Control and the Rhetoric of Interactivity in Contemporary Advertising Theory and Practice

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Interactivity and the apparent empowerment that it affords consumers has become a powerful watchword in contemporary discussions around advertising as well as in marketing theory and practice. Since the advent of marketing's engagement with the Internet, researchers, commentators and practitioners have fixated upon the way in which the interactive environment that is at the heart of the World Wide Web signals a shift in the balance of power between brands and consumers. As Hoffman & Novak (1996) put it, "it affords the foundation for consumer control that is impossible in traditional, passive media" (64), along with the need for significantly different communication approaches. What is perhaps surprising is that some of the most forthright of these claims about rising consumer empowerment come not from consumer groups but from within the academic marketing discipline itself, which increasingly promotes the importance of the 'co-creation of value', whereby brands acknowledge that it is customers' interactions with their products and services that produce value rather than value being something that the brand exclusively creates

(Vargo and Lusch 2004). This perspective also stresses the importance of adopting marketing communication models based upon mutually beneficial, power-symmetrical dialogue rather than the old-fashioned, hypodermic-inspired monologue patterns beloved of traditional advertising (Ballantyne 2004; Duncan and Moriarty 1998; Grönroos 2000, 2004).

However, the way these developments have been framed, promoted and discussed obscures the struggle for control in modern marketing communication theory and practice. Formulations of consumer empowerment, understandings of what interactivity is and what it represents, what 'has' it and what doesn't, definitions of control -- all these are discursively constructed by academics and practitioners even though they are often treated as what Skålén et al (2008) call "external, independent marketing reality" (119). To explore what this process of discursive construction suggests about interactivity in advertising and marketing, this chapter views both as rhetorical constructions, both in the sense of the discourse around them being an arena of rhetorical strategy but also in the broader sense of them as objects of knowledge and tools of practice that are produced through rhetoric (Hackley, 2001; Miles 2010, Nilsson, 2015; Skålén et al, 2008).

Despite a few attempts to give rhetoric a prominent position in formulations of marketing communication (Tonks 2002; Miles 2013) and investigations into the rhetorical and stylistic components of advertising executions (McQuarrie and Mick 1996; Phillips and McQuarrie 2002; Tom and Eves 1999) as well as of academic marketing writing itself (Brown 1999, 2004; Miles 2014), mainstream academic marketing research largely avoids what Simons (1990) has dubbed the "rhetorical

turn", remaining largely under the spell of the belief that marketing, if not being so now, might "one day establish itself as a 'science'" (Tadajewski 2006, 183). Indeed, clear rhetorical advantages to one party or another exist in treating dynamic, discursively-generated ideas as fixed, external realities. Accordingly, I hope to show that the theory and practice of contemporary advertising is suffused with attempts to control the understanding of 'fetish' terms such as interactivity, empowerment, control, and dialogue, and that the control of such understandings can be seen to afford distinct discursive advantages.

Accordingly, this chapter first examines the historical relationship of the discipline of marketing communication with the idea of control, one that also suffuses theory and practice of advertising. Then I will trace the link between control, interactivity, and consumer empowerment. Here, I will particularly examine the way in which early, foundational theoreticians of advertising on the Internet like Hoffman and Novak (1996) and Rodgers and Thorson (2000) position traditional advertising in opposition to the potentially egalitarian communication channels of the Internet. Next, I will discuss the burgeoning perspectives in current marketing theory regarding relationship and service, both of which containing clear exhortations against manipulative 'traditional' advertising practices and that call for interactive, dialogue-based communication approaches. This foundation helps clarify the rhetorical underpinnings of thinking about contemporary interactive advertising practices such as viral marketing and social media marketing.

While some of the discourse covered here is ostensibly concerned with 'marketing' (such as Hoffman & Novak's 1996 paper on marketing over hypermedia

environments or Vargo & Lusch's 2004 piece on the Service-Dominant Logic), it very much focuses on advertising when discussing aspects of marketing communication. In particular, such authors define interactive, networked marketing communication in *opposition* to traditional, persuasive advertising. As shown below, this opposition is part of a rhetorical strategy to package interactive advertising as something potentially revolutionary, even to the extent of avoiding the term 'advertising' itself (as old-fashioned, manipulative, and something to reject) in the description of such new approaches that are being rhetorically re-positioned under the broader rubric of marketing practice. Additionally, many advertising practitioners take care not to distinguish too strongly between advertising and other forms of marketing communication. Advertising agencies specializing in digital, for example, do not only deal with simple online display advertising but will also be integrating their campaigns across blog marketing, social media dialogue and content efforts and even gamification strategies. I will note further the significance of this point in the conclusion.

Marketing Communication and Control

Marketing is a discipline founded upon the urge to control the wild, mysterious, uncertain forces of the market. Most commonly, over the discipline's more than 90 years, that control has tended to manifest itself in the adoption of a 'scientific' approach to the analysis of the functions and variables that beset the enterprise of bringing successful products to market, thus reflecting the peccadilloes of the larger discipline of management. Indeed, Taylor (1911) was a culmination of a number of streams of research that had been moving from the start towards a more 'rational' approach to the management of industry. As Burris (1989) shows, it was part of

scientific management's attempt to establish organizational control structures "which work together to insure managerial control of the labour process, subordination of the workforce, and legitimation of this subordination" (1), with 'science' a modish, discursively-constructed framework informing the search.

Modern marketing communication conceptions possess an additional historical influence that locates control even more strongly at its disciplinary heart. Ewen (1996) cogently describes the way in which propaganda techniques of WWI, as rooted in the 'publicity' practices of Ivy Lee, Theodore Vail and Walter Lippmann, became transfused into the American advertising and emerging public relations industries. Consequently, marketing communication from the 1920s onwards becomes far more focused upon the 'manufacturing of consent' (to use Lippmann's phrase) as it employs new tactics of "psychological manipulation [and] seductive appeals to the subconscious recesses of mental life" (132).

The control orientation of marketing communication practitioners and scholars has also been buttressed by the way in which the burgeoning social sciences modeled human communication, considering as Varey (1993) does how "the work of Shannon and Weaver and of Schramm remains … the main basis of the prevailing orthodoxy in the consideration of the communication aspects of marketing and management" (330). Despite Schramm's (1954) more nuanced elaboration upon Claude Shannon's (1948) model of communication, both approaches remain fundamentally linear by focusing upon the correct transmission and reception of meaning contained within a message and carried over a medium. Both models contain versions of a feedback path between sender and receiver and so display inklings of the interactivity that is such a central

part of contemporary communication technologies. However, crucially, feedback is always a tool to determine whether a message has been *correctly received* and therefore an essential means of controlling for correct understanding.

Consequently, the communication models that have had such an influence on the development of marketing communication tend to treat the faithful and monological transmission of a message as the ideal. While some scholars have challenged such control assumptions in marketing communication, the mainstream marketing academic and practitioner understandings of communication continue to revolve around control of intentions and meanings. This is, ironically, particularly evident in the realm of interactive marketing, to which I will now turn.

Interactive Marketing and Control

Hoffman and Novak (1996) is suffused with optimism at the prospect of the "revolution" that is "dramatically altering" the "passive one-to-many communication model" (50) of traditional marketing. The interactivity that is at the heart of the Web, and that allows consumers to communicate widely their own content about products and brands, renders "impossible the blind application of marketing and advertising approaches that assume a passive, captive consumer" (65).

However, even this classic argument for the revolutionary nature of marketing on the Internet strongly retains a control orientation. While empowering consumers to produce content and meaning with brands, the state of 'flow' generated through hypermedia computer-mediated environments more effectively screens out "irrelevant thoughts and perceptions" so that "the consumer focuses entirely on the interaction"

(58). Indeed, the bulk of Hoffman and Novak (1996) describes ways in which marketers can ensure that consumers are brought into the state of flow through careful attention to the design of the online experience. Interactive affordances that gently challenge the consumer's skill help manipulate the consumer into the most receptive state possible for marketing messages. Ironically, a web user's perception of how much control they have over the hypermedia environment correlates strongly with entering the flow state, with a marketing emphasis on generating flow states leading to a greater perceived sense of control, the impact of which on "intentions and actions is more important than real control" (64). Seen this way, the approach is fundamentally manipulative despite being framed in a celebration of the equalizing, democratising nature of the web. All that the new interactivity has brought to marketing communication, it seems, is a new site for control, with new variables and new processes to manage. Despite a handful of attempts to interrogate, evolve, or provide alternatives to the model of interactive marketing communication, it has become a foundational document for subsequent scholarship on digital marketing communication.

Rodgers and Thorson's (2000) article that outlining their Interactive Advertising Model has also gained foundational status in the study of interactive marketing communication. Like Hoffman and Novak (1996), it also places control at the center of the online advertising experience. By "distinguish[ing] between aspects of the Internet that are consumer-controlled and those that are advertiser-controlled," they argue that not only is "the initiation of Internet use...completely under the consumer's control" but that "users are in the driver's seat throughout the entire online experience" (28). To demonstrate this, they delineate key factors in the online

advertising experience that are consumer-controlled and advertiser-controlled. Given the highly optimistic manner in which they start the paper, it should come as no real surprise that their model leaves very little control in the hands of advertisers. Only "structures" are controlled by advertisers, by which Rodgers and Thorson mean advertisement types (product/service, corporate, PSA, etc.), formats (pop-up, interstitial, etc.) and features (objective/subjective). Consumers, on the other hand, control functions (such as motives and mode), information processes (i.e. the cognitive tools of attention, memory, and attitude), and outcomes (the wide variety of "consumer responses" that might be stimulated by advertisements, such as clicking on an ad link, emailing the advertiser, forming an opinion towards the product, etc.).

However, even such a cursory listing of these elements suggests the presence of a very curious, if not naive, approach. What does it mean to say, for example, that attention is under the control of the consumer, if it is also seen as the prime battleground for all forms of advertising (Nyilasy and Reid 2009)? What does it mean to say that the outcomes of exposure to advertising are under the control of the consumer if the advertising industry itself is also premised upon influencing these outcomes? Indeed, in their detailed explication, Rogers and Thorson do not really consistently maintain the distinction between what is consumer and advertiser-controlled. The labeling of "outcomes" as consumer-controlled, for example, has little significance to their description of the various "responses" that the stimuli of advertising are attempting to elicit. In this sense, 'controlled' simply means 'originating with', as in a response originating in the consumer but stimulated by the advertiser. Yet, Rodgers and Thorson continue to view empowerment as a self-evident result of the fundamentally interactive nature of the Internet, arguing that it "

allows the user to participate in the persuasion process by changing the structural elements themselves" (39-40).

While one might wonder if this is not akin to allowing a goat to choose between a bolt to the head or a knife to the throat, the more important point is that the vaunted uniqueness is largely chimerical. One example that makes this point clearly includes the claim that "online, a customer can choose to click on a banner or not" (40). Of course, as an advertisement in itself, it may entice a user to click it for more information but, whether or not it is clicked, it is already fulfilling its job as advertising. A second, parallel example is the claim that a consumer can 'choose' to attend to, and act upon, any traditional piece of interruption marketing. Indeed, a print advertisement vies for the attention of the reader, but the reader might ignore it, only pay it a small amount of attention, attend to it closely but balk at its claims, or as a consequence of any of some of these reactions decide to seek out further information about the product or the brand. No substantive difference exists between interaction with a print or a banner ad, with the possible exception of the speed with which this takes place. Yet another aspect of the ostensibly unique empowerment afforded by advertising on the Internet is how a consumer can actively "seek out advertising websites" (ibid.), ignoring the fact that many readers of special interest magazines purchase them to see the latest product information, advertising, and PR from the relevant brands (as any reader of a guitar magazine will be able to assure you).

Perhaps the only aspect of Rodgers and Thorson's view of how the Internet "allows the user to participate in the persuasion process" that might be considered to be "unique" is personalisation which enables a consumer to "customize ads to their own

liking" (40). Yet, from the perspective of control it is very arguable to whom this choice belongs. The provision of customization affordances is something that the advertiser does, after all. The advertiser encourages the user to personalise his/her view in order to attract attention and keep her/his interest – in other words, customisation is a variable that one can alter in order to meet a particular intention, rather than something solely at the hands of the consumer. While browsers allow us to alter the appearance of websites and writing CSS stylesheets to format any page or page element, the vast majority of consumers can no sooner write their own CSS style sheets as tell you what the acronym URL stand for. By far the most common form of customization of advertising that modern users perform on the Internet is the use of an adblocker (Kantrowitz, 2015), which speaks volumes regarding the extent to which online advertising has successfully engaged with the concept of an empowered, interactive consumer, but perhaps in ways quite unintended by industry advocates.

Rodgers and Thorson (2000) and Hoffman and Novak (1996) are only two of the more well-known studies that emphasise the empowered nature of the online consumer. Unlike Hoffman and Novak (1996), who almost in the same breath go on to outline an approach for marketers to more effectively control this wild component, Rodgers and Thorson attempt to build up a model of interactive advertising which aggrandises consumer-controlled elements and diminishes advertiser-controlled ones. In sum, both of these classics of academic marketing's engagement with the online environment exhibit similar rhetorical gambits by going to great lengths to give the impression that the Web necessitates a sea-change in marketing's approach to control. They describe (to their readership of academic marketers) how technologies of

interactivity empower consumers and make the 'old' assumptions of marketing control untenable; yet they then end up describing new ways (or just the same old ways) to bring the consumer to heel.

Interactivity and the Relationship Marketing Vocabulary

One area in which academic marketing research has seemed to keep faith with the celebrated emancipating spirit of network technologies is in the field of relationship marketing and, latterly, the broader 'service perspective'. While predating the Internet, since its emergence in the late 1980s and early1990s relationship marketing has consistently championed a fundamentally interactive and non-controlling approach to communicating with stakeholders. For Gummesson (1987), interactivity differentiates a new relationship orientation from what he calls the "Old Marketing Concept". Because services, as he notes, are co-produced within the interaction of the customer and the firm, it makes little sense to maintain a dictatorial, control-oriented approach to a stakeholder with whom you are in a co-production relationship with. Similarly, as Grönroos (1994) argues, a relationship marketing perspective inevitably "leads to an interest in emphasising *dialogues* and creating, for example, advertising campaigns that facilitate various types of dialogue with identified customers" (10, emphasis in the original). He later explains that, for the processes of relationship marketing to work, "the parties in a relationship will have to be able to share information and listen to each other, and not rely on persuasion and manipulation" (Grönroos 2000, 6). Such a dialogue-oriented approach requires the participation of both parties, "and hence there are no senders or receivers, there are only participants in the dialogue process" (7).

Present here is an implicit claim that marketing communication at the service of relationship building cannot afford to be dedicated to the control of the consumer. This valorising of non-manipulative communication is seen in the work of many other researchers allied to the relationship and service marketing agendas. For example, in their exposition of a communication-based model of marketing relationship management, Duncan and Moriarty (1998) argue for a clear differentiation between "persuasion" and communication" in the realm of marketing. The traditional, short-term, "transaction marketing" understanding of persuasion, they note, "is manipulative" and "one way" (2). However, in marketing, prefereable relationships are built not upon *persuasion* but *communication*, "where *listening* is given as much importance as *saying*" (ibid., emphasis in the original).

Many of these positions exist together in Vargo and Lusch (2004), which outlines a Service-Dominant Logic, which re-formulates and re-packages the precepts of relationships and service marketing into a set of easier-to-digest foundational premises based around the core concept of the co-creation of value between the firm and its stakeholders. Instead of one-way, mass market messaging, Vargo and Lusch argue that "promotion will need to become a communication process characterized by dialogue, asking and answering questions" (2004, 13). The traditional balance of power between firm and customer is also consequently upset, as a service-centered view "means collaborating with and learning from customers and being adaptive to their individual and dynamic needs" (p. 6).

With little seeming room for manipulation and control in such an understanding of marketing communication, the RM and service literature ironically provides a far

more developed, and consistent, approach to the place of interactivity in modern marketing communication than does the foundational literature devoted to the specifics of advertising on the Internet. Yet, a clear opposition is also being constructed in this area of marketing thinking, as traditional advertising approaches are painted with the rhetoric of control and manipulation whilst the shining new relationship and service perspectives are constructed as supporting equitable, dialogue-based conversations with no persuasive intent. Paradoxically, perhaps, this rhetorical strategy persuasively emphasises the revolutionary nature of the new marketing paradigm in a manner similar to foundational researchers in interactive marketing. Additionally, we might wonder just how this type of orientation towards non-controlling communication survives when it interfaces more directly with the practices of the network technologies that seem to afford its most promising efflorescence.

In the first half of this chapter, we have seen how advertising has been used to characterize a form of marketing communication obsessed with control and manipulation. This has often led to advertising being used as an oppositional 'straw man' by researchers and theoreticians, in that it allows them to define an approach to marketing communication that is non-manipulative by pointing to traditional advertising practice as the exemplar of what should not be done. However, as has been discussed, even when interactive network technologies such as the Internet are held up as potential routes to non-manipulative, equitable marketing communication practice, rhetorics of control still seem to infect such formulations and understandings. The second half of this chapter investigates ways in which such rhetorics influence the forms of strategic advice offered by more recent academic

voices concerned with marketing communication practices on the social web. I will be examining a number of voices that are representative of the way in which social media and other online platforms, while ostensibly being held up as opportunities for consumer empowerment and egalitarian dialogue, are then re-framed as sophisticated arenas of control.

Social Media and the Persuasive Gambit of Conversation

Social media provide an apparently perfect venue for the creation of equitable, symmetrical, and non-manipulative relationships between firms and customers. After all, these media are built upon platforms of connection and interaction instead of passive reception. As Rybelko and Seltzer (2010) argue, "social networking sites such as Twitter would seem to be capable of providing an organization with a wide range of opportunities to engage their publics in dialogic communication" (337). Yet, research has consistently shown that the opportunities that embedded interactivity affords advertisers have largely not been enthusiastically adopted. Instead, advertising on social networks continues to be much as the Facebook-using respondents in Sashittal et al.'s (2012) study describe it -- "annoying, intrusive, insensitive to their needs, and peripheral to their interests" (499).

Academic advice to marketing communicators regarding effective strategies for using social media often undercut the egalitarian language emanating from the relationship and service theoreticians. For example, Hanna et al. (2011) speak of how interactive digital platforms have "empowered consumers to connect, share, and collaborate" and made them "expect to be active participants in the media process" (267). Yet, the advice the authors proffer their readers is rooted firmly in the old transmission

assumptions of mass media manipulation. The "critical questions" that online marketers have to ask are "who is/are the target(s)?", on what platforms do these targets live?, "what marketing content (story) does the company want to tell?", and then "how can marketers propagate or feed this content throughout the ecosystem?" (269). Where has the interaction gone? Where has the active participation gone? Instead, the consumer is a target (once again) that has to be *fed the right message* by the marketer.

Sometimes the language of control and influence saturates the academic voice from the start. Kumar and Mirchandani's (2012) discussion of how to increase the ROI of social media marketing presents a seven-step approach that asks marketers to "first identify the net influence wielded by a user in a social network and then to predict that user's ability to generate the viral spread of information [so that] businesses can identify the 'right' individuals to engage in social media conversations to promote WOM" (56). The language employed here suggests a heavily manipulative attitude towards the consumer. Most importantly, only certain consumers are to be considered worth engaging with in dialogue. The "right" consumer—one who deserves the dialogic attention of the firm—is one who has influence over others. The motivation for engaging such consumers is entirely self-interested; they are to be used by the firm to relay their message in the most effective way across the network. Kumar and Mirchandani make this clear when they describe how these "right" consumers will have to be 'incentivised' by the firm to spread their message. Such incentives "can be tangible (such as discounts and freebies), intangible (such as recognition in a social network) or both" (57). In these scenarios, traditional marketing attempts of control are simply shifted onto selected consumers who become proxy (traditional) marketers.

There is no revolution of empowerment here, and there is certainly no attempt to give up the persuasive, manipulative mode of one-way communication. What persists is an attempt to finesse the network and bend it to the control-oriented thinking of traditional marketing.

A tension exists in academic marketing writing on social media. While initial celebrations of the dialogue-enhancing abilities of the platforms are common, they less commonly and completely promote the use of non-manipulative, mutually beneficial relationship strategies. Indeed, this tension perhaps simply mirrors the general practitioner response to social media. As Schultz and Peltier (2013) have noted, engagement on social media, "the way it is seemingly being defined and practiced today by marketers, and supported by academic studies, often seems to be nothing more than a re-invention of one of the oldest tools in the marketing arsenal, sales promotion" (90). The heavy use of 'follow us', 'post a picture of yourself with our product', 'use our hashtag', as well as incentivising discount codes, along with the form of influencer targeting that Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) encourage, constitute the dominant modes of contemporary social media marketing. While such practices are, in one sense or another, taking advantage of the interactivity that online platforms provide, they are largely riffs upon the old themes of manipulative, persuasion-based, mass marketing communication practices. Getting consumers to take your packshots for you in return for a 10% discount off their next purchase is simply a cheap form of outsourcing, instead of the sort of marketing communications revolution that the luminaries of the service perspective have been calling for (though it does, perhaps, take Gummesson's notion of the "part-time marketer" to its logical conclusion).

Infection and Control

The manner in which influencer targeting has spread through advertising theory and practice regarding interactive systems is a bold indication of the aggressive customer-as-resource thinking that has tended to underlie marketing communication's reaction to the supposedly 'empowered' consumer. As I have argued elsewhere (Miles 2014), viral marketing promotes a "turning away from interaction with the customer" (4). While many theoreticians and gurus speak of the need to engage stakeholders in open-ended, exploratory dialogue in order to build up long-term relationships of trust and mutual benefit, the sort of contagion-inspired manipulation of targeted influencers that the viral version of word-of-mouth has generated is entirely antithetical to this approach. Viral marketers and influence marketers understand dialogue as a prime vector of infection instead of as a realm in which the firm and the consumer meet on equal terms. Indeed, all forms of influencer marketing shift the conversational dyad away from the consumer-firm and towards the customer-influencer. In these scenarios, the firm is not a transparent conversational agent but rather an *éminence grise* skulking behind the influencer.

The figurative violence of the viral metaphor measures in key ways the exasperation felt by marketing communicators (both academics and practitioners) when confronted by consumers who will not listen, cannot be found, or refuse to be interested in the persuasive messages prepared for them. Whichever is the case, viral marketing is substantively different in its implied conception of communication from the dialogue approach of the service and relationship marketing voices discussed above. For example, Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) typify this when they advise that the desired

"growth pattern" of a viral campaign should be "similar to major epidemics such as the Black Death in the 14th century, Spanish Flu in the 20th century, and Swine Flu in the 21st century" (255). The language is controlling, violent and confrontational – relegating the consumer to the role of helpless victim. The marketing virus effectively 'punishes' them for their networked lifestyle.

Viral and influencer approaches might get people talking *about* the brand, but that is not the same as talking *with* the brand. Here, too, the control paradigm central to traditional marketing communication is replicated in the dominant forms of contemporary online advertising and academic research in these areas. The general strategy in this work typically seems initially to celebrate the empowering nature of modern two-way digital communication, but then to suggest ways of undercutting it as effectively as possible.

Conclusion

There is currently a marked division in academic marketing research between scholars who champion an approach to marketing communication which is non-manipulative, dialogic, and exploratory and those who seek to explicate and promote control-oriented, persuasion/influenced-based marketing messaging. Ironically, those in the latter group are most represented in marketing communications research on interactivity. Many researchers have been responding to emerging practices in the marketplace, attempting to define and delineate new practices and techniques. In doing so, it is no surprise that they are lead by the nature of these practices. Certainly, the ways in which advertising practitioners have responded to the promises of interactivity have inevitably been influenced by their own traditions and path

dependencies. Additionally, despite the prominence of the dialogical turn in the service perspective, it is predominantly a theoretical one. So far, few attempts have been made to buttress the call for non-manipulative marketing dialogue with concrete frameworks or toolsets. Yet, the fact remains that, in the realm that should surely most engender discussion of non-control-oriented, non-manipulative, relationship-focused marketing communication, we find instead discourse saturated with uncritical assumptions of control and hierarchical influence.

In this way, the concept of interactivity serves as a rhetorical strategy in both marketing communication theory and practice. It is constructed as a 'game-changer' in order to both excite managers and scholars alike but also to threaten them with the new, the unknown, and the uncontrolled. It is used to present the prospect of non-manipulative dialogue between firm and consumer while at the same time being framed within the promotion of strategies and tactics which focus on manipulation, interruption, persuasion, and control-by-proxy. In other words, it works as a warning flag. By praising the prospect of two-way, equitable communication, it raises the prospect of such loss of control in the minds of its audience. It celebrates this wonderful thing while at the same time showing us how to avoid its inevitable 'excesses'. In this way, powerful keywords such as 'empowerment', 'interactivity', and 'dialogue' act as discursive grounds for a fearful re-dedication to the goal of control.

Advertising has become a key focus of such rhetorical efforts. The word 'advertising' now functions as a strategic signifier of practices that, for various reasons, it is now convenient for the discipline of marketing and the profession of advertising to distance themselves from. Persuasive communication directed at mass audiences is

seen both in the service and relationship marketing literature as well as in much of the thinking behind the promotional use of the Web 1.0 and 2.0 to be inappropriate of not counter-productive. 'Advertising' thus risks becoming supplanted by terms and descriptors which position their supporters as non-controlling and enlightened. Yet, the adoption of such a 'cleansed' vocabulary in no way ensures that the resulting communication strategies are truly egalitarian or non-manipulative. The 'social media marketing' techniques that now surround us in the digital realm are sufficient evidence that, when presented with the possibilities of interactive communication technologies, marketing is quite capable of forcing them to the persuasive, control-seeking ends that many voices from within and outside it have come to associate with traditional advertising. The final lesson here, perhaps, is that there is nothing *inherently* liberating about the hypermedia computer-mediated environment, and nothing that *necessarily* empowers anyone (other than, perhaps, the owners of the network).

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