the process of co-creation of meaning through customer and commercial. The customer's input in the process of co-creation are her experiences and the knowledge gained through this experiences. Experience here is used in a very broad sense

¹ Cited by Zaltman (2003), p.65

including the whole personal history of a customer. The “commercial’s input” into the process of co-creation of meaning is the story it tells. Or as psychologist Sidney J. Levy (2001)² explains: “The largest activity in marketing is the provision and consumption of stories. This fact is so general and pervasive that it commonly escapes notice or it is so prominent and noticeable that it interpenetrates all experience. ... Stories are bought and sold, they are part of the media of exchange, and they are the vehicles for all other goods and services.” Zaltman explains why “storytelling is so central to memory ...” (Zaltman 2003, p.211) because “Companies re-present events to consumers and tell a new story about those events.” (Zaltman 2003, p.190) So in our view the story combines consumers’ experiences of the events, they took part in, to a specific meaning. The experiences as well as the story create the meaning and can therefore influence customer’s decision-making. First we now look onto a dialogue and how it co-creates meaning. We will argue that it does not only create meaning, but that it also coordinates activities. Secondly we offer a view, where a seller via an advertisement and a listener co-create meaning, and also coordinate their joint activities.

Coordinating Meaning with dialogues

“Dialog has its origin in joint activities, which it serves to coordinate” (Bangerter and Clark 2003, p.195) or as they put it we “navigate” a joint project with dialogue (Bangerter and Clark 2003, Wilkes-Gibbs and Clark 2004). A purchase could be seen as a joint project between the supplier and a customer. Not any purchase as such, but the purchase of the supplier’s specific product or service. What can the seller do to coordinate the customers’ activities? Beside others, she can use dialogical communication policies as marketing instrument. (Ballantyne 2004) In our view, a good commercial can substitute a dialogue between supplier and customer if it contains specific elements, like storytelling and experientially conclusiveness, which we describe later in detail. We will look at commercials as one part in a social construction process where the meaning of the commercial is co-created by the commercial and the customer. In our view, a dialogue is not necessary to co-create meaning, it can also be done with a good story, which fulfils some requirements that we will describe later. This approach does not use the traditional view of communication, where the customer acquires the content of the seller’s message via perception and plays an inactive role. This is described as one fallacy by Zaltman (2003): “The belief that consumers think only in words makes marketers assume that they can inject whatever messages they desire into consumers’ minds about a company brand or product positioning. Because of this belief, marketers in effect view consumers’ minds as blank pages on which they can write anything they want – if only they can find a clever enough way of doing so. Thus marketers judge the effectiveness of, for example, an advertisement by asking consumers how much of the ad they recall and whether they liked the presentation.”(Zaltman 2003, p.13) A different view is addressed in the idea of the co-creation of meaning. Here companies, managers, and customers together construe the meaning of the advertisements the former sent. This view can be embedded in the social construction view (Gergen 1994), for distinguishing it from the constructivist view, see Gergen (1994). Some roots of this view, especially in philosophical linguistics, go back to Wittgenstein (1953). The idea as we use it for co-creating meaning, between two participants of a dialogue, is as follows: If A says to B “I bought a ball.” A as well as B have a concept of the term ball, which is derived from their past experiences. If their experiences concerning a ball differ, they may think about different balls. If there is no further information it is not clear for B what kind of ball it is. It is also unclear for A, whether B got an idea of the ball A meant. If they now step into a dialogue, they easily can clarify what kind of ball A could have meant. If, for example, A has bought a golf-ball and says to B “I bought a golf-ball” and B knows,

² Cited by Zaltman (2003), p.211

what a golf ball is, there is no problem. The dialogue as a social process clarifies the meaning. Even though, we can never be sure, whether the idea of the golf ball is the same for A and B. This is even more important for conceptual words, like “fresh”. In the case that **B does not** know what a golf ball is (B has never seen or touched or otherwise experienced a golf ball) the process of co-creating a meaning which is acceptable for both is more complicated. Even if A uses the official description of a golf ball (USGA)³, B will not get an idea of what a golf ball is.

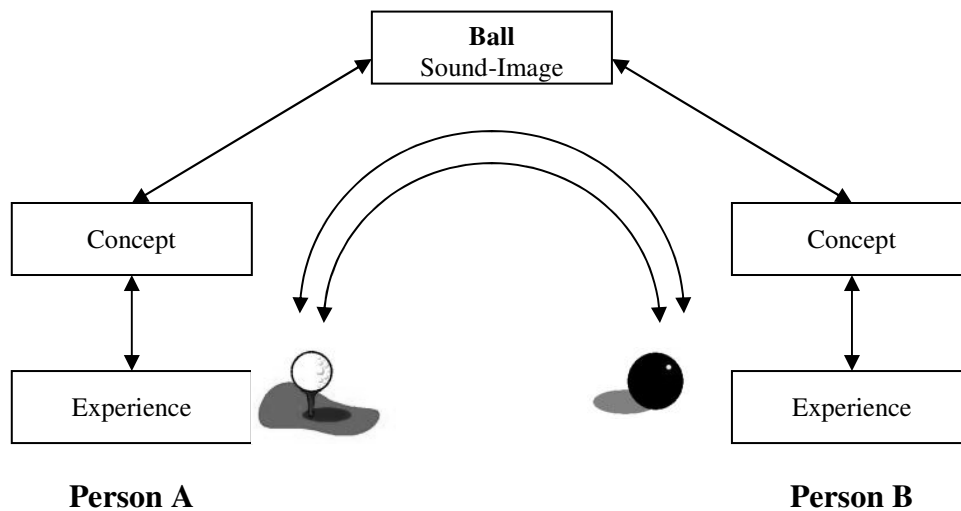


Figure 1: Co-creating meaning within a dialogue

On the other hand it is very easy for B to get an idea of what a golf ball is, if she can make a visual experience (see) of the ball. If we use terms which do not correspond to physical objects, A would have no chance to show B definitely what she means, for example what she means by the word “fresh”. So they must clarify the meaning in a dialogue until both feel that they have a mutual understanding of the word “golf ball”. It is not clear yet, how this mutual understanding is derived. We think that mutual understanding is reached if both participants in a communication do not feel any need for changing their specific concepts they use during the dialogue. If they feel a need for change, they will continue with the communication or will think that they have no mutual understanding on the point in question. But the experience of the listener is her part in co-creating meaning. This is not only true for a dialogue but also for an utterance, where the listener has no chance to answer like in a commercial, where the customer usually has no chance to answer directly. How than can she co-create meaning without answering and without having a dialogue? The basic scheme goes back to de Saussure (1959, p.66), see Figure 2.

³ Description of a golf-ball according to the USGA: (1) Weight: The weight of the ball must not be greater than 1.620 ounces avoirdupois (45.93 gm). (2) Size: The diameter of the ball must not be less than 1.680 inches (42.67 mm). This specification will be satisfied if, under its own weight, a ball falls through a 1.680 inches diameter ring gauge in fewer than 25 out of 100 randomly selected positions, the test being carried out at a temperature of 23 + 1°C. (3) Spherical Symmetry: The ball must not be designed, manufactured or intentionally modified to have properties which differ from those of a spherically symmetrical ball. (4) Initial Velocity: The initial velocity of the ball must not exceed the limit specified (test on file) when measured on apparatus approved by the United States Golf Association. (5) Overall Distance Standard: The combined carry and roll of the ball, when tested on apparatus approved by the United States Golf Association, must not exceed the distance specified under the conditions set forth in the Overall Distance Standard for golf balls on file with the United States Golf Association. Source: http://www.usga.org/playing/rules/rules_of_golf.html



Figure 2: The Semantic Connection (after de Saussure), (von Glasersfeld 2002, p.130)

“The link between words and meanings is based on the associational link between ‘sound-images’ and ‘concepts’. Sound-images, as she emphasized more than once, are not to be confused with the physical sound of spoken words. They are abstractions from the auditory experience of the sounds, just as, for instance, the concept of ‘apple’ is an abstraction from ‘apple experiences’.” (von Glasersfeld 2002, p.130) If a customer recognizes a sound-image in a commercial, she does so because she had already made some experience with this sound-image. Usually we have also made some other experiences together with the sound-image, like seeing or touching or smelling something. The abstraction from these other experiences serve as a concept that can be linked to the sound-image. If we only have made the auditory experience of the sound-image without any other experience, we are not able to associate a concept to the sound-image, which means we do hear the word but we find it meaningless. This is because we do not find a concept as an abstraction for experiences we have made. We only have the auditory experience of the sound-image, but no other experience which could be linked to the sound-image. So neither the concept is contained in the word nor is the meaning contained in the word both are abstractions from our former experiences and linked to sound-images based on our former experience. Hence if we hear a sound-image of an uttered word, the linkage between the sound-image and the concept, both based on former experiences, create the meaning. So both the sound of the uttered word and the listener’s experience create the meaning when the listener has no opportunity to answer directly or to respond.

If the words are combined to sentences and if the sentences are supported by pictures or if the pictures without words are telling something metaphor- and discourse-analysis has been used to analyse the concepts customers associate to verbal advertisements as well as to printed pictures used in advertisements (e.g. Forceville 1996, Ortony 1998, Phillips and Hardy 2002, Philips and McQuarrie 2004, McQuarrie and Mick 1992 and 2003, Young 2002, Kohler Riessmann 1993). In analysing commercials these methods are limited, because they are usually applied to single words or sentences and to single pictures, like pictures in printed advertisements. But for a commercial we prefer a more holistic way of analysing it, an approach which is ‘made’ to be linked to experiences. This approach is in our view storytelling.

“The meaning of experience has always been communicated in stories.” (Twitchell 2004, p.11) We believe that therefore storytelling is an effective way to embed the meaning of customers’ experiences in a commercial. By means of stories that people share with others, they navigate and make sense of the world. (Rosa and Spanjol 2005, Gabriel 1998; Weick 1995) “A good story holds disparate elements together long enough to energize and guide action, plausibly enough to allow people to make retrospective sense of whatever happens, and engagingly enough that others will contribute their own inputs in the interest of sense making.” (Weick 1995, p.61)

Then the questions are: “What is a good story, especially in commercials?” and “How should a story be told in a commercial?”

Storytelling

What kind of storytelling should be used in a commercial to embed customer’s experience? “When you tell a story that touches me, you give me the gift of human attention-the kind that connects me to you, that touches my heart and makes me feel more alive” (Annette Simons 2001⁴). If a good story touches the customer in some way, it can connect her to the product, service or to the brand of a company. A story can only touch someone if it touches her world of experience. So a story in a commercial has to fulfil at least two requirements, one is to meet the experiences of the customers and the other is to be a good story.

The question now is “What is a good story?” – a story that touches the customer? A story which is linked to the customer’s experience? If the story communicates experiences how can it do so? We followed Rolf Jensens question “Who are the most successful storytellers in the 21st century?” and his answer was “Hollywood”. Looking to Hollywood, we see wonderful stories being told. Is there a dramaturgy for a good story? If so, can it be applied to commercials? Two famous screenwriters, who described their theory/idea of good screenwriting in a very successful way, are Sid Fields (2003) and Robert McKee (2000). We used their concepts of storytelling and applied it to commercials.

We will start with the main paradigm of storytelling which is described by Syd Field (2003). The paradigm is similar to that given by McKee (2000) but we used Fields description because it was more appropriate to be applied to commercials. We found that the basic structure of Fields paradigm could be operationalized and therefore used for coding and analysing commercials.

The essential elements of a story according to Fields paradigm are exposition, confrontation and resolution linked by two plot points (see Figure 3). Plot points are occurrences, incidents or events that give the story a new direction.

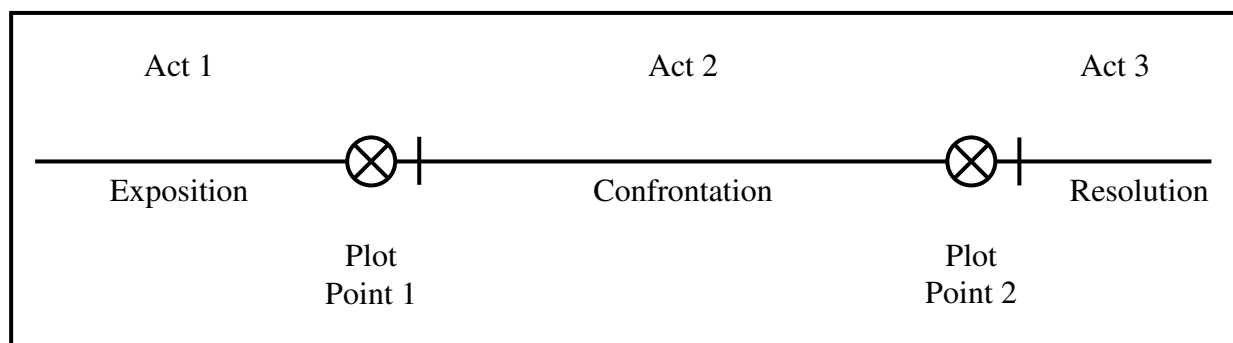


Figure 3: Storytelling

The exposition contains the setup of a story. The viewer gets a rough idea of the stories background and the main people are introduced. While a movie, with a total running time of 120 minutes is able to use 30 minutes to set up the story and introduce the characters, places etc., a commercial of about 30 seconds lengths has just a view seconds available to catch the audience with a story. The first plot point is the inciting incident, where the protagonist is confronted with a conflict or a challenge which she tries to solve during the whole story. After the

⁴ cited by Roberts (2004)

first plot point the second part starts – the confrontation. During this second act the protagonist is confronted with different challenges or obstacles, which impede her to complete her mission. Within this act the story accelerates to its climax. After the climax a second plot point starts the resolution. Here the story comes to its end. In addition to this elements Field gives another hint of what is important for good storytelling: “It’s not the destination that is so important ... It is the journey itself that is both the goal and the purpose.” (Field 2002). So the three elements must be combined to a journey as a holistic experience. So we used the three elements exposition, confrontation, and solution, as well as the two main plot points as independent variables. In addition we evaluated the scene order (Field 2003, McKee 2000, Gergen 1994) and analyzed whether the story had a valued endpoint. The idea of a value endpoint we took from Kenneth Gergen (1994) because we think that especially in advertising a value endpoint could be a convincing element of the story.

Experience

While storytelling is one factor of the co-creation of meaning experience is the second. The listener always has to use her experiential based concepts for creating meaning when interpreting what is said by another person. In that sense she always is a co-producer of meaning. The meaning is not contained in the word (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). It is in the experience of the people’s interactions. “Each of us, from childhood on, forms conceptual categories of embodied perceptions, actions, and other experiences. That is, we conceptualize the world through our embodied experiences and the shaping provided by the structures of our bodies and brains. Meaning of concept thus comes through embodied experience.” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, pp.442-443) We used two indicators to measure whether the story was linked to experience. These two indicators are experiential conclusiveness on a direct and on a metaphorical level. “We have seen that our conceptual system is grounded in our experiences in the world. Both directly emergent concepts (like UP-DOWN, OBJECT, and DIRECT MANIPULATION) and metaphors (like HAPPY IS UP, EVENTS ARE OBJECTS, ARGUMENT IS WAR) are grounded in our constant interaction with our physical and cultural environments.” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, p.119) Therefore the first indicator measures how much the story is experientially conclusive on a direct level (ECDL), as a real life experience could be. Experientially conclusive on a direct level is a story, if it could be directly experienced as shown in the commercial. The second indicator measures whether the story is experientially conclusive, on a metaphorical level (ECML). A story is experientially conclusive on a metaphorical level, if the metaphor used in the story could be imagined to be experienced.

An example for a commercial which was coded as experiential conclusive on a direct level is the TUI-Spot (Figure 4), where two persons are on the beach – white sand, blue sky and blue water – and enjoy their holidays. This is a setting that most of us have experienced before and therefore can be easily recognized.



Figure 4: TUI-Commercial

An example for a commercial which was coded as experientially conclusive on a metaphorical level was the AXE-Commercial “Metamorphosis” (Figure 5), where the power of the deodorant is given from a man over several animals and another man back to a man and still attracts women. The final slogan is “The new Axe. Can Longer.” (direct translated), which is a metaphor for long lasting sexual act. While most of the single scenes were experientially conclusive on a direct level, the whole sequence of them could not be experienced. Therefore it is a good example for experientially conclusiveness on a metaphorical level.

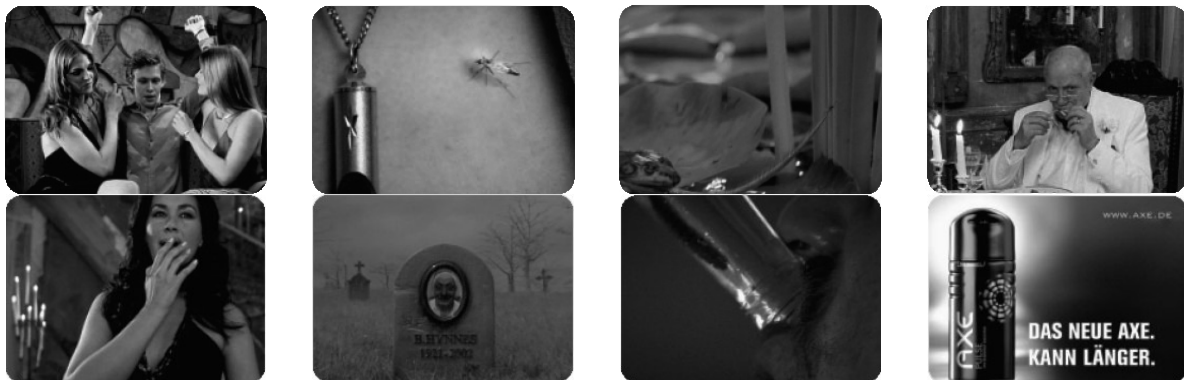


Figure 5: AXE-Commercial

The general idea of co-creating meaning leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Both elements, storytelling and experiential conclusiveness, are important / necessary for successful commercials.

Furthermore we think that a customer can only be coordinated with a story if it touches her. The story touches a customer the more it is experientially conclusive. If a story is a good story but without experiential conclusiveness it is less successful compared to a good story which is experientially conclusive.

H2: A good story does not work without experiential conclusiveness.

Marketers often argue that a product or service offered must have a value for the customer. This value could be communicated successfully with a value endpoint in the story, leading to hypothesis 3:

H3: We expect the value endpoint to have high explanatory power in explaining a commercials success.

Methods

Our main goal in this article is to figure out whether elements of storytelling and experientially conclusiveness of the commercial are factors for success. So we had to measure the success on one hand and elements of storytelling and experientially conclusiveness on the other (see Figure 6).

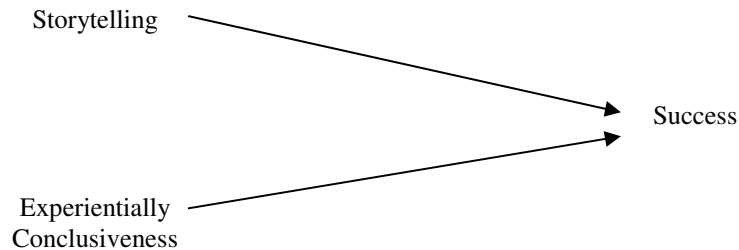


Figure 6: Measured Indicators

As success indicator we used a score for each commercial which was given by an independent jury of 16 experts. These experts worked as the German Effie-Jury⁵. All handed in cases (commercials) are evaluated in a four-step-process to get the so called Effie-Award. In the first step a group of consultants from leading market research institutes evaluates all handed in profiles based on goal and performance data and gives a qualified recommendation for a shortlist. In the second step the members of the jury evaluate the cases of the shortlist without creative materials. Scores are given on the basis of hard facts on sales and market share, but not on the creativity of the commercials. The jury members used a scale from 1 to 100 (1=“not successful at all” and 100=“extremely successful”) to evaluate each case. In a third step the jury uses these scores and additional creativity scores to select nominees for an award (bronze, silver and gold-Effie). The nominees are also called finalists. In the last step they select the award-winners. For our research we used the commercials from the shortlist and the scores based on market success (after step 2). All analysed commercials of the shortlist where scored between 50 and 75 points.

To measure the independent variables we used the following procedure: We used seven variables of storytelling and two variables for measuring experiential conclusiveness. All these variables had to be coded on a seven score Likert scale. For the five elements of storytelling the question was: “Are these elements identifiable in the shown commercial?” And the scale lasts from 7=“very easy” to 1=“not at all”. We measured the scene order with the question “Are the scenes ordered according to the scheme given by Syd Field?” (See Figure 3) The scale lasts from 7=“totally fits the order” to 1=“does not fit at all”. For the value endpoint we used the question “Is a value endpoint identifiable?” on a scale from 7=“very easy” to 1=“not at all”. The two experientially conclusiveness indicators were identified by the questions “Is this commercial experientially conclusive on a direct level?” and “Is this commercial experientially conclusive on a metaphorical level?” Both questions had to be coded on a 7 point Likert scale, were 1 indicates “not at all” and 7 indicates “absolutely”.

⁵ The GWA EFFIE awards marketing communication, which is proven effectively, creative and efficient related to its cost-benefit ratio and ambitiously set marketing goals. The participants have to lead the proof that this communication played the substantial role for the reaching of these goals. The jury members are representatives of the advertising industry, trade, media, journalism, marketing teachers, market research and advertising/communication agencies.

To assure the reliability of these independent variables, four independent researchers coded all the variables for all the 56 commercials in our sample, which were broadcasted on German television in 2004 and were available for viewing.

Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alphas of our measurements. All variables are reliable for advanced practice according to Nunnally (1978).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alphas

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Exposition	0.946
Confrontation	0.929
Solution	0.924
Plot Point 1	0.962
Plot Point 2	0.918
Scene-order	0.916
Value endpoint	0.921
Experientially conclusiveness (direct)	0.918
Experientially conclusiveness (metaphorically)	0.951

Results

As shown in Table 2, nearly all independent variables correlate and so we had to identify the variables with the highest explanatory power. We did that by using a complete selection linear regression. The complete selection procedure uses all combinations of independent variables. Table 3 shows the three best models in terms of highest R².

Table 2: Correlations of the independent variables

	Exposition	Plot Point 1	Confrontation	Plot Point 2	Resolution	ECML	ECDL	Value Endpoint	Scene-order
Exposition	1	.806**	.403**	.458**	.444**	.383**	.235	.345**	.571**
Plot Point 1	.806**	1	.757**	.719**	.572**	.377**	.401**	.434**	.713**
Confrontation	.403**	.757**	1	.847**	.600**	.337*	.542**	.566**	.771**
Plot Point 2	.458**	.719**	.847**	1	.777**	.413**	.536**	.659**	.781**
Resolution	.444**	.572**	.600**	.777**	1	.314*	.612**	.824**	.782**
ECML	.383**	.377**	.337*	.413**	.314*	1	.165	.458**	.374**
ECDL	.235	.401**	.542**	.536**	.612**	.165	1	.586**	.626**
Value endpoint	.345**	.434**	.566**	.659**	.824**	.458**	.586**	1	.806**
Scene order	.571**	.713**	.771**	.781**	.782**	.374**	.626**	.806**	1

p<0.01=**; p<0.05=*

In all three models, shown in Table 3, we find at least one variable of storytelling and at least one variable indicating experiential conclusiveness. All the variables are highly significant. The values of non-significant variables are dropped out of Table 3. All three models support our first hypothesis that both elements, storytelling and experiential conclusiveness, are important for successful commercials. Model 1 and Model 3 are very similar, as the both variables exposition and ECML are included. In Model 1 a third variable is used with an addi-

tional explained variance of 6.1%. This variable ECDL explains the difference between both models. In Model 1 with the highest R² the variable exposition and both variables of experiential conclusiveness are included. In Model 2 scene order and ECML explain 35.3% of the total variance. It seems that the scene order explains a part of exposition and ECDL, which is also supported by the correlation coefficients (see Table 2), whereas exposition and ECDL do not correlate significantly.

Table 3: Variables and Models

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Exposition ^a	0.911 (0.248)***	-	1.056 (0.248)***
Confrontation	-	-	-
Solution	-	-	-
Plot Point 1	-	-	-
Plot Point 2	-	-	-
Scene order	-	1.407 (0.268)***	-
Value endpoint	-	-	-
Experientially conclusiveness (direct)	0.841 (0.061)**	-	-
Experientially conclusiveness (metaphorically)	0.978 (0.088)**	1.033 (0.085)**	1.052 (0.088)**
Total R ² ^b	0.397***	0.353***	0.336***

a) Table shows the unstandardized regression coefficients of each model. In parenthesis the explanatory power (R²) of the specific variable is shown. p<0.01=***; p<0.05=**;

b) The explanatory power of the variables in each model sum up to the total R²

Looking at the independent variables of our models, we found in Model 1 a weak correlation (0.383) between ECML and exposition, in Model 2 a weak correlation (0.374) between ECML and scene order and as well between ECML and exposition in Model 3 (0.383) and no correlation between ECDL and exposition in Model 1. But neither the weak correlation between ECML and exposition nor the weak correlation between ECML and scene order are symmetric as shown in Figure 7 for ECML and Exposition.

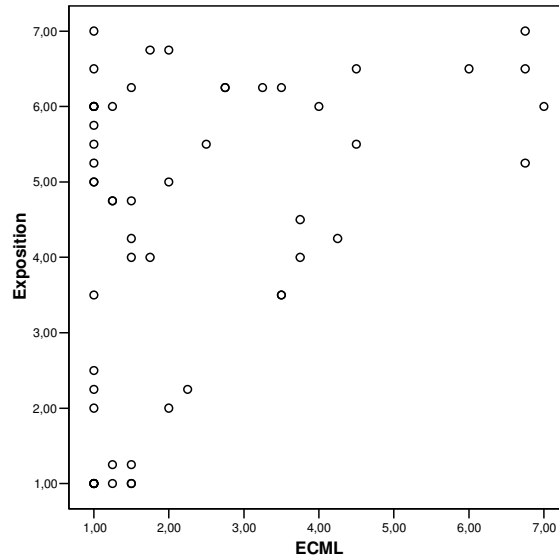


Figure 7: Plot

As shown in Figure 7 there are no commercials with weak exposition and strong ECML. To test hypothesis 2 that a good story does not work without experiential conclusiveness, we calculated the mean values of the success scores of three groups of commercials as shown in Table 4a and 4b.

Table 4a: Means of Success-Score

		ECML	
		Low	High
Exposition	High	62.12	69.57
	Low	59.1	--

Table 4b: Means of Success-Score

		ECML	
		Low	High
Scene order	High	62.55	69.91
	Low	59.16	--

The mean values are significantly different on a 0.01 level (using t-tests). While the difference between a low and high exposition-value in the low ECML-case (Table 4a) explains only 3 points of the mean success score, the difference between a high and low ECML-value in the case of high exposition explains more than 7 points. This is nearly the same with scene order and ECML. While the difference between a high and low scene order-value in the low ECML-case (Table 4b) explains only 3 points of the mean score, the difference between a high and low ECML-value in the case of high scene order explains more than 7 points. This gives support to hypothesis 2, that a good story is not that successful without experiential conclusiveness, even if it is a good story.

The expected importance of the value endpoint could not be supported with our data. We could not identify a regression model, where the value endpoint has a high explanatory power, like the variables in Table 3.

Discussion

Model 1 shows an explained variance of nearly 40% which is very high. Model 1 contains one variable of the storytelling elements and both variables of experientially conclusiveness, which confirms our main hypothesis that both elements, the story on the one hand and the customers experience on the other hand explain the advertisements' success. This supports Zaltman's (2003) idea that not only the creatives of the ad agencies but also the customers create the meaning of an advertisement and therefore determine the success. In all three models we find storytelling variables on the one hand and experientially conclusiveness variables

on the other hand. We did not find a model with high explanatory power with either only storytelling variables or only experientially conclusiveness variables. This also gives support to the idea of co-creation of meaning. Furthermore we did not find any commercial with excellent experiential conclusiveness and poor storytelling. But we did find good storytelling without experiential conclusiveness. So it seems that storytelling is a necessary precondition for co-creating meaning. But without an experimentally conclusive content the customer has only a weak, if any, chance to co-create meaning.

We used a social constructivist view to analyse commercials. Our data supports that the meaning of a commercial is co-created by the advertising creatives and the customer. We think that the co-creating of meaning follows a process, where the story told is the initiating part of the communication and the customer's experience co-creates meaning which then may have an impact on the customer's behaviour. In this sense the supplier (via the ad agency) tries to coordinate the customer's behaviour through initiating a communication process. The customer's behaviour can not be managed or influenced directly. If the customer co-creates the meaning she also determines her behaviour so that the supplier can only coordinate it. In that sense Zaltman (2003) is right that not only the creatives of the ad agencies but also the customers create the meaning of an advertisement and therefore determine the success. This also indicates that a social constructivist perspective is an interesting view in marketing research and advertising, confirming the prepositions of Rosa and Spanjol (2005).

Our empirical analysis tries to understand communication especially advertising from a social constructivist view. As such it leaves open more questions than it solves. But of course we are not able to mention them all. Some questions could be: Which role plays music and/or humour in commercials for co-creating meaning? Do adequate testimonials perhaps play the role of an "experience carrier"? How is the meaning co-created? What is the link between co-creating meaning and the decision to purchase?

Using the social constructionist view, there is a lot to be done by further research.

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