



**Research Article**

**THE MEDIA BOOM : THE JOURNEY FROM THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA TO THE INTERNET**

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**ABSTRACT**

The planet has known a lot of inventions that attracted human beings' attention and changed their lives either to the better or the worse. An absolute revolutionary technological innovation is the Internet; an innovation that modified all the traditional norms that other media do have. Internet was easily adopted by simple people, by journalists, by academicians in their scientific cursus and for sure by companies and brands. This article exposes the journey of media from the classical ones to the Internet; it highlights the unique characteristics of this new medium compared to the traditional media starting from the apogee of the consumactor and his new role in the brands' management till reaching its power to anthropomorphize the brand and infuse it with human traits that makes it closer to its fans.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Markets that abound with competing brands, a consumer who has become very demanding and difficult to satisfy, fierce competition without border. In short, a world in perpetual change where brands must not only adapt to it but above all be proactive and close to its fans in order to survive (Van Rekom *et al*, 2006). This emotional proximity between the consumer and the brand, now the only weapon of prosperity and existence, is made easier to reach thanks to the Internet, to this new medium that darkens the walls and brings people together in ambient and user-friendly digital spaces promoting relational exchange.

The media landscape has undergone many changes during the 20th century and it continues to explode and expand. After the press, the display, the radio, the cinema and the television, a new media, says the Internet, too strong, revolutionary and interactive appeared and could upset the consumer-brand relations, raised the voice of customers long considered passive objects, opened the door to relational exchange, in short changed the face of the earth. This undeniable importance of the Internet prompted Dassen (2011) to say that "today, a world without the Internet is unthinkable" (p11). This is justified in a way by the exponential growth in the number of connected (about 2.27 billion in 2012 according to wikipedia) and by the incorporation of this media in the marketing strategies of several brands. This adoption is explained by the particularities of this medium which leads us to review the main characteristics distinguishing the Internet from traditional media.

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**The traditional Media**

According to several studies, the old media landscape was characterized mainly by vertical and mass communication. A so-called "top-down" communication (Pereira, 2010) ranging from the company to consumers who receive without having the opportunity to improve, modify and change its informational and artistic content. This is an era where communication was primarily "intrusive, boring and unwanted" (Macias, 2003), "interruptive and imposed" communication (Khan, 2009) in the sense that exposure and duration are not controlled by the consumer (Florès *et al*, 2008) and an impersonal and soulless communication raising the slogan of "One size fits all" (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000). The consumactor, in this context, was continually bludgeoned by unsolicited advertising messages, with the main objectives of selling and maximizing profits and increasing market share. In other words, it was conceived only as a simple means to facilitate the achievement of these material objectives.

**The 6th medium: characteristics and virtues**

**The Internet and the consumactor**

Unlike traditional media (press, radio, television, billboards and cinema), the Internet has raised the consumer's voice, which has become too strong and above all powerful. As Burnham (1998) points out, "The Internet is not a passive experience, where viewers are programmed with branded messages, but it is an active experience, in which the user controls and dictates not only the content, but also the pace and meaning of the interaction". In support of the same thesis, Lehu (1996) argues that the Internet has mainly allowed the passage of a consumer "deceived, abused, cheated,

manipulated for years” to another “much more skeptical, much more vigilant, much more demanding, and mature. To be concise: he no longer believes in it. His naive confidence disappeared, when he finally understood that he alone had the true power.” (p13). Indeed, the apogee of the active consumer or “consumactor” is one of the most important features of this sixth media. The Internet has mainly allowed the consumer to escape from the prison of reception and passivity to a space of free expression, sharing and exchange. In the e-world, the consumer takes the lead in the relationship with the company and the brand. Indeed, this particular world has allowed the transition from an era where the company or brand imposes on the consumer a certain way of life and consumption to a new era where the company must explore the world of the consumer and adapt to it to better seduce it and be high expectations (Debos, 2008; Florès *et al* 2010; Da Silva and Alwi 2008...)

We are living in an era of “consumer empowerment, prosumers” (Mellet, 2009, p269) where consumers order, criticize, demand, express themselves freely and the brand obeys, adapts and personalizes its offer, its speech and its messages. In other words, the brand moves from a “normative” logic where it dictates its laws and the consumer follows it to a “plastic” brand logic where the consumer has become a “pilot” (Debos, 2008).

It is commonly known that each individual embodies a certain desire for consideration, a growing and incessant will to participate in all facets of life as well as a determination to leave a personal trace where he passes, In short, a desire or a thirst for modelling and reshaping his entourage. All these desires, wills and needs of close relationship with the brand, conviviality and identification have become accessible and easy to satisfy thanks to this digital universe. Supporting this thesis, Laurie (2008) argues that Internet marketing is only “a marketing initiative... designated to encourage one’s innate desire to share things one finds attractive, to benefit others and to express oneself as propagators”. The Internet thus reveals its innate desires, freeing them in order to better value the consumer in his surroundings and above all to present him as an active and important member in society as well as in the management of the brand. In short, a real life partner for the brand and the company holding it.

In summary, Mayol (2009) argues that “The role of the consumer will no longer be simply to consume the product, but also to “evangelize”, to convince other consumers to become, in a way, the best media in the brand”. The author adds that in order to survive and maintain a place in the crowd, marketers must abandon the narcissistic role they used to play (Christodoulides, 2009) and admit that the consumer is “the one and only architect of the product” and that it should be considered as the “centre of the economic universe” (p3). Supporting these ideas, Consoli and Musso (2010) argue that the contemporary consumer is “self-sufficient, selective, demanding, knowledgeable in products, interested in quality and services, co-creator of content, social, participatory and reflective” (p318). This is the era of consumer-producer or “prosumer” where “the role of producer and consumer begins to merge” (Toffla, 2006) and where consumers show their willingness to be part of the brand’s marketing team by sharing their own experiences with the brand.

### ***The Internet and the controlled infection***

Apart from facilitating informal, horizontal and engaging communication, the Internet is characterised by the speed with which messages are disseminated. Indeed, in the cyberworld, information as well as communication messages circulate and spread more rapidly than in traditional forms of communication and especially in a very short period of time thanks to the force of word-of-mouth (Van Der Lans *et al*, 2010).

This characteristic of “controlled infection” (Dobele *et al*, 2005) supports the approach that Internet marketing is “a simple copying and pasting of word-of-mouth marketing on the Internet” (Subramani and Rajagapalan, 2003; Phelps *et al*, 2004), or A controlled form of word-of-mouth by disseminating information about the company, brand or product. Then instructs consumers to disseminate information to their network, friends, and even other consumers” (Mayol, 2009) or “an amplified form of word-of-mouth characterized by a higher rate of spread” (Bouhleb *et al*, 2007). This rapid circulation of information disseminated and received by consumers strengthens and greatly supports the role of consumers.

### ***The Internet: a medium of a high creativity***

According to several researchers (Beninger 1987; Obermiller and Spangenberg 2000; Gruen *et al* 2006; Eberle 2010, etc.), this ease and speed of propagation are explained in a way by the perceived strong credibility of messages circulating on the net. Indeed, messages sent by friends are more powerful and more capable of influencing receivers than traditional advertising that is either imposing or imperialist (Debos, 2008). According to Levine *et al* (2001)<sup>1</sup>, « *There are no secrets. The networked market knows more than companies do about their own products. And whether the news is good or bad, they tell everyone*” (p142). Thanks to this speed of communication messages, another faculty of this medium emerges, namely the acceleration of the acquisition process of customers. Indeed, on the web and unlike traditional media, it has become easier to quickly convert a prospect into a real customer thanks to the commitment of consumers-Internet users, their mouths-word-of-mouth that has been accelerated and intensified as well as infectious communication marking the cyberworld. (Van Der Lens *et al*, 2010)

### ***The Internet: Communication and conversion media at reasonable costs***

Apart from the speed of message circulation, the high credibility and strength of the e-consumer, several researchers (Parise and Guinan 2008; Van Der Lans *et al*, 2010; Pereira 2010; Neti 2011, etc.) affirm that the Internet should be seen as a source of material gain and profit for brands managers. Indeed, among the most salient features of this sixth media is its very low communication cost. Indeed, the cost of advertising campaigns on the Internet is very limited compared to that of traditional campaigns, since the social and relational network of the consumer alone ensures the circulation and the propagation of messages. On the Internet, there is more spending on advertising space, on posters— the cyberworld

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Christodoulides (2009): « Branding in the post-Internet era ». Marketing Theory. Vol 9. N°1. Pp 141-144

allows the company to create, strengthen its reputation and image (Negra *et al*, 2008) with the least cost.

Thus, the Internet has helped marketers not only to communicate at a very low cost but also to merge their markets to a certain level by facilitating the adoption of a global and borderless communication strategy. Indeed, the digital world allows brands to spread a communicational message, interact with their fans and receive feedback from around the world through simple mouse clicks. The notion of a catchment area disappears on the Internet and communication and distribution strategies become globalised. In short, we are witnessing the globalization of material, relational and emotional exchanges through multi-sense communication connecting the brand more intimately with its consumers (Mcalexander *et al*, 2002).

### ***The Internet: A hyper-measurable medium***

Finally, the importance of marketing via the Internet *also* lies in the ease of detection or knowledge of the consumer's behaviour through the monitoring of his actions as soon as the message is received or exposure to promotional content. This allows companies to form very detailed mega databases facilitating their future marketing actions. In fact, marketers have become able not only to know the participants in their communication campaigns but most importantly their behaviour (quality of their visit, duration of the visit, pages visited, actions and comments on several web pages, etc.) This makes it possible to build a detailed record of each visitor. The information, the basis of any marketing decision, which was very expensive in the real world became now free on the Internet. In addition, the Internet makes it possible to make "a comprehensive collection of data entered by all users... and thus create a certain database covering all humanity" or a "Database of intentions" (Tillinac, 2006, p 22)

### ***The Internet versus Traditional media***

In an effort to decipher the differences between traditional media and the Internet, Orihuela (2003) argues that the differences are summarized in 10 main shifts. Indeed, the Internet has enabled a shift from passive audience to participatory "users have become content producers" (p2), from monomedia to multimedia where "text, audio, video, graphics, photos and animation could be arranged together and interactively on a single media", from periodicity to the notion of real time where time is no longer a constraint but rather a valuable resource if it is well managed (Damascus, 2006), from the shortage of print space and the limitation of broadcast time in other traditional media to abundance and "the overflow of information", from "editor-mediated" decentralized media promoting free expression and publication without borders and without publisher, broadcasting and forced exposure to free access, from the asymmetric and unilateral communication model to a bilateral model where communication is of the "many-to-one" type and a multilateral, horizontal and symmetrical model where communication is of the "many-to-many" type highlighting the importance of synergy between consumers on the net on the other hand, the organisation of the communicational content according to the space purchased or the duration of the time allowed to its organisation according to the digital space assimilated to meeting places open 7/7 and animated at the same time by consumers-Internet users and the brand and thanks to the Internet, the media have been able to reclaim their role as social managers of knowledge (p5).

In the same wave and according to Haridgge-March (2004), the Internet, which offers the possibility of sending personalized messages, fully embodies the true meaning of one-to-one marketing exhibited in 1993 by Peppers and Rogers. Annoyed and annoyed by "false spontaneity, orchestrated emotions and crocodile smiles" (Simmons 2008, p302) characterising traditional communication between the brand and consumers, the latter find in the digital world possibilities of expression, creating and developing relationships with the brand on the one hand and with its fans on the other (Burton, 2002).

As a result, it is not astounding that in recent years the marketing literature abounds with articles and research dealing with the Internet and especially encouraging brands to incorporate it into their strategies. Indeed, this growing interest finds its reasons very well in the particularities and opportunities that this new media offers to brands. Indeed, as mentioned above, the interactive Internet has cut with the past and unidirectional media by giving more freedom to the consumer, removing barriers between the brand and its fans and thus facilitating the globalization of exchanges at very low costs

## **CONCLUSION**

The Internet is a major turning point in the history of media and information and communication technologies (ICT), it has enabled anonymous and ordinary people to become real media and sources of information. Against all odds, this media has helped netizens or e-citizens to federate brands and develop a strong and promising relationship with them. Indeed, academics and practitioners in journalism, computer science and especially marketing have too much focused on the analysis of this new media, its potential and its contributions. In marketing, several researchers have stressed the importance of the Internet tool in the creation and development of a sustainable link between the consumer and the brand (Kalakota and Robinson, 2000) "has unique properties that assist the organization in the performance of different marketing functions in a more effective and efficient manner" (Bierma, 2002). The Internet and its various tools also facilitate the differentiation of goods and services (Trudell and Kolkin, 1999) and thus satisfy the consumer's desire and need for originality and uniqueness. The Internet can still be used to better position the organization in a digital environment (Cho *et al*, 2002), to more easily attack new opportunities (Donado, 2002), and to alter and update their marketing strategies and techniques (Krishmanusky, 2003).

It is thus more than evident that the Internet has changed the world of brands and has altered their promotional and communication strategies. This effect results from the unique characteristics of this medium. In fact, unlike traditional media and what many may think, the Internet is a very special medium, a constantly changing medium. It has undergone many changes since its inception, and ICT research continues to enrich it with new methods, tools, programs and tricks that make it easy to use for different purposes: political, personal, journalist, promotional and relational.

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