

# Why the Experiential View Is Vital To Marketing Communications Research Now

## An Enhanced Framework for Examining the Effects of Contemporary Marketing

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Advertising and, more generally, marketing communications, along with consumer behaviors, have changed in important ways. Whereas, traditionally, brands and companies have forced information on consumers, they now are creating numerous forms of communications to trigger diverse gratifications for consumers who are most often exposed incidentally to them. This essay, therefore, urges researchers and practitioners to open up the theoretical framework of marketing communication research beyond the traditional information-processing paradigm by incorporating the experiential view. The authors develop three major arguments in favor of adding the experiential view to provide an enhanced framework for examining the effects of contemporary marketing communications. They conclude with a set of implications for both researchers and practitioners.

### INTRODUCTION

Whereas advertising and marketing communications have changed a lot in terms of practice, scope, policy, and impact in the seven decades since the inauguration of the *Journal of Advertising Research* in 1960, the theoretical perspective seemingly has not. Even though the very definition of advertising has evolved through several updates since John E. Kennedy's salesmanship in print in the early years of the nineteenth century to the more recent and broader "brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people" (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016,

p.334), which refers to the umbrella term "marketing communications" (e.g., Huh, 2016, Schultz, 2016, Stewart, 2016), the dominant theoretical perspective still dates back to the original view of advertising as sales information. For an excellent overview of the evolution of the definition of advertising, see, for instance, Richards and Curran (2002), as well as the first pages of Rotfeld (2008).

### First, a Bit of History

Although the appearance of the first advertisements (outdoor advertisements, posters, or inserts)

## Management Slant

- The experiential view offers a more elaborate account of consumers' incidental exposure to numerous communications and the effects of brand stimuli without awareness.
- It offers a more elaborate account of increasingly entertaining communications with less direct, factual, and verbal messages.
- It offers a more elaborate account of the increasingly active role that empowered consumers play.
- Expanding the traditional information-processing paradigm by bringing in the experiential view provides an enhanced framework for examining communications effectiveness.
- This enhanced framework requires a more holistic approach as well as more indirect measures such as implicit measures.

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undoubtedly dates back to the first forms of commerce in antiquity, the need for companies to communicate to markets really developed with the Industrial Revolution and the advent of mass production in need of sales. (For a very complete and impressive review of the history of advertising until the present day, see Richards, 2022.) As markets became less and less local, companies had to use mass printing (leaflets, posters, then newspaper advertisements), the mass medium of that time, to inform consumers who lived much farther away from the places where the products were produced. Companies' efforts to inform the public about the existence of their products to sell them were referred to as "advertising" in English (derived from the Latin *ad vertere* meaning "to turn toward") and "publicité" in French (from the Latin *publicitas*, which means "something that is public").

According to early advertising agencies such as Lord and Thomas, advertising was thus assimilated to a form of "selling in print," which meant giving the prospects as much information as possible and then the possibility to make the order (Hopkins, 1923/1998). AIDA—attention, interest, desire, and action—was one of the early models promoting the idea of a sequence of effects that gave the main role to the information transmitted by the advertisement (Barry and Howard, 1990). According to this sequence of advertising effects, purchasing behavior was explained by the buyer's knowledge of the product purchased, which resulted from the information transmitted by advertising, which is the key. Influential practitioners have largely shared this view; for example, Daniel Starch, who invented the Starch Rating (a press editorial and advertisement reading measure and the forefather of Gallup's measure of recall) in the 1920s (Starch, 1923), and Russell Colley (1961), who promoted the model Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results, or DAGMAR. It was also in this television-era context that Rosser Reeves (head of Ted Bates and Co.) wrote his influential book *Reality in Advertising* (1961), in which the key concept of communication was the transmission of a unique selling proposition, that is, a strong verbal claim, reflecting a proposition strong enough to consumers that competitors do not or cannot offer it, to pull customers to a brand, as well as the accuracy with which the sender's claim was received by the target receiver.

### The Key Role of Verbal Information

The key role of the information transmitted by advertising and its consecutive sequential effects received strong support from academics. Although the so-called "motivation school" in the 1950s (with authors such as Dichter, 1957; Gardner and Levy, 1955; and Martineau, 1957) defended the importance of symbols, emotions, and nonverbal cues for brand communication effectiveness,

the most influential sequential model has been the hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). According to this traditional hierarchy framework of advertising and marketing communication's effectiveness, the receiver of the message first has to be aware of the information transmitted by the company (awareness of the existence of the product, knowledge of its attributes, etc.) and only then can feel something of a more affective nature (liking, preference), which can ultimately generate a buying behavior. Of note, according to Lavidge and Steiner (1961), referring already to the concept of "involvement," consumers' psychological or economic commitment plays an important role, with more committed or "involved" consumers taking more time to go through the sequence, as cited in Barry and Howard (1990). McGuire (1978) added conditional probabilities in this traditional sequential view.

Information's fundamental importance continued to be reinforced with a body of work on cognitive structure and cognitive response approaches (e.g., Greenwald, 1968; Lutz and Swasy, 1977), leading to the elaboration likelihood model of Petty and Cacioppo (1983, 1986). Petty and Cacioppo distinguished two routes of persuasion: the high-involvement central route, giving rise to an extensive processing of advertising information and leading to attitude changes that are more persistent, resistant, and behavior predictive, and the (weak) low-involvement peripheral route "based on affective associations or simple inferences tied to peripheral cues" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p. 128). According to a longitudinal content analysis of the articles published in 17 top-tier advertising, marketing, and communication journals between 1980 and 2010 (Kim, Hayes, Avant, and Reid, 2014), dual-process models, information processing, and the hierarchy of effects were the three most frequently mentioned theoretical frameworks over this 30-year period.

### Time to Open Up the Theoretical Framework

If marketing communication research is to build theory (or to develop knowledge; e.g., Avant, Kim, and Hayes, 2017; Chang, 2017; Ford, 2021) and serve as a developmental vehicle for professionals in all areas of marketing (per the stated mission of the *Journal of Advertising Research*), it needs to expand beyond the same old building blocks. Despite regular criticisms of cognitive- and information-processing-based views, the focus has been and is still primarily on the cognitive and conscious processing of advertising information, with an emphasis on consumer recall and recognition among both practitioners and academics (e.g., Ambler, 1998; Barry and Howard, 1990; Ehrenberg, 1974; Gordon, 2006; Heath and Feldwick, 2008; Kitchen and Spickett-Jones, 2003; Krugman, 1965; Lannon and Cooper, 1983).

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Advertising and marketing communications have evolved a great deal from brands and companies forcing information on consumers with the sole intent of selling to now creating experiential contexts that offer consumers diverse gains and gratifications (Dahlen, 2021), and the whole ecosystem of technology, formats, media, and revenue models has expanded (*e.g.*, Ford, 2021) far beyond print advertisements and broadcast media. To therefore better examine the effects of contemporary marketing communications, this essay invites both practitioners and researchers to open up the theoretical framework of marketing communication research beyond the traditional and still predominant information-processing paradigm and to bring in the experiential view (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Since the two founders of the experiential movement rightly observed some 40 years ago that the lives of most human beings are devoted to activities guided by the quest for hedonic gratification, this trend has obviously increased, but the incorporation of this valuable perspective into marketing communication research is still far from being achieved. Before highlighting the main contributions and implications of this important challenge, this essay suggests three major reasons for practitioners and researchers to move in this direction: The experiential view offers a more complete account of consumers' incidental exposure to communications and the effects of brand stimuli perceived without awareness, offers a more elaborate account of the development of increasingly entertaining communications, and more effectively addresses the increasingly active role of consumers in marketing communications.

**INCIDENTAL EXPOSURE AND EFFECTS OF BRAND COMMUNICATIONS PERCEIVED WITHOUT AWARENESS**

Most, if not all, authors who have sought to analyze the evolution of advertising concluded that the development of information and communication technologies, new media, and new formats are driving forces (*e.g.*, Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Kumar and

Gupta, 2016). Advertising and marketing communications depend on the media to deliver their messages (Deuze, 2016). What is obvious is the combined development of the Internet and advances in computer technologies, as well as the multiple and varied digital communication formats they continuously generate. This can be seen easily in banner or display advertisements, websites, search advertisements, online behavioral advertising, videos, native advertising, video game placements, advergames (games that use advertising techniques to promote products or services), apps, and brand communications on social media that, in turn, cover a wide range of platforms from Facebook and Twitter to Instagram, Reddit, and TikTok (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016).

As Rust and Oliver (1994) foresaw more than a quarter of a century ago, the new technologies that enable these developments have profoundly changed marketing communications, making them both ever more numerous and ubiquitous in content, time, and place. With the continued development of digital and mobile technologies, the proliferation of media platforms offers consumers multiple and varied content—all of which are potential communications media—that are accessible at virtually any time, in any situation, and at any location (Stewart and Cunningham, 2017). The emergence and development of social media have greatly amplified the power and the phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication, which has exponentially increased the number of potential customer touchpoints for marketing communications (Batra and Keller, 2016).

Obviously, the number of communications related to a brand or organization to which a consumer can be exposed on a daily basis is astronomical (Batra and Keller, 2016; Wind and Hays, 2016). It is apparent that this multiplication of new media and platforms, which offers consumers multiple and varied content at all times and places, reflects a consumer in permanent search of sensations, emotions, and pleasure. Huizinga (1970) discussed the idea of *homo ludens*, or the “man who plays,” in opposition to *homo economicus*, or “economic man,” and its instrumental consumption of the late 1950s (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986), which fully matches a postmodern (Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh, 1995; Lyotard, 1979) or even hypermodern consumer (Aubert, 2006; Lipovetsky and Charles, 2004).

Faced with this multiplication of new media, platforms, and various digital formats of communications, consumers are exposed more than ever to brand communications during their multiple media consumption and entertainment activities, particularly as they are often engaged in media multitasking and multiscreening (Duff and Segijn, 2019). The exposure of consumers to communications, therefore, occurs most often in situations where their primary focus is not the goal-oriented task of consumption problem solving (both highly involved and looking for information to process) but, rather, the sensation seeker's task of *homo*

*ludens*: consuming entertainment media. Faced with overwhelming amounts of stimuli and confronted with information overload (Sauerland, Felser, and Krajewski, 2012), consumers most often seek to avoid commercial stimuli (Milosavljevic and Cerf, 2008). In such conditions of low involvement, the attention accorded to these stimuli is short and infrequent, as Pieters and Wedel (2004) have shown in the case of magazine advertisements. Consumers are thus mostly exposed to communications incidentally, and, accordingly, most brand communications are processed without consumers allocating specific attention to them (Derbaix, Herrmann, and Kacha, 2014). Many new forms of communications are increasingly integrated into the content of multiple media vehicles, and entertaining communication becomes an important part of the process (e.g., brand placements in video games, sponsoring activities, and advergames). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that situations in which consumers are potentially interacting with communications most often take place while these communications are not the focus of consumers' attention (Ferraro, Bettman, and Chartrand, 2009; Grimes and Kitchen, 2007). Although it is understood that exposed consumers may, under certain conditions, allocate specific attention to communications (as can be seen in the discussion of the third reason given in the following text), the fact that these interactions with communications are characterized by the absence of specific attention is the norm nowadays when it comes to understanding the effects of contemporary marketing communications (e.g., Derbaix *et al.*, 2014; Ferraro *et al.*, 2009; Grimes and Kitchen, 2007).

Whereas the cognitive foundations of the hierarchy of effects and information-processing models consider that higher order effects for the brand depend on the level to which consumers pay attention and process brand information, the experiential view is much less restrictive. It is more open to the existence of higher order outcomes for the brand in the absence of a sufficient level of processing or even conscious perception; for example, the effect of sport sponsorship on spectators' likelihood to include the sponsor brand in their consideration sets has been observed, even without awareness of the brand as an event sponsor (Herrmann, Corneille, Derbaix, *et al.*, 2014; see also Santoso, Wright, Trinh, and Avis, 2022, for another example with Twitter advertisements). The experiential view of the "intervening response system (cognition-affect-behavior) that generates output consequences" proposed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p. 132) clearly attested to this 40 years ago. They suggested that there is a need to go beyond the traditional view of the cognitive component, a structured memorial network of knowledge and beliefs, by also taking into account more latent content including "consumption-related flights of fancy involving pictorial imagery (Richardson, 1969), fantasies (Klinger, 1971), and

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daydreams (Singer, 1966)," (p. 136) which may result from less conscious cognitive processes.

Similarly, the affective component, which is traditionally restricted only to a part of the hedonic response (*i.e.*, attitudes and preferences), encompasses in Holbrook and Hirschman's experiential view a wide range of emotions and feelings. The same goes for the "behavior" component, traditionally focused on purchasing behavior, which is extended to the whole consumption experience, including physical and mental events relating to both action and reaction.

In terms of "output consequences," whereas the conventional approach focuses on satisfaction of consumer needs through the utilitarian functions fulfilled by the product, the experiential view emphasizes the fun that the consumer derives from the experience of consuming the product (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), which is in line with "play mentality" (Huizinga, 1970). This "stream of associations that occur during consumption (imagery, daydreams, emotions)" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 138) is, therefore, an integral part of the value for the consumer, with perceived value being at the origin of the feedback loop representing the learning effects of a behavior on future behaviors. If the consumption of marketing communications as a service offered to customers is adopted, this feedback loop may represent a favorable (or unfavorable) learning effect for the forthcoming consumption of future communications of the same brand (Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015) or even affect consumption behaviors toward other brands and organizations' communications more generally (Darke and Ritchie, 2007).

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCREASINGLY ENTERTAINING COMMUNICATIONS**

Not only has there been an explosion of new and unique formats, but communications have also become increasingly entertaining,

blurring the boundaries between marketing communications and entertainment. The message now tends to be communicated in a less direct or factual way, explicitly signaling persuasive and commercial intention in favor of more indirect, playful (*e.g.*, “the gamification of advertising”; Terlutter and Capella, 2013), and more subtle communications that arouse more sensations and fun and leave more room for consumers’ imagination.

Adopting, for example, the narrative persuasion logic (*e.g.*, Kim, Ratneshwar, and Thorson, 2017) of transporting and engaging the consumer from the narrator’s perspective (*e.g.*, van Laer, de Ruyter, Visconti, and Wetzels, 2014), an advertisement can tell the passion-filled story of the brand or product (Dahlen, Thorbjørnsen, Colliander, *et al.*, 2020), its origin, its longevity (Pécot, Celhay, Kacha, and Lombard, 2022), its life, its projects, all in connection with certain events and symbols, thus reinforcing its expected perceived positioning. According to Filser (2002), this so-called “experiential dressing or packaging” revolves around three dimensions: the dramatization of the setting in favor of the product; the narrative that tells its story; and the actions that range from interactions between the consumers and the product to their opinions and recommendations on e-commerce sites, blogs, or social networks (originally observed in stores). In the field of communication, this kind of “experiential dressing or packaging” can, of course, be adopted in a variety of ways: for instance, utilizing characteristics such as syntax and images (Kim, Choi, and Wakslak, 2019); dimensionality (Li, Daugherty, and Biocca, 2003); graphics, colors, etc.; and using creative media choices (Dahlen and Edelnus, 2007). Most major brands use advertisements that combine various sensory stimuli (visual, auditory, tactile), including, for instance, crisp sounds or whispering (Sands, Campbell, Mavrommatis, and Kadomskaia, 2022), to trigger immersive and positive sensory experiences among consumers.

In the case of product placement, for example, this experiential dressing or packaging by nature also concerns the medium (*e.g.*, the movie) that hosts the placed product as well as the execution characteristics of the placement itself, such as its more or less strong connection to the plot (or one of the main characters), as has been shown in the literature (Babin, Herrmann, Kacha, and Babin, 2021). Numerous other examples, some of which are event-based communications (*e.g.*, trade fairs and exhibitions, company-organized or company-sponsored events), websites, or advergames (*e.g.*, van Berlo, van Reijmersdal, and Eisend, 2021), would easily support the same analysis.

This development of more entertaining marketing communications constitutes another argument in favor of the relevance of the experiential view, because in this view, the consumer assumes the role of “producer” of the experience that she or he lives when

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interacting with objects, stimuli, or situations (*i.e.*, producing a set of thoughts, emotions, activities, and value [TEAVs]). This “production” is induced by an experiential context (*i.e.*, an assembly of stimuli “capable for bringing about an experience”; Carù and Cova, 2006, p. 44), an assembly of stimuli resulting from an experiential dressing or packaging (Filser, 2002).

Given the diversity of consumption experiences in retail environments, Antéblian, Filser, and Roederer (2014) proposed a distinction that is based on whether consumers access physical experiential contexts directly or virtually through media such as computers, tablets, and smartphones. This distinction, which is based on the mode of access to the experiential shopping context, either directly or indirectly through technology, is easily transposable to current communication practices. Whereas nonevent communications, such as the multiple forms of advertising or product placement, usually require the mediation of technology to give consumers the possibility to interact with them, event-based communication (*e.g.*, fairs or exhibitions, congresses, festive events, events organized by the brand or company, or even events sponsored by the brand or company) *de facto* offer consumers direct interactions with these physical experiential contexts as well as indirect or mediated interactions by means of live or deferred broadcasts.

#### **THE INCREASINGLY ACTIVE ROLE OF CONSUMERS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**

Whereas the traditional market/economic approach places the creation of value within the company to satisfy consumers who are perceived mainly as passive information receivers, it is now well accepted that value is cocreated with consumers as soon as they participate in the production of the expected service (*e.g.*, Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), giving them a more active role as they are both producer and consumer (cf. “prosumer”; *e.g.*, Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau, 2008;

Ritzer, 2010; Toffler, 1980). As already pointed out, in the experiential view, the consumer is the producer of the experience that she or he is living when interacting with an experiential context made up of an assembly of stimuli.

In the field of communications, consumers also expect and have, today in the digital age, more possibilities to play an active role (Acar and Puntoni, 2016), for instance, in controlling the receiving of advertisements (*e.g.*, with the remote control and video recorder) or, conversely, actively seeking certain contents and formats more generally (*e.g.*, on YouTube). These fully empowered consumers, moreover, can be and are—younger generations, in particular—content creators of multiple forms (text, pictures, video, music, etc.), becoming simultaneously media content receivers and creators of their own content (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell, 2008), and they can even be seen as content integrators as they control, to a certain extent, the marketing communication integration process (Kliatchko, 2008). “Much more consumer-to-firm, consumer-to-consumer, and consumer-about-firm communication exists. Because of increased social influences on purchase, word of mouth (WOM) and advocacy have become especially important; brand messaging is even less under the marketer’s control” (Batra and Keller, 2016, p. 122).

Under these contemporary conditions, consumers’ interactions with the experiential contexts provided by communications can give rise to a more or less active participation on the part of the consumer, similar to the three levels of participation distinguished by Antéblian *et al.* (2014) for consumption experiences in retail environments. The first level is “interpretative collaboration,” which echoes the set of cognitive and mental processes activated by stimuli perceived by consumers with more or less (or even no) attention (Derbaix *et al.*, 2014) and triggers a set of TEAVs. This first level of consumer participation is present as soon as a consumer interacts with a communication context. As developed in the preceding text, it is worth underlining here how much the experiential view of TEAVs is much less restrictive and much more in line with current communication practices (contents, formats, and exposure conditions) than the traditional view of the CABS (cognition-affect-behavior-satisfaction) models (*e.g.*, Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, 1968; Howard and Sheth, 1969; Nicosia, 1966). In addition to the traditional knowledge and beliefs learned primarily through conscious memorization and learning processes that presume the consumer’s high involvement, thoughts also encompass mental elements (ideas and mental images, real or imaginary) resulting from less conscious and nonconscious cognitive processes. Similarly, emotion is no longer centered on the traditional attitudes and preferences resulting from beliefs about the product and the brand but focuses more on consumers’ feelings, expressive behaviors,

and physiological responses. The same goes for action, extended to the consumption experience (and not restricted to purchase), which takes in everything that happens there, including physical and mental events relating to both actions and reactions. Finally, it is the same for value, which relates to consumers’ enjoyment, pleasure, and evaluative judgments.

A second level of consumer participation in consumption experiences in retail environments is called “directed self-production” (Antéblian *et al.*, 2014, p. 93, italics in original), which involves the performance of all of the actions required of the consumer in the retail setting. This could involve events organized by brands and organizations (*e.g.*, fairs, exhibitions, company visits, or open-days where consumers can directly interact through their five senses with the products) or brand-sponsored events (*e.g.*, sports or cultural events), through consumers’ attendance at the events, visits to more or less immersive websites (*e.g.*, Li *et al.*, 2003), and participation in games, competitions, or advergimes (Terlutter and Capella, 2013). Research has demonstrated how online sales sites, inspired by technologies developed in video games, for instance, offer the opportunity for visitors to represent themselves in the form of personalized avatars and allow them to live a more immersive and enriched experience (*e.g.*, Garnier and Poncin, 2013). Similarly, visiting virtual worlds, such as Second Life, leads consumers to interact with brand outlets and, in turn, to positive effect (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2009).

The third and final level of consumer participation is called “creative coproduction” (Antéblian *et al.*, 2014). In the field of marketing communications, this typically consists of activities such as consumer advertising (co)creation, (co)production, and even (co)broadcasting. Reflecting a specific subset of the more general phenomenon of user-generated content whereby consumers freely choose to create and share information of value, consumer-generated advertising refers to “specific instances where consumers create brand-focused messages with the intention of informing, persuading, or remembering others” (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon, 2011b, p. 87). With the development of the Internet and inexpensive computer/smartphone cameras and video-production software, consumers are now creating and producing commercial slogans or digital advertisements, and even publishing them themselves by means of free platforms such as YouTube. This can occur through participation in a brand-sponsored contest or even spontaneously. The famous “Live the Flavor” advertisement that aired during the 2007 Super Bowl halftime (since generating millions of views and yielding untold publicity), with the winner of Frito-Lay’s competition inviting consumers to produce advertisements for their Doritos brand of chips, is an interesting example of consumer-generated advertisements resulting from participation in a

**Table 1** Prototypical Information-Processing View versus Experiential View of Marketing Communication: Synoptic Comparison

Variable	Information-Processing View	Experiential View
Perspective	Analytical	Holistic
Consumer orientation	Problem solver: looking for and processing information	Sensation seeker: looking for hedonic gratifications
Reference exposure conditions	Primary task: a problem solver goal-oriented task	Secondary task or primary task (sensation seeker-oriented task)
Prototypical communication stimulus	Information-mainly-based communications	Entertaining communications
Immediate objective	Persuasion: changing consumers' attitudes	Entertainment: providing engaging experiential contexts to consumers
Prototypical nature/role of the target consumer	"Receiver" of information transmitted by brands/organizations' communications: role rather "passive" (except under high involvement)	"Producer" of the experience resulting from its interactions with brands/organizations' and other consumers' communications: role rather "active"

brand-sponsored contest. Consumers, however, often participate spontaneously at their own convenience; that is without any brand invitation, brand endorsement, or even control over the content or the media. This active role adopted by empowered consumers has given rise to multiple forms of interaction and engagement behaviors related to brand communications (including advertisement hijacking in the form of parodies and spoof advertisements) on social media (*e.g.*, forums, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, or virtual/online communities), including their resulting public conversations and communications.

## DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Contributions of the Addition of the Experiential View

Compared with the traditional information-processing view and its underlying linear mass media paradigm, the experiential view emphasizes consumer interactions with the multiple marketing communications like so many experiential contacts with a brand or organization. These multiple interactions take place throughout the numerous daily activities in which consumers are engaged primarily guided by the quest for hedonic gratification according to human nature (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Consumers thus interact with the ever-increasing number of communications crossed along their journey primarily in situations where their attention is absorbed by a main task ("primary task") that does not favor the allocation of specific attention to each of the communications with which they interact often incidentally (Derbaix *et al.*, 2014).

The experiential view attributes to consumers the role of producers of the experiences they live (*i.e.*, feeling and producing TEAVs). Thus, in situations where the consumer's level of specific attention to the stimuli remains very low (or even zero), the TEAVs that they feel result from mental processes that do not require specific attention; whereas, in other situations (*e.g.*,

advergames, contests for the cocreation of a slogan or a video advertisement for a brand) that require the consumer's attention and that become their "primary tasks" by getting them to participate or even collaborate, the TEAVs that they feel are also the results of more conscious mental processes.

At the same time, the adoption of the experiential view could contribute to enhancing the importance of the artistic and aesthetic dimension (*i.e.*, "multisensory aesthetic"; Wind and Hays, 2016, p. 152) or what Deuze (2016) calls "the aesthetic opportunity." It could also enhance the societal responsibility of marketing communications through the achievement of positive effects on consumer entertainment, engagement, and relationship building (Chang, 2017; Kumar and Gupta, 2016). It could ultimately help to avoid possible negative social effects (*e.g.*, on stereotypes conveyed by communications, see Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016) and go beyond the achievement of broader effects on consumer welfare (*i.e.*, "adding value beyond the purpose of the advertiser"; Dahlen, 2021). This could also positively affect other stakeholders. By doing so, the experiential view could ultimately raise awareness of its importance today and in the future (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Deuze, 2016).

Table 1 provides a synoptic comparison of the prototypical traditional information-processing view versus the experiential view. It should be reinforced that the goal here is not to suggest that one is better than the other but to urge the complementarity of the experiential view as a necessary enhancement to the information-processing view for marketing communication research and practice.

The multitude of consumers' microinteractions that result from new media, new communication formats, and new consumer behaviors (*e.g.*, Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Deuze, 2016; Kumar and Gupta, 2016) undoubtedly contributes to a blurring of the boundaries among marketing communications, media

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communications, information, and entertainment (Dahlen and Edelnus, 2007). This multiplicity of diverse consumer micro-interactions with brand communications consequently calls for the adoption of a more holistic, integrated, dynamic, and cumulative approach in line with the synergistic and integrated marketing communication (or integrated brand promotion) view recommended by Batra and Keller (2016), as well as the recent forward-looking work of the Wharton Future of Advertising Program for “Creating Value through All Media and Non-Media Touchpoints” (Wind and Hays, 2016). It should be kept in mind, however, that the meta-experience that a consumer has with a brand, company, or organization (and all that is experienced in terms of TEAVs) results from both marketer-controlled as well as consumer-driven touchpoints (Kliatchko, 2008; Schultz, 1998).

### **Implications for Researchers and Practitioners**

The addition of the experiential view also requires a reexamination of the traditional methodologies and measures used to monitor the effectiveness of communications within the framework of the information-processing view. Such a reexamination suggests that two major changes are necessary.

First, in line with the holistic approach called for earlier, the succession of interaction microexperiences that are experienced by the consumer invites researchers and practitioners to focus on the resulting meta-experience with the brand rather than only on the effects of a single microinteraction experience with a given experiential context (*e.g.*, one single exposure to an advertisement). A more holistic approach is critical now, because it will be important to track and understand everything that is consciously or even nonconsciously felt about the brand or organization at a given moment (*e.g.*, after a communication campaign), to follow its evolution over time, and to link these data with behavioral data on product and brand consumption patterns. It is important here to recognize the increasing value of panel data to examine longitudinal effects. When valid and properly analyzed, such data have the potential to help both researchers and practitioners to gain a better understanding, not only of the value that consumers can experience from marketing communications but also of

their behavioral impact. This approach argues the absolute necessity of bringing the academic and managerial communities closer together (Babin, Ortinau, Herrmann, and Lopez, 2020). It is important to note that such a holistic approach does not mean calling into question the experimental logic traditionally used in more analytical approaches, but it requires adaptation and greater flexibility (Heath and Feldwick, 2008). This enhanced view needs to be implemented with a more global and dynamic perspective (*i.e.*, developing a learning culture and skills to test alternate communication options as suggested by Wind and Hays, 2016).

Second, the addition of the experiential view invites researchers and practitioners to go beyond tracking memorization of communication content (*i.e.*, the brand, the arguments put forward, and the resulting beliefs), as well as consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions toward the brand, through self-reported verbal measures traditionally used according to the information-processing paradigm. The experiential view argues in favor of tracking everything lived and felt by consumers about the brand, company, or organization (*i.e.*, all TEAVs that can result from both conscious and nonconscious mental processes). Consequently, it invites us to favor sufficiently fine-tuned and in-depth measurement methods that are capable of tracking the complexity of conscious and nonconscious TEAVs. It, therefore, calls for the incorporation of less focused and less direct measures, such as indirect or implicit measures, which are the only ones able to track effects and outcomes for the brand without requiring the consumers’ awareness (Fennis and Stroebe, 2010). According to Fazio and Olson (2003), this would involve implicit measures using data collection protocols that are not directly focused on the object under investigation, as opposed to explicit measures that are based on direct verbal reports on this object. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) already mentioned the interest of “sufficiently indirect methods” such as “projective techniques” (p. 136) and “nonverbal response measures” (Hirschmann and Holdbrook, 1982, p. 95) such as physiological measures some 40 years ago.

With respect to the traditional constructs and measures the information-processing view is emphasizing, Table 2 offers an overview of main potential implicit measures and behavioral data that could be used in addition to track conscious and nonconscious TEAVs that consumers may experience toward a communication campaign, brand, or organization.

Table 2 is not intended to be exhaustive, as there are many possible implicit measures that can be used (Gawronski and Payne, 2010). The main purpose of this table is to highlight ways to go beyond traditional measurement methods (and self-reported measures) with implicit measures that have already been used in a marketing communications context to track consumers’ memory



**Table 2** Information-Processing View versus Experiential View: Main Constructs and Measurement Methods

Information-Processing View		Experiential View	
Constructs	Methods	Constructs	Methods
Memory of the communication and transmitted verbal information; recall/recognition of communication, brand/product, main arguments; conscious thoughts, knowledge structure, and beliefs	Interviews data Recall/recognition measures; verbal thought-listing technique; self-reported beliefs (Likert-type or semantic differential items)	Experience of the communication/campaign and brand meta-experience; accessibility of brand and associations in consumers' memory; nonconscious and conscious felt sensations (real and imaginary thoughts, symbols, images, sounds, smells, tastes, touches)	Eye-tracking; implicit measures (e.g., projective techniques, free association tasks, perceptual identification techniques, word and sentence completion tests); semantic priming tasks (e.g., lexical decision tasks)
Evaluation of brand/product concrete attributes; attitudes toward the advertisement/brand/product; preferences	Self-reported attitudes (multi-item scales); product category brands rankings	Arousal, emotions, and feelings toward communication/campaign and brand/product; connection to the brand; attitudes and preferences	Physiological measures; implicit measures (e.g., affective priming test, Implicit Association Test, and stimulus- and memory-based consideration sets)
Buying decisions and behaviors	Self-reported behavioral intentions (single-items and multi-item scales); forced-choice tasks	Consumption-related physical and mental events ( <i>i.e.</i> , conscious and nonconscious multisensory impressions as well as emotions and feelings felt)	Behavioral data on communication consumption (browsing/viewing/liking, click-throughs, opt-in/opt-out, eWoM content); behavioral data on product/brand consumption (purchase/usage, eWoM); consumption introspective reports (e.g., personal narratives, protocols)

Note: eWoM = electronic word of mouth.

traces left by previous consumption experiences (*e.g.*, Trendel and Warlop, 2005; Grimes and Kitchen, 2007). An original illustration is provided by Huang and Hutchinson (2008), who developed some implicit measures of cognitive responses to advertisements from traditional measures such as thought recognition and belief verification tasks. More typical implicit measures used in a marketing context involve projective techniques as well as priming techniques, the latter increasing the accessibility of information already existing in memory regardless of consumers' awareness (Grimes and Kitchen, 2007). Among numerous promising and already used implicit measures in marketing communication research (for a rather complete overview see Trendel and Warlop, 2005), two main subcategories (both of which are based on consumers' response accuracy and speed to various stimulus presentations) are distinguished hereinafter: tracking memory traces and semantic or evaluative associations.

Memory traces of brands or communications' features can be tracked through word stem (or fragment) completion tasks (for applications, see, respectively, Duke and Carlson, 1994; and Krishnan and Shapiro, 1996) or perceptual identification tasks using, for instance, partly degraded images of brands or

advertisements (*e.g.*, Pieters and Wedel, 2004; Wedel and Pieters, 2000). Such perceptual identification tasks can also use brand names and simply ask subjects to identify as quickly as possible each brand name (including the target brand) presented very briefly on a computer screen. In the same vein, but starting from a list of brands in the same product category, an implicit stimulus-based consideration set measure can be developed (a memory-based measure can, of course, also be developed; *e.g.*, Herrmann, Walliser, and Kacha, 2011; Herrmann *et al.*, 2014; Shapiro, MacInnis, and Heckler, 1997).

Semantic or evaluative associations that potentially exist in a consumer's memory with communications, brands, companies, or more general causes and concepts can also be tracked. The Implicit Association Test (IAT), the most well-known and used implicit measure in psychology (Brunel, Tietje, and Greenwald, 2004; Petty, Fazio, and Briñol, 2009), is a perfect example here. The purpose of the IAT is to assess the strength of associations or evaluations automatically activated by a communication, brand, object, or concept by having the respondent go through a series of successive sorting tasks of stimuli (words or pictures) into various categories as quickly as possible. (For a detailed presentation of the principles

and applications in marketing, see Trendel and Warlop, 2005; Ackermann and Mathieu, 2015.) This test generates a relative measure of associations or evaluations, although adaptations to one brand, object, or concept exist. Other possibilities are to use a meaning or an affective priming task; for an application, see, for instance, Pham and Vanhuele (1997).

As mentioned in Table 2, eye-tracking and physiological measures (e.g., facial reactions, galvanic skin response) can also help to go beyond traditional self-reported measures; however, these are difficult to utilize outside of a lab setting.

Behavioral data are already more well-known and available in the present day, such as the common metrics outlined in Table 2. Still not yet used often enough, when behavioral data are properly monitored, analyzed, and linked with the TEAVs that consumers experience, they certainly have the potential to help practitioners and researchers. Although they are not used traditionally, behavioral data that reflect the more active role of consumers in response to their exposure to a specific advertisement; a whole communication campaign; or a product, service, or brand could be important. Often shared on the web (i.e., consumer-generated advertising and conversations), such data need to be carefully monitored and analyzed with specific approaches and tools; see, for instance, Campbell, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon, 2011a.

## CONCLUSION


Advertising and, more generally, marketing communications have significantly changed in important ways. First, the combined development of information and communication technologies, new media, and new formats (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Kumar and Gupta, 2016) has given rise to a myriad of new media, platforms, and marketing communications formats. As consumers are thus exposed more than ever to numerous marketing communications during their daily activities, they are, most often incidentally, exposed to communications without allocating specific attention to them (Derbaix *et al.*, 2014). Second, not only has there been an explosion of the number of marketing communications that consumers are exposed to incidentally, but marketing communications have also become increasingly entertaining, with the message being communicated in a less direct, factual, and verbal way in favor of more fun, arousing executions. Third, consumer behaviors have evolved with the development of information and communication technologies and new media. Given these new possibilities to play a more active role, consumers can now not only control or, conversely, seek the marketing communications they want to be exposed to and/or participate in, but they can also become producers and generate communication content themselves (Berthon *et al.*, 2008).

Although advertising and marketing communications have changed a lot, the theoretical perspective seemingly has not, with the focus still primarily on the conscious processing of verbal information in advertising/communication despite regular criticisms (see, e.g., Heath and Feldwick, 2008). This essay, therefore, urges researchers and practitioners to open up the theoretical framework of marketing communication research beyond the traditional and still predominant information-processing paradigm to bring in the experiential view (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), ultimately providing an enhanced framework for examining the effects of contemporary marketing communications. During the course of this essay, it has been argued that the experiential view offers a more elaborate account of consumers' incidental exposure to numerous communications and the effects of brand stimuli perceived without awareness, the development of increasingly entertaining communications, and the increasingly active role of empowered consumers in marketing communications.

Compared with the traditional information-processing paradigm, the experiential view places the emphasis on consumers' interactions with marketing communications, which are seen like so many experiential contexts, thus attributing to consumers the role of producers of the interaction experiences they live, as well as the TEAVs they get as a result. Fully acknowledging the human (*homo ludens*) playful nature of consumers, the experiential view offers a better accounting of the TEAVs resulting from mental processes that occur under prevalent low-attention situations, as well as the TEAVs resulting from more conscious situations that require higher levels of attention.

For marketing communication researchers as well as practitioners, the addition of the experiential view should provide a more complete understanding of the effects of marketing communications, but it requires a reexamination of both traditional methodologies and measures. First, and in line with the holistic perspective of the experiential view, researchers and practitioners are encouraged to adopt a more holistic approach that aims to track at a meta-experience level everything that is both consciously and non-consciously experienced about a communication, brand, or organization at a given moment (e.g., after a communication campaign) rather than focusing only on a microinteraction experience with a given advertisement. Second, researchers and practitioners are encouraged to go beyond tracking consumers' memorization and verbalization of marketing communications content, attitudes, and purchase intentions toward the brand, by means of more indirect measures such as implicit measures capable of accessing features, meanings, associations, evaluations, and intentions even outside of consumers' awareness. To this end, a series of implicit measures

has been highlighted earlier, as well as the interest to strive to link them with behavioral data.

The experiential view is already 40 years old, but its adoption to enhance the theoretical framework of marketing communication research is still far from being achieved. It is our hope that the arguments and recommendations outlined herein will contribute to address this decisive and exciting challenge and, in turn, advance advertising and marketing communication knowledge development for practitioners and researchers. 

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