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Entertainment and Communication:

An Interdependent Approach for Generating Value through “Commu-tainment”

Abstract— Individual and social time has become a platform, horizontal rather than vertical, of typical entertainment activities, ranging from traditional and innovative media. The shift towards digital media, mainly devoted to consumers, will also be reciprocally influenced by them. The multisource research on which this article is based is aimed to define and demonstrate how entertainment is no longer simply a mere services (and related products) industry – albeit consisting of over 100 subsegments and perhaps precisely because of this - but is fast becoming a successful communicative and marketing factor helping to create business value in all sectors, product or service, private or public. More than 100 cases are analyzed and six are presented as paradigmatic ones.

Keywords: Entertainment, Communication, Marketing, Media, Services, Experience Economy, Brand, Value

I. INTRODUCTION. ENTERTAINMENT, A GROWING INDUSTRIAL SECTOR. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH.

The perimeter of free time, of leisure time and, from the industries’ perspective, of contents, channels, platforms and entertainment, is become an increasingly significant topic in our society as an economic and social, not to mention business and professional, phenomenon. The entertainment industry offers a prospect of the “eclectic, vibrant, coloured and creative art forms that fill the leisure and recreational time” (Vinet M., 2005) of ever wider segments of the western population as well as of those countries gradually emerging from a subsistence economy (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2010; Plunkett Research, 2011)[1].

Thanks to convergence, it is possible to simultaneously transmit and enjoy the new media (Rheingold H., 2002; Jenkins J., 2006; Mediascope Europe, 2010). Hence individual and social time becomes a “platform”, horizontal rather than vertical, of typical entertainment activities, ranging from traditional and innovative media such as television, cinema, web, social media and

[1] PriceWaterHouseCoopers, *Global Entertainment and Media Outlook, 2010*; Plunkett Research, *Entertainment and Media Industry 400 Firms*, 2011.

networks, to communication as entertainment; from publishing to events; to art, thus to cultural goods and merchandising products; to performing arts; to wagering and to gaming [2], to recommendation software [3]; to travel, tourism and food and wine activities, to sports and events, up to shopping [4] and visiting, also for recreation, the new forms of sales outlets (malls and shopping centres, factory outlets,...), up to design seen as an aesthetic and functional support, up to “location-based entertainment” (Lieberman, 2002; Stein, Bingham, 2009; Vogel, 2004, 2011) [5]. A taxonomy undergoing continual integration thanks to the innovative forms of entertainment, marketing and communication [6].

A time expanded and filled with multiple activities, involving both work and entertainment, a time “softened” (Rheingold, 2002) by the use of technologies and human life “colonized” by being

[2] Vogel H.L. (2011) considers “toys and gaming” in the entertainment category: these are very different industries, in which the added value of the former comes from the production and distribution stages of the product (Lego as well as Barbie dolls), whereas for the latter the added value is linked to the knowhow involved in the digital design (videogames, both “arcade” and “home”) and to communication and marketing conception-planning, or digital production and distribution and thus potentially infinite.

[3] *Recommendation software* is understood as those online systems (combining media, communication and entertainment) used by distributors of paid or free content (Amazon, iTunes, Facebook...) which engage with the interlocutor by “recommending” the next purchase, like the blogs of listeners or readers which recommend a band or book to their social network.

[4] Shopping no longer involves seeking or making purchases, it is now a form of entertainment. Retail developers are increasingly tending to abandon the format of the mall and centres devoted simply to buying to create destinations that combine shopping with the appropriate entertainment: being able to see a film, follow a cookery course in four hours, listen to a band, watch a fashion show, obtain an autograph from a celebrity, watch a sports event, eat something, meet people cfr. Stein A., Bingham E.B. (2009).

[5] *Location-based entertainment* refers to non-domestic, high-tech or sophisticated attractions. For example theme parks, places in which the importance of the location and its (media) structure/design are indisputable but also places in which the potential and identity of the brand and its extensions is deployed.

[6] There is by now a vast amount of literature that recognizes sectors and subsectors of entertainment, media and communications. Besides the already cited studies by Vogel (various years), Vinet (2005), Torkildsen (2005), Stein-Bingham (2009), we should not forget Cherubini in Italy (2008, 2011). VSS-Veronis Suhler Stevenson, private equity leader in these sectors, in *Forecast 2010-2014* (2010, appendix 1) speaks of 6 Communications sectors: Entertainment & Leisure, Targeted Media, Traditional Consumer Ad Media, Marketing Media, Education & Training Media & Services, Business & Professional Info & Services, grouped (by revenue) into 4 macrosegments: Consumer End-User, Institutional-End User, Marketing Services, Advertising, broken down into 20 segments and over 100 subsegments.

continuously interconnected in “indistinct” places where the boundaries between private life and work tend to overlap.

The entertainment, media and communications industry is also quantitatively important during today’s economic crisis. PriceWaterhouseCoopers’s Entertainment & Media sector report showed how this industry grew by 4.6% in 2010; for the next 5 years PWC forecasts that global spending will reach \$1.9 trillion, with an average annual rate of 5.7%. This last figure should perhaps be adjusted downwards after the global economic data of August 2011, but which anyway masks the accelerated shift of sales from the traditional platforms to the digital ones. Today digital platforms account for 26% but in 2015 they will reach 33.9% with a 5.5% annual rate of growth.

The sector has also ridden the economic crisis well in Italy: spending in 2006 amounted to \$43 billion, but for 2011 it is estimated to reach \$58 billion with a 6.1% increase.

Advertising, the most susceptible to the general economic cycle of the three spending segments PWC analyses – advertising, consumer/end-user and internet access – has recorded the greatest swings over the past years with +5.8% in 2010 following -11% in 2009. Advertising will enjoy a global annual growth of 5.5% to achieve \$578 billion in 2015. Consumer/end-user spending also grew by 2.2% in 2010 (-0.4% in 2009). On the other hand, internet access spending has not been affected by the negative economic situation and PWC expects it to reach \$408 billion in 2015 (+8.6% per year).

The entertainment, media and communications industry thus continues to rest basically on two legs, advertising and consumer spending (internet as products and services can be spread over both). It has been recently shaken at global level by the gigantic m&a, by the new online technologies and services that are radically changing the panorama [7]. As it asserts in Outlook 2011, PWC believes that the majority of the companies in the sector will come together on digital collaboration (“by now in their DNA”) by the end of 2015 and their success will be concentrated on three areas:

- a) the “empowered” consumer [8] ,

[7] Plunkett Research, *Entertainment and Media Industry*, 2008, 2011.

[8] The Eurobarometer of the European Commission published a survey (April 2011), on “Consumer Empowerment”, in which it investigated the *confidence of consumers* (well-informed, protected), their *capacity* (literacy and arithmetic skills) to read labels, both corporate and on products; their *awareness of legislation in favour of consumers*; *consumer engagement* (time spent shopping; comparing products; reading terms and conditions in hard-copy contracts

b) the “engaged” advertiser-marketer ,

c) the transformation of the business model thanks to the new technologies that can redefine the “collaborative digital enterprise” of the future.

The president of VSS, Veronis Suhler Stevenson, John Suhler, stresses the concept: “Advertising and marketing investments, historically the drivers of communications growth during recoveries, are expected to be more muted due to the shift away from traditional media to more targeted media” [9].

The traditional one-to-many mass media model is being challenged by the growing influence of a new many-to-many or few-to-many model, involving the ability to identify individual and collective niches as well as allowing niche individuals and audiences to choose between content sources.

The shift towards digital media, mainly devoted to consumers, will also be reciprocally influenced by them. Consumers will be in complete control of their choice as to what information and what entertainment they want to consume [10].

The research question on which this work is based aims to define/demonstrate how entertainment is no longer simply a mere products and services industry – albeit consisting of over 100 subsegments and perhaps precisely because of this [11] - but is fast becoming a successful communicative and marketing factor helping to create business value in all sectors, product or service, private or public.

Many are the definitions of “customer value” the literature has developed: we refer to the basic components of the construct that stress what customers want and believe they get from buying and using a product/service. We refer to the perceptions of what is received by the customer and what is given by the producer/retailer (Zeithamel, 1988); we refer to the perceived worth in monetary

and in purchasing online; interest in consumer information; tendency to talk about purchase experiences); *detriment and redress* (entity of phenomenon, impact, willingness to take action, involvement of public authorities and consumer organizations, obstacles to going to Court).

[9] Veronis Suhler Stevenson is one of the global private equities which invests the most in the communication industry. Targeted media are direct marketing, direct mail, branded entertainment, outsourced custom publishing, pure-play consumer internet & mobile services, business-to-business media.

[10] VSS Forecast 2010-2014, cit.

[11] Just considering below and beyond ADV around these production segments, communications and media as a whole are full of entertainment logic, either as an object (product or service) to communicate or as a communications/marketing factor/instrument.

units of the set of economic, technical, service and social benefits compared to those of the competitors (Anderson, Jain, Chintagunta, 1993); we refer to the comparison between the value perceived and the perception of the sacrifice (Monroe, 1990); we refer to the *emotional bond* established between a customer and a producer after using the product/service (Butz, Goodstein, 1996).

At the same time communication becomes a strong component of the successful entertainment so that very frequently entertainment is mainly communication.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This work, inspired by the Harvard Business School methodology, follows the logic of multisource research. It combines the desk part, consisting of an in-depth study of literature on the entertainment and services, the customer value management process, brand management and experience economy topics, plus an analysis of the latest international reports, with a field part carried out over several years (2008-2011).

For the empirical stage, we refer to multiple case studies analyses (Yin, 1981,1994,2004,2009; Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt, Graebner, 2007). The authors then interviewed marketing and communications experts and managers as well as examining secondary sources – papers, business communications products (press releases, copy strategies, event communications, websites) and articles – that could help to explore and explain the evidence and complete it, achieving a broad observatory.

Among the many experiences studied - 103 cases - some considered paradigmatic have been chosen and briefly illustrated in this paper.

The sample was selected by following quantitative criteria (organizations' number of employees), but some organizations (like sport federations and associations and entertainment events), are analyzed through qualitative criteria (importance/positioning within their reference industry), both following Ateco Industry categories.

The 68% of the first cluster (73 companies) is made of product activities, the service activities amount to 32%; the main part is represented by large enterprises (69%), 16% are medium, 15% are small enterprises. The 70% are Italian companies while 30% are foreign companies.

The main sector is represented by “information and communication services” (51%, considering publishing activities, books, magazines and newspapers; tv, radio, movie and video production and post-production; music, radio, tlc, softwares, internet access and web portals, news agencies) followed by “manufacturing activities” (23%), “art, sport, entertainment and recreation activities” (14%), “financial and insurance activities” (6%), “others” (5%), associative activities (1%).

The second cluster (evaluated with a qualitative method), is mainly composed of services activities (97%); large enterprises amount to 57%, while the rest are medium (36%) and small companies (7%). Almost any companies are Italian (93%) and belong to the sector “art, sport, entertainment and recreation activities”, followed by “associative activities” (7%) and “information and communication services” (6%).

The cases will represent an initial framework of the phenomenon addressed to products, services and media; in particular we will discuss IKEA (communication services to promote and engage the customers in the sales outlet seen as a location-based selling process), Barilla-Mulino Bianco (cooperative online platform to engage consumers of a typical fast moving consumer good), ENEL (event management in the energy service sector to influence stakeholder and maintain the customers’ data base), Intesa Sanpaolo Bank (storytelling as banking communication strategy for establishing a new relationship between the consumers and the company); Metro Free Press (engagement of youth target in the innovative information industry); My Space (the global entertainment portal of NewsCorp Group). This mix has been chosen with the idea of proposing different markets of marketing and communications services, ranging from durable products to consumer products, from private services to those of public utility, from the classical media to the innovative media, a mix that could be considered approximately a perfect representation of the selected sample.

III. MAIN DESK RESEARCH AND LITERATURE EVIDENCE.

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ENTERTAINMENT GENERATED SECTORS:

THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

The enlargement of the entertainment context has an almost ideological significance. With the conglomerates [12] so swiftly expanding the channels with their vast branded media ownerships and with an entertainment value built around an ever increasing number of cultural and social forms and practices (professional news reporting, citizen journalism, media-based social political campaigns, museum communications, events around sports, shopping, food and drink), entertainment has become an “ubiquitous force” (Dyer, 2002) in our cultural and economic life.

The hybridization entertainment causes in the planning, production and distribution of products and services in other industrial sectors makes the scenario even more complex thanks also to the increasingly playful content of communications. Distribution and communications, indubitably real and physical, but becoming virtual and entertainment branded (Hackley C., Tiwsakul R., 2006, Lehu J.M., 2007) because of the greater technological convergence of the marketing-communications tools used. The result is a complex communication process aimed at achieving its own objectives related to the consumer/customer values and value creation process (Gutman, 1982; Gutman, Reynolds, 1988; Sheth, Newman, Gross, 1991).

Media operators – especially those enabling consumers to stay connected with friends, family and influencers, like broadband internet access and mobile phones - will thus reap increasing benefits from “must have” offers of products/services, such as the current Apple or Disney products/services (Fitzimons G. M., Chartrand, Fitzimons Gavan J., 2008), capable of establishing a link between the brand and individual behaviour (Shiv, Huber, 2000; Zhang, Mitchell, 2005; Hackley, Tiwsakul, 2006) as between the customer and the producer/retailer through the emotional bond created by the perception of an added value of the product/service (Betz, Goodstein, 1996; Woodruff, 1997).

[12] Such as NewsCorp., Time Warner and Disney and the continual mergers between platforms, for example Google that has gradually incorporated You Tube, Double Click, Keyhole and Urchin; but also the case of the American cable giant Comcast (24 million users) with the acquisition of NBC Universal, leading TV broadcasting network, or also the recent news of the AOL-Microsoft-Yahoo merger Cf. Cherubini S., Pattuglia S. (2009).

A. New Strategies and Branding

Companies are working out new brand management strategies, such as online interactivity and social networking, and new forms of information and entertainment production are constantly appearing. This means that marketing strategies enabling brands to connect emotionally, through entertainment content, with captive audiences will continue to receive a growing share of marketing budgets [13]. All the case analyzed in our research document this assumption.

Consumers, and especially those in the younger groups, are now asking to control what they see, read and listen to [14]. Hence proposals linked to current developments in entertainment, media and the social media, such as the pricing of contents, the portability of the various media and sharing them with friends as well as the possibility of deferred and repeated viewing and listening.

The production and management strategy for all sectors now seems to be based on a philosophy of influencing the consumer's needs, expectations, aspirations, life styles and moments of life. This is a customer-oriented or market-driven strategy (Lambin J.-J., 2006, 2007), if not actually user generated, when the consumer-customer cooperates by sharing not only communication tasks linked to awareness but by performing creative and management tasks for products and services with the companies producing them. The context has changed and in the digital era "the context is the king, not the content" (Vogel, 2011).

Entertainment becomes a component of the marketing and communications strategy for goods and services in the experience economy (Gilmore, Pine, 1999, 2007; Lasalle, Britton, 2003). To be involved in the processes of enjoying or participating in initiatives, the consumer/stakeholder must not only be considered integrated with the producer of the good or deliverer of the service from a prosumership perspective (Normann, 1996) but must also be activated with a series of experience providers (Schmitt, 1999, 2003; Gilmore, Pine, 1999, Vogel, 2004, 2011) that in today's world have become brand entertainers. The "customer value" is now generally considered deriving from five categories of value that may be provided by a product or a service: functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional (Sheth, Newman, Gross, 1991). The entertainment value may affect all of them.

[13] VSS Forecast 2010-2014, cit.

[14] Plunkett Research, 2011, cit.

The synergies erupting within the single brand conglomerates also achieve a cross-promotion, since companies aim to integrate and disseminate their products through a variety of media and consumer channels, enabling the brands to cover all the corporate structures (Grainge, 2008). These strategically move consumers until a continuous construction of the brand (Aaker, Joachimstaler, 2000) and brand communities is achieved (Muniz, O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexandre et al., 2002; Cova, Cova, et al. 2002, 2007; Bagozzi, Dholakia, 2002, 2006; Muniz, Schau, 2005; Fournier, 1998, 2002; Dalli, Romani, 2007; Cherubini, Pattuglia, 2010), defining a branding process that is capable of extending the “experience” of consumable entertainment by creating a reproducible iconography - logos, adaptations, products, gadgets, services (Grainge, 2008) – and by creating a value that derives mainly from a hierarchy model based on means-end way (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds, Gutman, 1988) considering attribute-based satisfaction plus consequence-based satisfaction and, finally, goal-based satisfaction (Woodruff, 1997).

B. Brands in Places

What companies are developing in these new strategies is thus an image of the brand positioned – not only in the sense of positioning but also of physical and digital placement – so that it can surprise, touch, excite and make aware as well as engage (Lehu, 2007, Kapferer, 2008). It is placemaking (Jerde, 1999; Gilmore, Pine, 2007).

The context becomes the place of the experience “the primary means companies have to demonstrate exactly what they are” [15] as the IKEA case study will demonstrate about our construct.

To differentiate their offerings, companies link experiences to their products and services and incorporate them in experiential branding, staging events for these products/services (see ENEL case study), using the distribution, the retail-ment (Kapferer, 2008) to entertain, aiming at shopper-tainment (Gilmore, Pine, 2007).

People perform activities that, if they involve experiences, will make them memorable. Up to the paradox of “the places without attractions are those without pointers” (Mitchell W.J., 2001): that is places without electronic indications (physical and digital signage, GPS, geo-location social networking) to identify them and make them visible and able to be shared.

[15] Pine J.H, Gilmore J.H.(2007), *Authenticity*, Harvard Business School Press.

C. *The Interdependence of Sectors through Entertainment*

This is the strategy of the brand presence and the evolution of advertising in the new forms of brand promotion. “Some companies in the entertainment, media and communication sectors are more apt to be buyers of advertising (theme parks, casinos, toy companies [16],...) than others (broadcasters, print media) who are more apt to be sellers of advertising: high advertising-to-sales ratios are typical of heavily branded services and products, many of which are offered by media and entertainment firms” [17].

This goes to prove the undeniable and extensive interdependence of the various sectors inside the industry considered (McLuhan, 1964; Vogel, 2008, 2011) [18]. Advertising is thoroughly integrated, also thanks to the new technologies and digital media, through merchandising, licensing, event sponsorships, tie-ins and brand placements, with the distribution and dissemination of entertainment products and services (RFID tags and the new barcodes; podcasts, musical clips, webisodes, mobisodes) as well as with the creation of “experience places and centres” (Gilmore, Pine, 2007).

Entertainment has thus become a communicative factor, with relative delivery modes, very suited to modern marketing strategies involved in creating experiences and organizing processes for engaging and retaining consumers, for creating values to consumers and producers/retailers.

Both product and service brands (Keller K.L., Lehmann D.R., 2006) are defining brand management (Aaker, 1991,1995,1997; Kapferer, 2000, 2008) and marketing communications

[16] The toy giant Mattel has for some time been following the strategy, with the appropriate distinctions and “modernizations”, of creating brands that – starting with the toy “object”, Barbie or Toy Story – are fast extended to all forms of merchandising, teen clothing, publishing and accessories, with the aim of producing and marketing products with a high “entertainment” content: “Now we’re starting with games and transforming them into entertainment,” as the CEO, Robert Eckert, states in Greguoli I., “Mattel vede mostri dappertutto”, *Marketing Oggi*, 31 August 2010. Mattel purchases the “American Girl” system, a famous top-end doll brand, espousing its philosophy: in the stores – located in the main streets of major US cities - mothers, grandmothers, daughters and friends can: spend time in the theatre with American Girl themed shows, have their dolls’ hair styled, participate in events, eat lunch and dinner or take part in photo shoots to take home a copy of the magazine with their picture on the cover. American Girl services rather than products: the goods sold are gadgets/memorabilia of the experiences.

[17] Vogel (2011), *cit.*

[18] Vogel (2011), *cit.*: “Entertainment and media industries all operate within a framework of commonly shared elements. All sectors are conditioned by the same underlying rules, are affected by changes in distribution technologies at approximately the same time and, because of the nature of the products and services offered, are often both buyers and sellers of advertising services”.

strategies increasingly linked to the consumers' experience and their proactivity in networks (Gronroos, 1990, 2011; Gummesson, 1999, 2008), such as customer relationship management, unconventional marketing, event marketing, co-opetitive and partnership forms (Hamel, Prahalad, 1989, 1994), co-branding and alliances (Kapferer, 2008).

Engaging customers, besides emotionally motivating them towards the brands of which they become active promoters, helps the firm to identify new markets, to show the efforts made to connect with the customer and to create communities. The corporate results are amplified if there is a mutual engagement between company and customers (Fleming et al., 2005).

Operators adopt these communication strategies entertainment to reach and retain to old and new targets, or "fragments" and "communities" [19], such as teenagers and the young, the forever young, seniors, women, singles, gays, elites, innovators or followers, attempting to give them innovative, engaging and experiential responses in a multitasking mode to win them over and open new markets.

The new converging media - cross media, TV, digital cinema and radio, web TV, internet, videogames, mobile gaming, social network & media, virtual worlds - are becoming increasingly interactive with market strategies and analyses.

Entertainment is thus a new communications platform (strategies, tools, languages) useful in all sectors for engaging consumers and stakeholders. It creates experiences as a keystone of the "total entertainment" supply, referring to "industrial structures of corporate ownership as well as to particular textual and consumption practices that have developed at a juncture where entertainment content is inclined, and designed, to travel in mobile ways across media platforms and ancillary/territorial markets" [20].

Over the last thirty years branding has become central to intellectual property systems (copyright industries). The concept of brand brings identity and value to the entertainment "commodities" circulating in a media environment controlled by the media and communication

[19] Kapferer (2008) in *The New Strategic Brand Management*, Kogan Page, prefers "fragments" and "communities" to segments and targets to point out that the two traditional marketing concepts are theoretical abstractions whereas the former are more appropriate, on one side, to express audience fragmentation (of all genres, not only media) caused by Anderson's "long tail" (2003), and on the other – the communities – to refer to living groups made up not of aggregations of variables but of individuals who "feel" they shares interests and passions (also referred to brands).

[20] Grainge P. (2008), *cit.*

corporations. These, by expanding their cultural rights and holdings, have actually organized and coordinated a diversified media economy based on franchising, the one we have now. Brand management plays a fundamental role in this process, differentiating products and services to achieve consumer loyalty that can be transformed into measurable forms of brand equity.

The result is a strategic communication vision no longer set downstream of the value chain in a company, but upstream at the planning and production stage. It thus influences the design of the product/service and the process, packaging, the lay-out of environments and experiences, the integrated holistic communication/promotion system, up to the cases of co-creation of the product/service through online platforms (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, Schau, 2008).

A role seen finally as creating revenue and value (Zeithaml, 1988; Anderson, Jain, Chintagunta, 1993; Monroe, 1990; Sheth, Newman, Gross, 1991; Burns, Woodruff, 1992; Burnes, 1993; Gale, 1994; Butz, Goodstein, 1996; Woodruff, Guardial, 1996; Cronin et al., 2000; Sparks et al, 2008) and properly a customer value-based theory of the firm (Alderson, 1957; Drucker, 1973; Slater, 1997). This is what some have identified as “the benefits of linking business acumen to creativity in a pragmatic way” (Lieberman, 2002).

IV. MAIN EVIDENCE IN FIELD RESEARCH. ENTERTAINMENT IN COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND THE CREATION OF VALUE

A. *IKEA*

Branding/Communications Strategy: Ikea is the internationally famous retailer for having radically transformed the home furnishing (and accessories) sector with low cost and durable products of good Scandinavian design. The brand philosophy is based on creating and maintaining a “partnership” with the consumer, resulting in a communications plan that moves from a virtual approach and engagement towards physical involvement in the store. On 13 May 2010, IKEA opens its third store in Milan, an Italian city in which it has been present for over twenty years, and decides to communicate this plan through online, offline and physical platforms. The aim of the marketing-communications plan is to engage its most loyal customers through a concept of sharing: IKEA gets as close to its customers as possible! A communication conceived not merely as a traditional relationship between the brand and the consumer but as an “experience” to enjoy

inside the store. An “event-competition” - “I’m closed to IKEA!” - is thus designed to enable participants to demonstrate their affection to the brand. Those playing the game have to mark their favourite product by physically “attaching themselves” to it for the greatest number of hours on the event day and thus earn it. It’s easy to image the extraordinary physical reality effect created on the social media.

The communications strategy is conceived in two stages: before the launch, some teasers send the message of being “attached” to the brand. The strategy is typically glocal: the use of online communication to engage the local public hosted by Facebook. The second stage, during the store opening, is launched by public relations actions and press relations (Facebook and web). The values of the new “third” IKEA are stressed: merits, physical and non-physical assets, location. People are attracted and led by the hand towards “living” the competition.

Target: customers, potential customers. The competition on Facebook is addressed to 25-35 year-olds.

Media: The social platform “Hemma” has enabled the consumer to be considered a “partner” of the company. The communications campaign is based on social media, creating a minisite within the larger corporate site, the “competition event” in the store that becomes the foundational moment of the new store opening. The minisite platform acts in cross media with the larger web platform, in particular with Facebook. Customer data base, interactions, the physical event in the store: all converge on the social network and on the minisite showing a gallery of participants. Facebook hosts a display campaign, Twitter ensures live coverage of the event and the videos of the event are published on Youtube.

Results and Value Creation: On the day of the event, the platform has 2400 registrations in the Milan area with a virality rate of 86%. 1000 pages are downloaded. The company considers these figures in line with the most optimistic expectations. With its third Milanese store, IKEA wants to give more services, become closer to the consumer by improving the shopping experience and thus the value the consumer perceives.

B. Barilla-Il Mulino che vorrei

Brand/Communications Strategy: Barilla is a large brand of the “made in Italy” food industry, with several branches abroad and a market leadership in both the pasta and bakery sectors. A very solid reputation but with an image slightly dimmed by the traditional style of the communications

approach based on concepts of reliability and family traditional values and on a rather dated and whimsical image.

The “Mulino che vorrei” (“The Mill I want”) is the recent internet digital user engagement platform aimed at a young and creative target while respecting its traditions and its reputation. The communications philosophy and mission was the chance offered to elements of the community to a) propose ideas; b) comment on them with corporate top management; c) vote the most appealing ideas.

Target: The most innovative segments of the Italian population with the aim of obtaining their ideas and proposals (cooperative intelligence).

Media: The platform has been conceived as strongly interactive (and osmotic) with the social relational platforms Facebook, Twitter and Friendfeed.

Results and Value Creation: On the basis of brand community indications, at the end of 2009 the company reintroduced: the “box of wonders”, “Palicao” biscuits and the “soldino” presented at the 2010 Eurochocolate Exhibition in Perugia. The most appreciated aspects by the community were the innovative nature of the different corporate communications; the consumers’ degree of engagement, hitherto considered only as potential clients and not as company opinion and co-decision makers; and the possibility of interacting by engaging with the company in “suggesting” new product. The less appreciated aspects were even more interesting: the absence of prizes and economic recognitions, those elements – one process, the other involving the instrument’s aim and general vision - that would have made this entertainment service a true online game.

C. ENEL

Branding/Communications Strategy: Leading electricity (and gas, renewable energies, nuclear) provider in Italy. With over 32 million customers, it has faced the liberalization of the market by tackling the new competitors in the domestic market and making acquisitions worldwide. The group heads 850 companies, both subsidiaries and affiliates.

The brand position has always been based on concepts of size, experience, technological dynamism and self-promotion, now also abroad, managing with the appropriate branding techniques to renew and extend the “affective relationship” it enjoys with its main public (consumers and families). ENEL uses a communications strategy based on “entertainment” elements and services to engage its customers and stakeholders: popular science (entertainment, information and knowledge); sports (competitions, challenges, engagement); culture (values,

internationality, languages); product communications (dialogue, experience); events and conventions (shows, surprise, motivation). The social dimension is guaranteed by the integrated communications project “Enelsharing” aimed at: knowledge management, creation of reputation and engagement, edutainment, online intelligence.

Target: Consumers, business, families, media, stakeholders, employees.

Media: Integration of projects and media. In popular science: “Playenergy” projects (dedicated to the young, interactive portal, live events, gadgets), and “Incredibile Enel” (energy tour in Italian cities with games, scientific laboratories, interactive installations, shows); in sports: sponsor for the 2009 World Aquatics Championships (sponsoring/endorsement of the champion swimmer Federica Pellegrini; installations, ambient marketing, merchandising, ADV and signage), for Ducati at the MotoGP (sponsoring, co-branding, ADV, portal); in culture: “Enel Contemporanea” project (awards, 9 international artists, five editions 2007-2011 with works/installations in Rome and Venice); in product communications: “e-mobility” project (fleet of electric cars, “Wired Electric Race” organized with Wired magazine and with other corporate and media partners; the technological flagship store); in the “Enel World Leader” events/convention.

Results and Value Creation: Extensive physical and virtual participation in the initiatives by the reference target. The openings – for example – of the art installations attract an average of 300 stakeholders and an associated press coverage. In the Wired Electric Race page on Facebook over 2500 people in the target clicked the Like button; the sponsoring/endorsement of F. Pellegrini campaign has had such exceptional media interest that the company engaged her for the entire 2010 corporate and product ADV campaign.

D. Metro Free Press

Brand/Communications Strategy: The first free newspaper, started up in Stockholm in 1995 and now present in 23 countries (120 cities) with over 24 million readers. Positioning: neutral, interesting and useful tabloid: reading time 15-20 minutes (duration of journey in bus/underground); flexibility in distribution. Global brand with local content (cities). The communicative aim is to keep in contact with the younger generation, and especially with the “green generation”, as a model of an eco-sustainable lifestyle, that is with young people who are daily coping with life in the big cities. But also to “communicate by entertaining” with playful themes.

Target: active young people living in metropolises: 56% 18-44 years, 65% working/studying; 51% women.

Media: Integration. Entertainment elements in marketing-communications publishing: celebrating St Valentine's Day with a special edition by the Spanish fashion designer Da Prada; "Happy Metro": a "yellow" day to identify a paper that only contains good news; "Editor for a Day": Metro asks a famous film director, actor or singer to edit an edition of the paper; partnership with fashion: "Follow the New York Fashion Week"; with sports: "World Cup Edition"; with cinema: "Spiderman reads Metro" during the Rome Film Festival, or with branded handbags handed out to passers-by when "Sex and the City 2" came out; with associations: "Metro supports the Pink Ribbon"; "Metro Photo Global Challenge": global digital photography competition, launch campaign (11 weeks) online and offline with 45 million contacts. Categories included emotions, everyday travel and favourite sports, all linked to experiential and entertaining elements.

Results and Value Creation: The type of medium has inevitably meant that all the initiatives have millions of contacts (off- and online on the site, on Facebook and on all the social networks). In particular the photography competition attracted 40 million young people through Metro and partners (including Nikon). Over 8 million pages were visited. In the 2010 edition, 150,000 photos were presented in the three categories.

E. My Space

Brand/Communications Strategy: In 2010 Myspace – since 2005 owned by News Corp. – is transformed from a "social network" to an "entertainment social portal" offering users rich, engaging and personalized experiences with exclusive high-quality content, forming a community of common interests and passions. Besides music, there is TV, cinema and celebrities. New logo and new graphics are the strengths of the new brand positioning: social specialization, broad availability of entertainment content, capacity to discover and ride new cultural trends thanks to the portal's community and interactive dimension. The final objective is to narrow the gap between brand and user (whether consumer or artist) creating a great "hub" as a personal entertainment centre.

Target: 18-44 year olds, enthusiastic about the entertainment culture and "sharing".

Media: Portal integrated with mobile and social platforms and offline events. Cooperation/integration with Fox Channels (TV, cinema). Contents: programmed editorials and opinion pieces, social, artists' profiles (350,000), "content hub" (entertainment sections devoted to

films, TV, stars, exclusive videos and photos), themed pages enlivened by fans, and special projects such as “Hijacks”(2010) in which for three whole days artists can personalize the entire platform presenting their own content and choosing what other artist to promote (literally “hijacking”).

Results and Value Creation: In Italy there are 3 million users (18-44 years) with 2000 new users a day. The “My Spot” project, in partnership with Canon and Sugar, for creating web serials had 13,000 viewings for the first episode; the profile reached 1800 friends and the four episodes totalled 110,000 viewings.

F. Intesa Sanpaolo Bank

Brand/Communications Strategy: Intesa Sanpaolo, the second largest Italian bank, has for many years been involved in the perFiducia project for films promoting optimism and loyalty in Italy. In the 2.0 edition of the project, the bank is launching an innovative competition based on a shared storytelling platform designed by Eikon Europe and by an expert in role-playing games, F. Dimitri. The corporate strategic aim is to renew the bank’s communication, focussing on the younger and more dynamic elements in society and in the bank (employees can also participate in the project), encouraging them to write stories and share a form of entertainment which the bank promotes and organizes. The partnership with the film world will again be emphasized when a jury chooses - from a selection of users’ best collaborative stories - the three perFiducia shorts to produce with young directors.

Target: Young people and innovators passionate about technologies and writing.

Media: Game on collaborative platform launched also thanks to the big per Fiducia ADV campaign.

Results and Value Creation: The initiative, carried out in February-March 2010, was very successful, with some 19,000 registrations in the community and 3,291 authors. There were over 300,000 page visits with 200,000 single visitors and 20,000 Google search results plus thousands of comments on the blog. There was also an excellent participation by the bank’s employees. The project managed to engage thousands of people, including employees, in a game involving “trust”, a fundamental value which should underpin the consumer-bank relationship.

V. COMMU-TAINMENT. CONCLUSIONS, RESEARCH LIMITS, MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The multisource research led to the basic theoretical framework – *commu-tainment* - to be defined thanks also to the analysis of the cases presented here. These cases must be studied furthermore to model the comparison with other product, service and media companies. The intention is to select the observation variables – brands, targets, media, strategies – and demonstrate how these are able to generate (or destroy) value for the company through the entertainment dimension in the sense of keeping current customers, attracting potential ones and avoiding losing customers or stakeholders.

In this research, as in the cases hereby analyzed, *commu-tainment* is thus understood as *entertainment that becomes communication to provide the company with new strategies for engaging stakeholders and forging bonds with them (whether they be customers or other stakeholders). It involves contents adapted to the new integrated and social media to respond to an ever growing target/community spectrum, in the continuous definition of a branding that, in our long-tail experience economy, is becoming increasingly crucial in achieving identity and value of products, services and businesses.*

In a hypercompetitive environment – and during a persistent economic crisis - where the consumer can be considered always inconstant, the innovation in strategies may concern the creation of new business and markets as the renewal of ongoing business and channel distribution, as the *discovering of new approaches – such commu-tainment is – to management or competitive strategy* (Slater, Narver, 1995; Slater, 1997).

This work has shown as managerial implications that the marketer and communicator have to create an integrated brand-media-content system that becomes entertainment in itself and through itself, ways to create “musts”: to do, read, see, feel, participate, intervene in something; to create buzz (spontaneous and not buzz marketing), as real and not planned word-of-mouth. Experience producers and brand entertainers will lead the consumer by hand up to the choice and act of purchase in an holistic and all-embracing experience (fig.1, loosely based on Olins, 2008).

Some cases will stress products and environment drivers, such as the IKEA and Mulino Bianco case studies. Others will be strictly connected to places and communication drivers, such in the case of Disney, or museums, or virtual environment as web portal and social media; MySpace and fast moving consumer goods could give emphasis to the behavior driver and the communication

impact on consumer value. Services like banking (Banca Intesa case study) or tlc, or public services as in health system (f.e. hospitals), will be more related to the behavior and service attributes' drivers.

If entertainment was once separation from daily life, a world involving glamour, utopia, the exotic atmosphere, today when everything becomes entertainment, and marketing strategies involve entertainment, it ceases to be a single category (Dyer, 2002; Grainge, 2008).

TABLE I. THE BRAND CORE IDEA: THE BRAND BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND ENTERTAINMENT



Source: Adaptation from Olins, 2008.

Only in this way it will still be possible to sell the experience and not merely the objects, not the services.

Young people are the perfect demographic group for appreciating these forms of engagement: new technologies such as social media and social networks (see the Myspace case study), lifestyles by moments and fragments (see Metro free press and banking cases), all-embracing connections and appreciation for recreational living make this age group the real “spokesperson” of the new business model: the extended entertainment industry is “perfect for an expansive economic model”.

“The expansion of entertainment brands into branded entertainment destinations completes the cycle that started in local venues and grew to national and international distribution. It now returns to something that people can experience personally, one-to-one – not just in theme parks but in facilities down the street and around the corner. What has been the driving force behind this explosion, this convergence, this intertwined knot of entertainment mediums that blends from one

conduit to another? It is entertainment marketing” (Lieberman, 2002) in which communications can and must play a primary role, acting both initially during the planning stage and later during the implementation stage so that they can evolve more clearly from a cost generating function to one generating value to customers as a long term relationship with the producer/retailer.

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