



## Brand Entertainment

To what extent brand entertainment influences the brand equity of a company? This book gives insights into the effectiveness of branded content by reviewing previous studies and topical literature, as well as international case studies. The empirical research provides an original comparison between the British and Italian audiences, based on the results coming from quantitative and qualitative data (a survey and interviews to academics and practitioners).

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# BRAND ENTERTAINMENT

A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN U.K. AND ITALY

*Preface by*

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## **Preface**

*by Annarita Sorrentino<sup>1</sup>*

The new consumption paradigms are increasingly characterized by consumer “crushes”, passivity resulting from confusion in the face of too many choices and a huge proliferation of stimuli. From this perspective, the utilitarian value derived from the experience of purchase and consumption is only one of the components which affect satisfaction, but it is no longer sufficient to capture the desires of the post-modern consumer. In so liquid a context, firms find it more and more difficult to codify, manage and react with a coherent strategy. The “crushes” and passivity induce the consumer to choose by following emotional and not rational “logics”. In this sense, it used to be much simpler for advertisers. At the beginning of the last century - and more or less until the 1950s - nothing more than a clear and direct message was needed to advertise, such as “buy Mercedes” or “drink Pepsi”, all printed on a poster before, and then passed for radio and TV. People received it and reacted accordingly.

Subsequently, with the birth of consumerism and the massification of society, the tastes of the public became more selective and marketers were faced with the need to make their advertisements more original, so as to stand out and beat the competition. In fact, the last decades of the twentieth century have seen advertising overwhelmingly invade every area of everyday life, in the most varied and creative forms.

To avoid the so-called “marketing clutter”, advertising merges with entertainment, thus giving birth to advertainment – which is the precursor of brand entertainment: a marketing communication tool aimed at engaging the audience by using songs, movies, television, games, and electronic communication.

The line between advertainment and traditional advertising, therefore, becomes not so clear or distinct. For example, some advertisers consider product placement, but advertainment or brand entertainment require more than just a casual reference or appearance; they expect whatever is being advertised to be discussed repetitively and be a core part of the entertainment. Brand entertainment, hence, represents a departure from previous marketing strategies in two ways.

Firstly, its rise gives brands the opportunity to go from being mere sponsors to real creators: we are used to seeing many companies sponsor productions with the aim of carving out a space for their logo in front of the consumer's eyes (how many sometimes does the Mercedes or Visa mark appear during a Champions League game?). Now, however, brands are converting into entertainment platforms.

Secondly, this new strategy denies the typical brevity of the spot, which generally makes it irrelevant, intrusive and unwelcome, to offer a more engaging and requested user experience. This requires a greater and longer-term commitment than traditional advertising campaigns.

This book offers a comprehensive overview of the challenges that branded contents face in to understanding, managing and measuring the dynamics of modern consumer needs and successfully managing the customer experience. The reader will gain a deeper knowledge of the approaches to brand engagement and learn about the theoretical and empirical challenges of studying brand entertainment. The book also considers the consumer-brand relationships in digital environments, which requires a move beyond the purely the rationalist perspective of traditional marketing, and

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provides methodological support for firms and scholars who wish to understand, managing and measuring the branded entertainment.

More specifically, the book explores the changes in branded content from product placement to the branded engagement, the limitations of traditional advertising, its evolutions and the approaches to measure its effectiveness.

The book thereby takes up the theoretical debate about the definition, the management and the measurement of advertainment marketing process and its implications: it is framed in the scholars' debate regarding evolution and paradigmatic changes of the branding strategies adopted in the new postmodern marketing era.

It also provides an interesting empirical study about the audiences' inner process of assimilation of Branded Content (with a comparative and original research between UK and Italy), by pointing out how this can have impact on the brand image/awareness and, in definitive, if consumers actually like or not this marketing tactic.

The conceptual model that this study proposes, verified through a quali-quantitative research carried on across the two abovementioned countries, represents an attempt to fill a gap in the existing literature about brand entertainment: by assuming that branded content is the natural evolution of the advertising in the new postmodern era, the paper represents the first attempt to frame it in a branding model. Moreover, it reveals that a branded content strategy advertainment based is effective since it promotes a positive attitude towards the brand in the public, operating on brand knowledge (brand awareness and brand image) which, in turn, directly influences brand equity.

Hence, the originality and value of the study, since - unlike what happened with regard to advertising – branded content has never been linked with brand equity.

From a managerial perspective, thus, the study helps practitioners in evolving their traditional view of advertising: from an “hard-selling” to a “soft-selling” strategy.

Therefore, besides addressing the scientific community in the field, this book will also be a valuable practical resource for marketing managers, entrepreneurs and consultants who want to implement innovative strategies to manage the brand entertainment.