

ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION DURING CRISIS

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Abstract: Crisis communication and advertising communication are a priori diametrically opposed. Advertising is not the appropriate tool in times of crisis, but offers prospects that other tools do not possess. Despite its many faults, advertising can help a "classic" crisis communication. We will try to confront the general conclusions drawn about the relevance of the crisis advertising, with a particular situation, the global automotive market, customizing by the study of the crisis advertising played by the brand BMW. We will base our observations on a corpus of advertisements issued within the crisis global campaign "Joy is BMW", confronted with a renowned campaign conducted by BMW Group in 2001 and 2002, "The Hire".

JEL classification: M31, M37

Key words: crisis communication; advertising communication; corporate image; stock market crash; crisis management; ConsumActor; non-media channels.

1. INTRODUCTION

Patrick Lagadec defines crisis as *"urgency plus destabilization. It combines waves of difficulties, disturbances in the functioning of organizations, discrepancies in fundamental choices"* (Lagadec Patrick, 2000). Communication should not be improvised in difficult moments. Crisis communication is the most difficult of all communications. It is therefore particularly important that it be cherished and coordinated. It must be carefully designed so that all parameters are properly managed.

For many companies, managing a crisis is having a good communication. However, crisis management and crisis communication should not be mistaken. A crisis can not be managed with communication, as communication does not manage a business. However, communication is certainly the best way to deal with a crisis. *"If managing a crisis in itself, goes through several elements (...), crisis communication, ranging from the as much as possible full-holding of the media field, to the control of prospect rumors that might creep, is certainly one of the key factors of success or, on the contrary, failure in crisis management"* (Lugrin Gilles, 2001). Crisis communication is a two-edged sword. One must therefore remain vigilant.

We live in a period of prime importance crisis installed along with the stock market crash in 2008, as it reached all the wheels within wheels in this society. It is true that the financial crisis is unique. This has turned upside down all systems established at all levels of life. These repetitive crises have resulted in what Lagadec called "financial break": *"speculative financial consistencies become determinant and tend, in all economic sectors, to replace the old commercial or production-related consistencies..."* (Patrick Lagadec, 2000). We would like to address this problem by broaching the axis of crisis communication and advertising.

2. OBJECTIVES

Crisis communication and advertising communication are two opposing fields. We thought it appropriate to confront them and to analyze the extent to which advertising could be a crisis communication tool. Indeed, we believe that advertising communication, usually used to praise the merits of a product or a brand, can add value to crisis communication.

The question underlying our research is formulated as follows: **"Is advertising a relevant and effective means of exit from crisis, especially during the financial recession? What are the features of the advertising tool as a means of crisis communication?"**

We will develop our process of reflection in three stages:

The first hypothesis: *advertising plays an important role in a context of crisis.* To verify this hypothesis, we will compare the results of our research with Sophie Giret's findings, relating to the issues of using advertising in a crisis. Sophie Giret is holder of a CELS Master's Degree (École des hautes études en sciences de l'information et de la communication, Université Paris IV-Sorbonne), recipient of the *Prize for the best memoir about the 2003 crisis communication.*

The second hypothesis: *financial crisis is a propitious occasion for using crisis advertising.* We will apply the findings from the first part to the economic and financial crisis experienced since September 2008.

The third hypothesis: *crisis advertising diverges from classical advertising and broaches its own characteristics.* We will establish the appropriate conditions for issuing a crisis advertising in terms of form, content, media and broadcasting time table.

The interest of our research is primarily to compare two practices uncommonly associated. The relevance of the crisis advertising being already studied by Sophie Giret, we will try to confront the general conclusions drawn by her, with a particular situation, namely the current economic recession. We will focus our research on the global automotive market, customizing by the study of the crisis advertising played by the brand BMW.

Whether they were press articles, basic works explaining in the main lines the crisis, scientific papers, the crisis has spilled much ink. The particularity of this study is to apply advertising to a financial and economic crisis situation. Being in the middle pipeline, this crisis is conducive to observation.

3. METHODOLOGY

We will base our observations on a corpus of advertisements issued during the crisis, within the global campaign Joy, started with the launch of the new Z4 Roadster in April 2009. These advertisements were confronted with a renowned campaign conducted by BMW Group in 2001 and 2002, "The Hire". Our objective was to highlight the characteristics of an advertising campaign during a crisis, compared with an advertising campaign in normal times.

We collected advertisements from the global online media, car magazines, BMW's official websites and car fan blogs. Daily press is, in our view, a good place for observation. We will justify the choice by different arguments. Firstly, daily newspapers are essential in the release of advertising. In fact, they rank second in advertising investment. In addition, this media vector of information seems rather pertinent as a place for observation in times of crisis.

Our study has however some limitations. First of all, the viewpoint we developed is focused mainly on the automotive sector, the world market as a whole. Sad to say, we could not take into account all the actors of this crisis. Indeed, it would have been pertinent to have the standpoints and statements of several car manufacturers, especially the direct competitors of BMW Group on the luxury car market: Acura, Audi, Infinity, Mercedes Benz, Lexus and others like Cadillac (GM brand) and Lincoln (Ford brand). Unfortunately, despite our efforts to take into account all these actors in the analysis undertaken, a more broad approach of the contribution of each brand in the advertising arena hit by the crisis would require considerably more effort for the collection of materials, and especially the need for restricted accessibility information sources. The analysis conducted is based on our own observations and the feedbacks and resonance of BMW's publics to the advertising activity. Finally, our work is limited in time by the evolution of the crisis so far. In our opinion, other conclusions could be drawn if seeing the crisis as an event of the past, taking it into account as a whole.

4. RELEVANCE OF ADVERTISING IN A TIME OF CRISIS

4.1 Communication tools in a crisis situation

We identified several communication tools used in crisis situations. Most of them are non-media, that is "*all forms of communication, other than advertising*" (Lendrevie Jacques; De Baynast Arnaud, 2008). This category consists of press relations, proximity communication, direct marketing and internal communication. We add to these the Internet, which is increasingly seen as a privileged instrument in crisis communication due to its rapid dissemination (Table no. 1)

Table no. 1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Communication Tools in Times of Crisis

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
PRESS RELATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credibility - The broadcaster is not the organization - Allows information dissemination to general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The risk that the message does not pass - Tension between the press and companies - Lack of control over the message
PROXIMITY COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives proof of goodwill - Privileged relational axis - Promotes dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty in transmission - Difficulty of implementation - Limited public
DIRECT MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Privileged relational axis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited public - High cost per contact
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages support within the organization, so that outside the message should not be picked to pieces - Internal = message relay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal-limited public
INTERNET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update easiness - Message control - Interaction is possible - Information for the general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of diversion by the opponents - Risk of general deriving - The public must seek information

4.2 Crisis Advertising

Brochand and Lendrevie define advertising as: *"A mass communication, which is being partisan. In this sense, it can not be confused with information, in the strict sense. Adapted to market economies, competition tool, advertising is not however exclusively commercial, and can support institutions, social or political causes"* (Lendrevie Jacques; Brochand Bernard, 2001).

In a crisis situation, advertising can provide various **advantages**. Firstly, advertising is a *media tool* that can be beneficial in a crisis that affects a wide audience. By advertising, the company gives to the public and exposes the crisis in sight of all. This act may be considered a sign of commitment, transparency willingness from advertiser. This method is more offensive and scores in a reactive and proactive demarche. The company takes over the reins and manages the whole communication, without relying on an external relay. Sometimes, press relations, direct marketing and other non-media tools are not sufficient for the organization to express its viewpoint.

Secondly, as a *control tool*, advertising allows control of the information broadcasted. Finally, it can be inserted as a *complementary and equivalent tool*. Advertising can compensate the limitations and shortcomings of other communication tools. Advertising allows the confirmation of the company's presence on the market and in relation to its competitors, and even strengthening its position. It provides an additional aspect, namely the call to creativity. According to Marc Fauconnier, *"creative advertising has a greater impact on consumer and does not allow him to leave. (...) The creative impact is a good alternative to the media procrastination..."* (Marc Fauconnier, 2008).

Advertising certainly has some **inconvenients** and is not suitable for all crises. This drawback is mainly due to the fact that it is associated with a commercial and promotional speech. As Brochand and Lendrevie say in their definition: *"Advertising is a mass communication which is being partisan"* (Brochand Bernard; Lendrevie Jacques, 2001). They go even further and say that *"it is not aimed at objectivity. It is well known, and we know it one-sided and subjective. It seeks to influence attitudes or behaviors, not only to transmit facts"* (Lendrevie Jacques; De Baynast, 2004).

Advertising has essentially more weaknesses. The vocation of advertising is to send us into a credible world, but in no case the real world. It arranges it arbitrarily to offer us as the advertiser wishes. The audience is becoming less confident in an advertisement which exaggerates and amplifies reality. The public is looking for deeper values than what advertising suggests to him. The consumer has become a citizen actor in time. Today, he is involved in society. According to this, he makes choices and executes acts of responsible consumption. We call this new type of consumer a *"ConsumActor"*. Developing a stronger citizenship, the consumer becomes more critical of what he is proposed. This implies a critical questioning of brands and products. Naomi Klein in her work *No Logo* (Klein Naomi, 2002) calls this movement *"the advertising breakers"*.

The relationship between advertising and the recipient passed through various stages (Marion Philippe, 2007-2008): the *"advertisement phase"*, which is directly related to the product; the *"symbolic phase"*, which plays on the metaphorical side; the *"ludic phase"*, based on metacommunication; the *"dissemination phase"*, where advertising has been installed everywhere, and invades us. Indeed, advertising has reached saturation, as it is everywhere all the time. It *"is keen to fill the media space, which may cause discredit and even rejection... In short, according to Ogilvy's expression: 'Too much advertising kills advertising'"* (Marion Philippe, 2007-2008).

Advertising Communication vs. Crisis Communication. Advertising has its own mode of operation. *"It does not concern objectivity. It is well known, and we know it, one-sided and subjective. (...) Advertising tries above all to be attractive and seductive. (...) The true nature of advertising is seduction ..."* (Brochand Bernard; Lendrevie Jacques, 2001). Through these attractions, advertising is in many respects the opposite of crisis communication. In particular, by its nature of seduction, pleasure, where the crisis is serious and can have serious consequences.

Advertising is part of a *"one way"* communication record, while the crisis requires a permanent dialogue with stakeholders. By its very less flexible nature, advertising does not lend itself to dialogue and strives towards an asymmetric relationship. This type of communication is *"unidirectional asymmetrical"*. Crisis requires a *"two-way symmetrical"*, *"Two-way communication"*, which induces listening and taking into account each stakeholder (Gryspeerd Axell, 2007-2008). Non-media communication offers the opportunity to restore contact with target audiences and entering into dialogue, which is not the case of advertising.

4.3 Characteristics of Crisis Advertising

Each crisis is different, it is impossible to determine the characteristics of crisis advertising. Advertising does not lend itself to all crises. It is important to take into account the *context of a crisis emergence*.

- a) *The Organization and its Environment.* The evolution of events is such that at the time of publication, the information is obsolete. Timing plays against the use of advertising and therefore is a barrier to crisis advertising. If the organization in crisis is very present on the advertising stage, crisis advertising would be a logical and consistent option. Other constraints related to the use of advertising: money. The major drawback of advertising is the financial investment.
- b) *Mass-media and Stakeholders.* Sophie Giret recommends advertising when *"the organization in crisis estimates that the press and mass-media, in general, do not give enough importance, time, lines for the information that it considers relevant"* (Giret Sophie, 2003). Besides mass-media, the organization should explore the public opinion and various stakeholders (politicians, associates, residents, neighbors, clients, etc.) and not oppose them.

Crisis advertising is not presented as a standard advertising. The so-called classic advertising serves a brand or a product promotion. Crisis advertising deviates from its commercial role for more informational purposes. For this reason, the advertising contract is diverted to correspond to the crisis context. The advertiser is clearly displayed as the advertising broadcaster.

Content and form are also inverted in an advertising crisis. A reverse trend in terms of image and text is put into practice. Given that the purpose of business is to explain or take the floor, the standard relationship *"image / text"* from the classic advertising is reversed. Crisis advertising *adapts to crisis* and violates all codes and the traditional advertising contract. This advertising adapted to the crisis will play an important role in managing corporate image, an image often affected during a crisis.

- a) *Renewed Crisis Imagine.* Image is one of the pillars of corporate communication. We define it as a set of mental representations attached to a brand or an organization. Beyond its function of identification and representation, the brand creates *"value for the*

consumer and the enterprise. It is a guarantee of origin and quality" (Lendrevie Jacques; De Baynast Arnaud, 2008). This guarantee is violated during the crisis. The organization in crisis must redouble its efforts to provide the public this warranty and to comply with the implied contract offered by the brand.

- b) *Advertising and crisis attending image.* Advertising is the most used in institutional communication, image building and institutional positioning. In crisis, the company needs to reposition, advertising can be an image reconstruction tool. Indeed, advertising can be a way to "regain trust", "regild the emblem" or "restart business". The crisis can be a broadcast advertising environment. Audiences are more willing to read a crisis ad than a standard ad having in view their request for information. The company does not need to capture public attention, the crisis already made it.
- c) *Image Rehabilitation, Renewal and Strengthening.* Sophie Giret identifies three *image strategies* attributed to crisis advertising: *rehabilitation, renewal and strengthening.*
 - *Rehabilitation:* The organization's image being shattered by the crisis, the advertising would be a way to rehabilitate it. Then it should be based on corporate values that have served to build this image and be consistent with the crisis.
 - *Renewal:* partial or total. This case is possible when change is necessary and when the crisis has caused irreversible damage to the previous reputation and image.
 - *Consolidation:* A good crisis management can enhance company image and credibility among its audience. Advertising crisis will be perceived positively if the company knew how to manage the crisis adequately.

4.4 Conditions of Advertising Effectiveness: Applying Grid

A crisis advertising is adapting to the context, the organization using it and its publics. We will sustain our third hypothesis, namely that crisis advertising deviates from the traditional advertising lines in four strokes. We will raise the issue of airing conditions in terms of broadcast mass-media, content, form and timing. But above all, the company must identify its target audience, define its objectives and establish the budget. These points are essential in the communication plan and will influence the design of the advertisement.

A. Mass-media vehicles

The media is of paramount importance in releasing a message, especially in times of crisis. Various advertising media are newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cinema and display. We add to this list the Internet, increasingly becoming a broadcast ad location.

We took some of the evaluation criteria of a media vehicle established by Revéret et Moreau in order to apply them to advertising media (Revéret Régis; Jean-Nicolas Moreau, 1997):

- *Speed of production and updating of information:* In times of crisis, tool usability and message readjustment speed are essential.
- *Speed of message dissemination:* The crisis message must be released as early as possible and not expect a publication date, given the urgency of the situation.
- *Target penetration sharpness:* The message must be adaptable to certain categories of people.

- *Message customization*: A personalized message is more appropriate and better received in a crisis.

The process of advertising is based on two pillars: reasoning or emotion. Crisis advertising will tend to use the "central route" (Joannis Henry, De Barnier Virginie, 2005): the advertiser will offer an emotionless advertising message based on cognitive and reason.

The broadcast media vehicle most suited to the crisis advertising is the daily press. Three reasons for this choice: the press is "the place where everything happens", its credibility influences the advertising released and its flexibility is useful in times of crisis.

B. Content

The content of a crisis advertising depends clearly on the type of crisis, business and general context. The adjusted contract allows to regain a certain credibility and legitimacy by playing on information, interactivity and sobriety. Classic advertising "*distinguishes first of all from information; [...]it makes a detour through psychology and culture in order to speak to the consumer*" (Cathelat Bernard, 1987). Crisis advertising is using the same digressions, but borrows aspects of information to meet stakeholders' demands and to disseminate the crisis message. Similar to an article, the *body copy*, the text of a press release, must provide two levels of reading: *full reading* or *partial reading*.

The message should contain a title, *accroche*, which draws the reader's attention. The advantage is that attention has already reached a state of paroxysm during a crisis, the organization should not devote more efforts to attract readers (Joannis Henry; De Barnier Virginie, 2005). In addition to the brand, the titles and headings must bear the information and not be simple labels. Thus, the message will pass even if a full reading hasn't been done. Another point that should not be overlooked is the message signature. This recommendation may seem trivial or logic, but signing the content of the brand is essential.

C. Form

The form of the crisis advertising will be influenced by the choice of the media vehicle and its content. Classic *print* advertising tends to a text expurgation or is exclusively visual. However, images are not forbidden in crisis advertising. They can be profitable, because they held highly symbolic attitude. For example, during the campaign "Bientôt ensemble", BNP Paribas group staged group images. The message was focused on the unification of two entities, the Bank has played on the effect of group that symbolizes the plurality within a unit.

D. Timing

Once the decision to use advertising is taken, the broadcasting timeline should be scheduled. A crisis development occurs in four stages (Libaert Thierry, 2005): *preliminary phase*, *acute phase*, *chronic phase* when the crisis gradually loses momentum, and *healing phase*. Before the crisis, advertising is a preventive measure. The crisis is an "unexpected event". However, in some cases it can be expected and foreseen, by using advertising in *Issue Management*, namely "risk management". Advertising released in the middle of the crisis should be informative and reassuring. The organization is under time pressure, and is in a state of emergency (Libaert Thierry, 2005). Messages should be disseminated as soon as possible and regularly to keep the public informed about developments. The *acute phase*, the moment of explosion of events, is certainly not favourable for advertising. The *post-crisis phase* is the ideal time to give a new brightness to the organization's image.

5. CRISIS ADVERTISING AT BMW GROUP

5.1. Contextualization of the Economic and Financial Crisis

The crisis became ordinary after September 15, the day that U.S. giant Lehman Brothers went bankrupt. The principle "*To big to fail*" has saved many financial institutions. This principle was applicable for "*fear that their failure would trigger the famous systemic risk*" (Jacquillat Bertrand; Levy-Garbo Vivien, 2009), until the famed September 14, 2008.

According to Thierry Libaert (2005), two scenarios are possible during financial crisis: an endogenous embarrassment and an exogenous embarrassment. Endogenous embarrassment is due to poor results, stock quotes that fall. Exogenous embarrassment is the result of a stock market crash as the one we witnessed in September 2008. We find ourselves in the scenario of a stock market crash that triggered the financial sector in crisis. The crisis has led to numerous effects on its way.

Referring to the phrase of Barry Eichengreen in his book *Financial crises, "crises are for the financial system what heart attacks are for the cardiovascular system"* (Eichengreen Barry, 2002). If the portfolio falls, the rest follow it. Like an earthquake, the waves were propagated throughout the world. Various industries have seen their turnover melting like snow in the sun. The car market has not escaped either.

BMW, the largest luxury car manufacturer in the world, was also affected by the crisis. Representatives of the manufacturer have reported a decrease of 5% of revenue in 2008, in the context of the global financial crisis that has seriously affected the automotive market. The company has reduced employees's number by 7%, to 100,041 persons at the end of 2008. BMW Group will record a profit leap thanks to new models and the gradual recovery of world economy in 2010.

5.2 Analysis of "The Hire" Pre-Crisis Advertising Campaign

In 2000 Bayerische Motoren Werke AG (BMW) posted total sales of \$33 billion, a slight decrease from its 1999 earnings of \$34 billion. Afraid of further backsliding, the Bavarian automaker decided to reshape its advertising to better target the Internet-savvy BMW customer. Before 2001 the company's advertisements had typically consisted of product-driven campaigns with immaculate BMWs clinging to mountain roads. BMW asked its longtime advertising partner, Fallon Worldwide, to create something different. In 2001 five action-packed short films emerged under the campaign title "*The Hire*", which became one of the most acclaimed campaigns in advertising history.

After working with BMW to develop the idea of a James Bond-type hero who drove various BMWs, Fallon enlisted David Fincher's film-production company, Anonymous Content. Fincher then successfully wrangled some of Hollywood's biggest guns - including directors Guy Ritchie and John Frankenheimer and actors Madonna, Forrest Whittaker, and Mickey Rourke - to create the five short films. Three more films were created in 2002 to promote BMW's new Z4 roadster. All eight starred Clive Owen as the "hired" driver who found himself driving a BMW in every spot.

"*The Hire*" largely arose from Fallon and BMW's growing concern that past campaigns had been missing the company's target audience: over 25-year-olds, well-to-do (with incomes greater than \$75,000), high-achieving males who usually researched purchases using the Internet and lacked the time to watch network television or step into a showroom. (<http://marketing-case-studies.blogspot.com>)

As for the *competition*, Mercedes-Benz, the German luxury arm of DaimlerChrysler, was the top-selling luxury brand in the United States in 1999, a position it maintained until losing ground to BMW and to Toyota's Lexus in 2002.

Marketing Strategy. "The Hire" was promoted much like a feature film would have been, with movie trailers, print ads, and Web ads. In producing "The Hire", Fincher and Fallon went so far as to create a dossier, complete with FBI and CIA files, just to flesh out the films' hero. Fallon flipped the advertising equation upside down by spending 90 percent of its budget on production and only 10 percent on media. Typical Hollywood methods, including broadcast spots, billboards, and free posters, were used to promote the films. Print ads ran in Hollywood trade magazines Vanity Fair, Entertainment Weekly, and Rolling Stone. The trailers for "The Hire", resembling regular movie trailers, aired on VH1, Bravo, and the Independent Film Channel. One of Fallon's biggest challenges was to pitch the films as entertainment but to still disclose BMW's involvement. Due to overwhelming Web traffic, ad-industry praise, and BMW's bottom-line success in 2002, a "second season" consisting of three films began airing.

Outcome. "The Hire" raked in a plethora of advertising awards, including two Grand Clio Awards and a Grand Prix Cyber Lion at the International Advertising Festival in Cannes, France. "Hostage" earned the award for Best Action Short during the Los Angeles International Short Film Festival in 2002. Their entertainment value garnered media coverage not accessible to typical advertisement. BMW's sales rose 17.2 percent between 2001 and 2002, helping the automaker to outsell Mercedes and placing it second only to Lexus in the luxury-car market. The greatest pinnacle of "The Hire" may have been winning the first-ever Titanium Lion, the highest honor at the Cannes International Advertising Festival. (<http://marketing-case-studies.blogspot.com>)

5.3 Analysis of "Joy is BMW" Crisis Advertising Campaign

In a time when the sales volume of an automotive manufacturer is based on its tradition and experience, especially on the marketing policy adopted, BMW decided to launch in 2009 a new *image campaign*, called "Joy is BMW". The campaign is placed close to the core values of the brand, wanting to bring to the fore the "joy" to find yourself behind the wheel of a car produced by BMW. The *Joy* theme of BMW will go along with the well-known slogan *Sheer Driving Pleasure*.

BMW officials consider that now it is the moment when the promotion reaches target public at its best. "Now there is no 'inflation' of ads, so visibility is better for the advertised product".

The image campaign is promoted on television, in print and on the Internet, and is based on *three main elements* offered by the BMW models (www.automarket.ro).

- 1) the *effective* performance that BMW cars offer due to the *EfficientDynamics* technology.
- 2) the *design*, the studies undertaken showing that it is one of the main factors when it comes to buying a car produced by BMW.
- 3) the *joy* to have at one's disposal an advanced technology and to detain a truly good and beautiful product.

Below we summarize the main commercial spots aired during the image campaign, with Joy's emotional associations and BMW's brand values.

- a) **Joy is BMW.** This commercial is interesting as it doesn't aim to promote individual vehicles, instead it tells potential consumers the story of the whole brand. It exploits communitarianism, that is it focuses very much on a community of human beings, of all ages and from different ethnic backgrounds "enjoying" their experience of BMW either on their own, or in large groups. This commercial shows illustrious cars from the past, for example the 507 and the Z1, current production vehicles and what is *presented* as showcasing the brand's future, the *G.I.N.A Light Visionary* concept - textile car body. The use of this time-line reinforces the likelihood that BMW is a company which is very proud of maintaining and continuing its enviable *lineage* and promoting a coherence that consumers will be able to trust in.
- b) **Jump for Joy 2.** The commercial relates to another very serious competitor for the high-end, sporty, dynamic, forward thinking sector of the market BMW likes to occupy – *Audi*. According to this commercial, BMW owners embrace joy and are *successful* in their attempts to enter their vehicles. The Audi owner on the other hand is less joyful and not successful in his aim to leap in to his car. *Humor* was the most obvious solution for the automotive manufacturer's communication in times of crisis. In the very rational, measured and ordered World we live in, joy and pleasure can be seen as very *irrational* and indulgent emotions – indeed emotions that distract us from being disciplined and keeping a routine. An important aspect of the commercial is that it shows BMW drivers to be supple in their stretch routine. The Audi owner is far stiffer – he doesn't get anywhere near touching his toes. This indicates that BMW drivers are allegedly healthier, a *health* related to the thoughts associated to the pleasure of driving a BMW car, seen as visit to a health spa – a luxurious experience which one will seemingly want to keep to one's self. The experience of a traveling in comfort whilst retaining a real sense of dynamism is an approach that may well suit *older consumers* – as it is often said that as we age, we become more conservative, more reserved in our tastes and far less "showy" in our external appearance. And as demographics show a trend of an aging population, this type of strategy may well prove to be very intelligent on the part of BMW.
- c) **Joy is Futureproof.** The advertisement focuses consistent messages based on the key elements of the BMW brand. Like many manufacturers, BMW make use of *aesthetic cues* in order to reinforce their brand identity: the use of sharp body lines, *Hofmeister Kink* at the C-Pillar and a *short front overhang* coupled with a *long rear overhang*. The voice-over arrives also to certain well publicized *technical specification cues*, the first of which is a *longitudinally mounted engine*, "*Straight-6*" used since 1933 – BMW being one of the few remaining manufacturers to still use this type of power plant. *Rear-wheel-drive* is the second discernable mechanical characteristic of a BMW. The introduction of the *Vision Efficient Dynamics* concept is used to introduce a new core message which can be used to bind the past, present and future together, suggesting an adaptation of the brand to meet the needs of the 21st Century But the fact that this vehicle breaks the BMW rule book can be evidenced by liberal use of the colour *blue* suggesting *electric power* and *sustainability* and a more *cab forward* appearance generated by a prominent divide in the bonnet. Joy campaign is a very good example of how a brand might react to the 21st Century corporate imperatives of environmental responsibility, ethical treatment of people and of course financial turnover. Together, these are often referred to as "*The Triple Bottom Line*".

6. CONCLUSIONS

Crisis communication and advertising communication are a priori diametrically opposed. The first belongs rather to the area of seriousness, even sobriety, urgency, truth and transparency. The second belongs rather to the area of easiness, slow motion, seduction and exaggeration. A priori, advertising is not the appropriate tool in times of crisis. Crisis communication favors rather non-media channels that have more credibility among the public.

Despite its many faults, advertising can help a "classic" crisis communication. Certainly, it is not self-sufficient. Advertising is a complementary way next to others to respond to a crisis. This allows the originality, creativity and imagination development. Indeed, advertising offers prospects that other tools do not possess. Firstly, through its nature of mass-media tool, it is able to reach repeatedly large numbers of people. Secondly, advertising is a proactive means of response. The company does not expect to be given the right to speak, it claims by itself. In addition, advertising provides the enterprise the possibility to control the message in its entirety, from conception to reception.

Pursuant to these considerations, we estimate that the *first hypothesis*, stating that *crisis advertising has a role to play in the context of a crisis*, is proved. Therefore, advertising makes sense in a sensitive communication. Playing on the image, an advertisement can be destructive. A mismanaged or misinterpreted communication can be disastrous. In the case of advertising, the impact is double because it comes directly from the announciator, who paid for the insert of the message.

Messages not being supported by the mass-media, the BMW Group was forced to regain control of the message. Given the azimuth rumors and general panic, the automotive sector had to reassure the public. Advertising allowed the brand to act and in some way to maintain control of speech.

BMW was a young brand and did not benefit of a legacy of credibility and prestige in the competition with other competitors, such as Mercedes, and the segment of customers to whom it addressed was very limited. The consistent and coherent image of BMW has strengthened and increased customer loyalty.

We believe that the *second hypothesis*, *financial crisis is a propitious occasion for using crisis advertising*, is confirmed. Crisis advertising is a relevant instrument during this crisis. Indeed, BMW has managed to forestall the crisis overthrows, mainly due to a media communication. BMW has shown how a well-run advertising program can help a company to successfully pass over a period of crisis, triple sales and generate profit. BMW Company was able to meet its business objectives through a coherent and consistent advertising strategy. The strategy of BMW has built a strong brand personality that has generated a permanently increasing demand for the various models, a spectacular leap of sales and a higher profit rate than expected.

The *third hypothesis*, *crisis advertising diverges from classical advertising and broaches its own characteristics*, leads us to decree that crisis advertising has its own functioning mode. Indeed, the crisis advertising leaves its own characteristic mark on the classic advertising. It readjusts the advertising contract and is based on an information schema. In most cases, it brings in the features of an article, either at the level of form or content.

The main objective of the Joy campaign was to create a richer and more nuanced image of the brand. BMW was seen primarily as a manufacturer of performance cars. What was needed was a broadening of the customer base beyond the segment of enthusiasts interested in the technical performance of cars. A second goal of the campaign

was to improve the BMW's reputation of luxury car manufacturer, even if the models were becoming less exclusivist, as sales grew.

The advertising strategy was built around four concepts: communicating the brand's core values, a strategy of differentiation, creating a center of gravity around the brand and using a different register of communication, a distinct tones of voice, to speak in the advertisers' jargon.

Although the variety of BMW models is permanently communicated, a center of gravity was build around the unique experience offered by such a car - *Joy is BMW* - research showing that people choose the BMW brand at the expense of different brands. This turns irrelevant the competition based on price with other brands.

All advertisements produced for BMW, until the decision to change the central message around the word *Joy*, had a unique, unmistakable style. The BMW world was a cold, technological perfection, built on an iconic imaginary where any signs of humanity, which may suggest imperfection or fault emergence, was removed. There is no place in BMW's communication for good looking blondes, warm family homes or emotional sunsets. The car is the only star and the idea of each ad is based on information related thereto. However, the effectiveness of a crisis advertising has never been proven because it has never been measured. We can not state the positive or negative effects of such practices. It would be pertinent to continue this process of reflection.

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