Some Evidence on Unconventional Marketing: Focus on Guerrilla Marketing

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Abstract

From years the "postmodern" society has registered the transition of the consumer from a passive role to an active one where he is aware and informed on "prosumer" or on "value co-creator" according to the cooperative concept of the value co-creation put into a win-win logic; the transformation of the society, of the behaviour and the consumption typology have supported the development and the confirmation of particular techniques of communication and marketing which are able to strengthen the tools used for the relationship with the customer as well as the incitement occasion of the subjects that, due to the amount of information which they are involved in, can appear confused and absent-minded. This work analyses, also through the Red Bull case analysis, the potentiality and the role of the unconventional marketing – with particular references to guerrilla marketing, in supporting the communication of companies and creating incentives among the firm and the potential consumers through tools and projects that allow the collection of feedback and information on the market. With the Red Bull case study the authors want highlight the unconventional marketing role in the communication strategy and value co-creation activity. The case highlights the successes of Red Bull Company using unconventional marketing tools to deliver the value proposition toward the customers.

Keywords: unconventional marketing, guerrilla marketing, postmodern society, creativity

1. Introduction: the Postmodern Society

The world is dealing with a phase of fast and strong change at a social, economic, environmental and technological level – *the world financial crisis, climatic changes and pollution, digitalization, increase of internet use, new global references for the centralization of wealth*; the postmodern society, deeply marked by these changes, is set in different ways in the different Countries and imposes to the companies a deep revise of the business method and strategy but also of the models related to the relationship and communication with the environment, context and markets, inserted in a social responsibility logic (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2010); the post materialism (Inglehart & Abramson, 1999; Mostafa, 2011) represents a "spiritual" comeback that the contemporaneous world had set aside during the modern age; today, by interpreting at the same time the role of receiver and sender of information, the consumers can already receive, process and spread information; the subjects do not limit themselves to receive and listen the news but they are able to interpret, filter, elaborate and produce on their own the information that must be input in the several communication channel.

According to Cova, Giorando, Pallera (2012), what characterizes the postmodern society, compared to the modern one, resides in the centrality of the information, the globalization, the strong value of the symbolic components of the society, the capability of the individual to receive, process and spread information; these factors contribute to define the main changing elements in the society, especially from a sociologic point of view. In the contemporary society, the information represents a fundamental resource for both the consumers and the companies; reality has been mainly "built" and "mediated". Compared to the global symbolic impact, the aspects of territorial localization have been made secondary by globalization. The new technologies have favoured the cancellation of space and time that, in turn, supports the inclination of people to come back to find out its own identity and realization.

An essential difference between the two different ages influence the consumer role: modernity and postmodernity; while modernity is based on the evident separation between the demand and the consumption, on the contrary, in

post modernity these two aspects get close till the complete fusion. The co-creation concept stands out and synthetize the win-win exchange between company and consumer, project and consumer, in a value co-generation logic where the exchange concept is almost au pair and where the parts contributes to the mutual growth of the value (Polese, Pels & Brodie, 2011).

2. The New Consumers and the New Consumption Models

The society transformation has significantly influenced the consumption and the consumers, editing their role and behaviour; the figure of the consumer has adapted itself to the several and drastic social, economic and technological changes, moving from a subaltern role to a central one. In the age of information, technology and web, the consumers are well-informed and educated (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) and they have the possibility to compare the several value offers, whose concept is subjectively interpreted from the potential customers with a specific cultural and value outfit (Kotler, Kartajaya, Setiawan, 2010).

The current business environment is based on the consumer participation, globalization and creativeness. This makes the consumers more collaborative and careful to the cultural, emotional and experience aspects that are all intangible.

Some peculiar characteristics of the today consumer stand out:

- **Generally more informed:** thanks to the huge amount of information available on the media, and in particular on the web, made available by the companies, the opinion leaders and the consumers themselves;

- **More responsible:** the consumers pay more attention to the ethical aspect of the consumption, the production techniques and processes, to the environment safety, to the work conditions; the social responsibility of the companies becomes an important parameter for the evaluation of the consumer in the purchase phase. It is an aspect that affects the company reputation;

- **More changeable:** The consumer figure is more and more complex, strange and contradictory; the purchase become an action of personal gratification, desire satisfaction, status symbol and its own expression;

- **More leading:** thanks to the spread of participative platforms/tools/channels of the web 2.0 – *in particular the social network websites* – consumers can exchange information on any product and company influencing the purchase decision of the consumer interconnected through the same network.

The contemporary consumer, due to his characteristics, has been defined by some marketing researchers as "consumer 2.0" or "postmodern consumer"; it is a new conception of consumer that has some completely new characteristics compared to the past. These new consumers want to collaborate among themselves and with the firms, moving from the "consumer" role to the "prosumer" one (that is producer and consumer) (Toffler, 1980); in order to describe the situation that the new consumer deals with, Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) use the word "Prosumption" – *sum of the words "production" and "consumption".*

The present consumer wants to take part into the decision-making processes of the companies, to express his own opinion and to share the information on the net (with the whole consumers' community). He wants also to contribute to improve, design and advertise a product by collaborating with the companies with a proactive and co-creative logic.

By now, the consumer has changed his skin, he becomes independent, expert, demanding, selecting and inclined to a holistic approach; we have moved from the "brand monologue" to the "dialogue" and the consumer goes from a marketing mainly aimed to the increase of the market to a more sociological approach – *societing*. The word societing (Fabris, 2009) tries to explain the process of "inputting into the society" and "doing the society"; in a nutshell, marketing and sociology merge into a postmodern need characterised by the necessity of considering the society as a set of fast changing entities having rules and boundaries very difficult to be codified; we need to assume that "the company is a social actor integrated in a social context" (Badot, Bucci & Cova, 1993).

The marketing strategies do not just concern the relationship of the market exchange but they always influence the behaviour and the process of new meaning creation in the value concept. In general, the marketer scope is not the market but the society, with all the consequences that it can involve.

3. The Unconventional Communication: Concepts from the Literature

An unconventional approach of marketing does not underpin the replacement of the conventional strategy with a complete unconventional project; paths intersect, distance and cross themselves, because of the continue research of creating new incentives for the consumers and the most synergy and coherence of the sent message (Brioschi & Usleghi, 2009).

The management practice teaches to optimize the intervention and to develop marketing and communications processes that somehow growth in a complementary way and add together several tools. The business marketing becomes unconventional when it strengthens the communication of the message with innovative, specific and variable tools that, somehow, maintain the consumer's awareness or incite his interest.

Although we speak of unconventional marketing, as the tools and the activity mainly concern the communication, we should speak of unconventional communication but, in some sense and for some products/service, the marketing process is also completed from strategic and results measurement components; this is especially true when we deal with a win-win logic of value co-creation and by consequence when we give some input to the market and build a strategic framework that can take feedback and proposals for the development and the creation – *for a new modulation* – of a strategy.

In a so changed society, based on the continuous exchange of information, where people are just not the "receiver" but also the "sender" of the information, so producer of contents, marketing cannot be based on classic branding models and on a traditional approach.

The approaches to the innovative techniques of unconventional communication are based on the "bottom study" of the target psychology, the rational and emotional stimulus, the space where the consumer move, the needs that push himself to want and desire a certain product, the codes that regulate and influence his behaviour in acting, buying and consuming. But in particular, the new communication and marketing approaches assert that companies should not look for a positioning of their product in the market but for what in jargon is called "sense providing" or rather "the sense in the society". So the company should try to place their products and their brand in the society, explaining the usefulness and the sense of that brand/product. As matter of fact today the brand is a sense provider.

3.1 Unconventional and Guerrilla Marketing

With the consumption and society changes, with the multiplication of the incentives and the messages, new marketing and communication needs born; in particular, the unconventional marketing takes an important role.

The "Guerrilla Marketing" arises among the unconventional marketing elements (Levinson, 1984). Levinson, one of the first researchers studying the phenomenon of unconventional strategies, explained the phenomenon in this way: "it's a body of unconventional ways of pursuing conventional goals"; the author asserts that the guerrilla marketing is a "… proven method of achieving profits with minimum money".

To explain the guerrilla marketing we need to focus on the meaning of the word "guerrilla": in the military language guerrilla is *a way of fight done by irregular armed formations that fight again a regular army* (Zingarelli, 2010). As a matter of fact it represents an activity that develops with ambushes, attacks, sabotages, surprising attacks and the consequent short fight, generally happening across mountain, wooded and inaccessible areas that are advantageous for the fast movement of small formations. The technique can be used to avoid the direct fight with larger enemy formations by fighting with a fast and incisive strategy. The concept of guerrilla marketing that Levinson applies to the marketing, is a concept taken from the military field that refers to "an unconventional war" that is different from the conventional one. The unconventional war is based on the attempt of gaining the fight through attack strategies and arms that aim at generating subversion or threat and that are not regulated from international agreements. Umberto Eco stated: "in the age where the information has become the main necessity and where the power is just owned from people who control the media, the guerrilla, interpreted as a way of communication that is parallel to the traditional media, is the most successful action" (Eco, 1973). Eco uses the word guerrilla, but from a different point of view: he did not propose, as Levinson did, to replace the traditional approach with a low budget and unconventional communication, but to put side by side the two strategies.

The guerrilla marketing is a set of communication strategies that are innovative and necessarily sensational and that surprise the target by creating viral dynamics of message spread thanks to the investment of energy and fantasy instead of money (Simone, 2006); Guerrilla marketing uses a combination of engaging vehicles (Simone,2006) including elements of public relations, advertising, and marketing into an offensive promotion strategy to reach consumers through a variety of means. Sometimes ago this approach could be rarely observed just in the small companies while, today, it is used from any kind of firms that are attracted from the efficiency of these strategies.

The guerrilla marketing (Munkhammar et al., 2014) has its origin also in the "cultural jamming" movement (Brioschi & Uslenghi, 2009); the cultural jamming, or cultural disturbance, is a form of activism that carries out mainly illegal actions of guerrilla communication against multinational companies aimed at twisting the original message of the company, ridicule it and incentivize a reflection (Brioschi & Uslenghi, 2009).

The guerrilla marketing, starting from these intents, has been used to convey precise messages and it has reached a relevant position in the communication strategies, not only because of the cheapness of its realization but, for sure,

for the incisiveness of the communication techniques characterised from unusual, unexpected, not regular and unconventional actions (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011). Today, unlike the American situation of the past, especially big companies use to resort to unconventional actions of guerrilla marketing, as they are attracted also by the effectiveness of these techniques, avoiding the crowding of the conventional channels and to advertise in an original way new products or specific brand values; the guerrilla marketing is based on original and creative ideas, an innovative approach completely different compared to the past, so as to take and understand the phenomenon arising in the society. The guerrilla marketing is the funding concept of the unconventional marketing and so it is often considered as its synonym.

4. Discussion on the Tools of Unconventional Marketing in the Guerrilla Marketing

The cheapness and the cost convenience related to the development of guerrilla marketing campaigns are surely inserted in the subjective evaluations of the managers who compare duties, opportunities and result of the related investment. Sometimes the practical experience shows that the small and medium companies prefer the guerrilla marketing because of the possibility to develop communication activities with a limited budget while big multinational companies such as Nike, Microsoft, Adidas or Sony invest in the guerrilla marketing a communication budget that can be comparable to the campaigns made on traditional media (Burton & Chadwick, 2009).; it is clear that, in proportion, the same consideration can be applied to the small and medium companies.

So the guerrilla marketing is a set of communication tools that goes beyond the traditional schemes to stimulate and develop emotions (that are not necessarily positive) and to provoke, astonishment and floor.   The guerrilla reaches the consumer in the moments and places where its "advertising consciousness" is not active (as it happens nowadays in front of the TV or listening to the radio), that is when its defence against the communication message is lower; the effects that the guerrilla marketing produces on its "victims" are curiosity and involvement. We can find the guerrilla effects in the streets, on the walls, on the benches, on the bottom of the glasses, in fake conversations, on the banknotes, on the fruit, and even on the human body; the guerrilla marketing activities are designed to stimulate and create word of mouth, "viral" spread of the message among people. To get the effect that follows the astonishment, it is good that the guerrilla project is in keeping with a base strategy that, in turn, has to be aligned with the main characteristics of the product and the company's strategies.

  So three moments of contact with the consumer arise: the first one is the moment of the astonishment; the second one is the involvement in the general strategy of marketing; the last one is the moment of memory and sharing that, as a matter of fact, can develop in the reality (live) or on the web (through the social network web sites).

Even if it is still complex to put some boundaries to the guerrilla marketing topic or to define the unconventional marketing in a certain way, although it is not simple to define a definite set of tools or a framework that is constantly used, we try, then, to describe some tools that are generally used.

4.1 Viral Communication

The viral communication is one of the main tools of the unconventional communication. The term viral marketing has been introduced for the first time in an article published by Jeffrey Rapport from the Harvard Business Scholl in 1996. The viral communication is somehow related to the so-called word-of-mouth (WOM). We have to find the viral marketing origins (Ferguson 2008; Philps et al., 2004) in the word of mouth and in the influence among consumers (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

The communication is considered viral when the sent message tends to spread in a predominant and spontaneous way as it was a virus; so the viral communication is based on the originality of an idea or a product so as to activate in a spontaneous way the spread of the message (Putrevu & Lord, 2003) letting people speak about it.

The viral idea (Phelps et alii, 2004) begins its spread thanks to a group of people usually called influencer or opinion leader, and then it is disseminated to a wider public usually through the web. Of course the electronic communications or the social platforms, as the social network, simplify the information exchange in a short time passing through excellent viral channels.

The viral marketing allows companies to advertise their own products and services with a certain budget, sometimes even reduced, reaching in some cases a level of awareness that usually can be reached just by using high intensity campaigns of television advertisement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The viral marketing implies the elaboration and realization of a communication project that, in the following step of the creative process, must be necessarily supported by communication tools that are consistent with the integrated communication message of the company or the product line that must be communicated.

The first characteristic of a viral marketing campaign is, for sure, its immediacy: the message that we want to transmit, the promotion that we want to show must be simple, usable and fast. Secondly the message must have a

strong impact in order to reach the audience, or rather the potential customers or users of the product/service and must have original characteristics to be different compared to the large quantity of messages that everyday arrive from everywhere. Moreover, to be effective, a viral marketing campaign must be planned by considering the referred target: the used language, the tools, the virtual places, and eventually the real ones that will keep the campaign, must be known and suitable for the age and the flavour of the people that it wants to refer to. As a matter of fact, in some cases, the viral marketing campaigns are customized depending on the different referred ages; although it is uncontrollable, the viral market campaign can stimulate the word of mouth and be contagious just if it can be part of peoples' conversations.

Also the buzz marketing is part of the viral marketing. The buzz agents are interested in the product or service; they are made capable of having a preview of the products and services to let them starting the discussion on the market. They often seem to be fan of the product (Hughes, 2005).

The teaser – *it is a preliminary advertising campaign that tries to incentivize the audience without revealing the nature, the name or the brand of the advertised product. It needs a second campaign (follow up) where the mystery is unveiled and the product is explicitly advertised. It is a technique used with a large budget and for the launch of a new product -*, the stickering – *a communication strategy based on the billposting of a large amount of small stickers representing the company brand in public crowded spaces and in strategic points -* and the news making – *to transform into news an happening related to the brand, the company or to its products in a positive way -* are some of the techniques used in the viral marketing.

4.2 Ambient and Sensation

The ambient is a form of communication that uses all the elements of the physic ambient to send messages that can grab consumers' attention. In this way the consumer is involved into the communication by the ambient that surrounds him.

Luxton and Drummond (2000) define the ambient marketing as "the placement of advertisements in unusual and unexpected places, often with unconventional methods and, above all, for the first time", to reach the greatest astonishment of the target subjects.

The ambient communication is a complex form of communication that uses elements belonging to the external ambient, including all the available public areas, to spread messages that incentivize the consumer involvement. This kind of communication, in its several forms, uses the urban space to transmit messages in a less expensive and more efficient way compared to the traditional advertising media; in any case the importance of the marketing-media support, in particular in this period of global economic crisis, is growing (Gambetti, 2010).

The ambient communication derives from the outdoor advertising concept or rather the most ancient way of advertisement, based on the use of open spaces, usually having an urban nature, to communicate with its own audience. Though the ambient marketing derives from the outdoor advertising concept and it is similar to a traditional widespread form of communication, like the advertising billposting and the distribution of fliers, it differs from the other ones for a fundamental factor: the engagement. As a matter of fact the engagement, that means to involve the consumer, is the most important element for this kind of communication and it makes the ambient communication different from the other open air traditional communications as the billposting, where the message are exposed to a passive audience. In the ambient communication, the consumer is not passive and he becomes an active part of the communication as the ambient aims at creating literal contexts where the consumer plays an active role in the new meaning giving of the public stage as Cova, Giordano and Pallera state. In this way all the actors (companies and consumers) are involved in a unique experience.

The ambient uses contextual-ambient elements that help to create the atmosphere that, in turn, determines the collective and individual experience of people in their own daily life by involving the consumer from an emotional point of view and giving a symbolic value and sense to their experiences (Gambetti, 2010).

The ambient communication strategies allow to pursuit three fundamental advantages:

- To arouse unique and unrepeatable emotions in the consumer in order to establish positive associations towards the brand and its products;

- To stimulate the consumer's learning, creativeness and experimentation around the brand products and its messages;

- To lead the consumers' attraction toward the building of an experience around the brand and the social sharing of its contents.

The ambient communication has become an important way for the companies to renew themselves and to

revitalize the relation customer-brand; generally this kind of communication is combined with the other elements of the mixed communication and used as strategic branding tool aimed at reaching short term targets of commercial communication. However, the orientation toward the customer of this approach, that is designed to understand the individual and social dynamics of the consumer's behaviour, can play a key long term role.

The "Sensation" concept is related to the "Ambient" one; as a matter of fact, it is based on the same principle of the individual astonishment in a common ambient or a place where events or situations of social aggregation are rarely arranged. According to Hutter and Hoffman (2011a) the "Sensation" actions astonish, through initiatives out of the common, the subjects (often pedestrians) that usually frequent some places. The flashmob can be an example.

Flashmob (Grant & Boon, 2013) is a word that has been invented to refer to a group of people staying in a public space for a short time, with the common aim of turning in to practice an unusual and fast action; the meeting is usually arranged through the internet (e-mail, social networks) or by phone. The action rules can be shown to the audience some minutes before that the event takes place or can be transmitted early so that the participants can get ready properly; there are different kinds of flash mob – *frozen flashmob* where the participants stop at a certain time and after a signal, till the signal of the end of the event; *silent rave* where the participants meet at the established place endowed with music players and headphones dancing in a complete silence situation; the *massive flashmobs* that are events characterized by a meeting of thousand people coming together, in a pacific way, in the same place and at the same moment crowding squares, parks or monuments.

4.3 Ambush

The ambush can be defined as a kind of associative marketing used by an organization to increase the awareness or rather the detectability of the consumer; the unconventional marketing action is extremely evident in this case because it arises in a particular aggressive way; the unconventional marketing activities in this case are related to the communication of a brand/company that is the official sponsor of an event/activity with the presence of brands/companies that are not attending de jure.

In order to understand if the "ambushing" campaigns have been successful the companies measure the consumers' awareness of the sponsor; the ambushing is a technique that has changed in the course of time, that has developed moving from a massive use of the sponsorship campaigns (broadcast and surrounding advertising type) to greater creative efforts and a stronger inclination to the use of an audience or fan as if they were promotional vehicles, the so-called "offsite associative marketing" (Sandler & Shani, 1989).

Anyway the ambushing actions are illegal and risky for the companies that use them (Payne, 1998; Townley et al., 1998) because very often the companies that are subjected to these actions request a reimbursement for the damages caused to their regular sponsoring activity (Townley, et alii, 1998).

4.4 Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

The word-of-mouth (WOM) is a fundamental concept of the unconventional communication and it is somehow interdependent if compared to the other unconventional tools because it is traditionally used. The WOM is a communication that has a very ancient origin and it is usually considered a verbal form of communication strengthen by the Web. Today marketing is based on the return to the centrality of the WOM value, or rather on the transmission of information, consideration and opinion on a product or a brand that takes place from person to person in an informal way. The successful component of the WOM is the trust and the trust creation that can be exchangeable between the sender and the receiver.

While the spontaneous WOM is natural and simple to be spread, the WOM built in accordance with to a communication strategy is more complex and must be necessarily based on a communication process that incentivizes the desire of knowing and spreading in an automatic and indirect way the communication and the meaning of the message.

Consumers are available to convey WOM messages with commercial references just in case they get positive perception in:

- An exceptional, excellent, innovative product or service;
- An involving and original message;
- An extraordinary and unpredictable event (for example the guerrilla activity can activate a viral spread and generate WOM).

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) state that the WOM can affect the behaviour of the consumers as it is more effective than the traditional media advertisement in the decisions related to the choice of the brand. In the last years the online WOM has acquired a main role, as the traditional one, in influencing the consumer and his behaviour. This

happens thanks to the positive externality created by the trust feeling among the consumers (Arora, 2007; Herr et al., 1991), that nowadays are mainly influenced by virtual communities and the social networks developed on the most important web platform (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

So the WOM is a very powerful communication tool that can influence the consumers' opinion and their purchase choices of a certain product or service. It is important to say that the WOM is useful not only for the consumers that use to exchange opinions and that know useful information and the experiences of other users that have already done the purchase, but it is also useful for the companies. The comments and the opinions exchanged by customers on the several online (and offline) channels, let the companies acquire important information as they can know what consumers think about them, for example they can now the quality and the defects of their products etc. Thanks to the network word of mouth, companies can study the consumers and understand their behaviour, their habits and their way of thinking, taking a close look on them in a not officious way (Kozinets, 2002).

According to Cova, Giordano, Pallera, there are several techniques used by company to incentivize the word of mouth:

- **Tryvertising**: is a term deriving from the fusion of the words "trial" and "advertising", and refers to the selective distribution of the product samples to the leader users (it can also be considered a sales promotion technique);

- **Empowered involvement**: it is a technique aimed at involving the consumers in one or more aspects of the marketing, enabling them to influence the development of a product or an advertising campaign;

- **Brand ambassador program**: to invite the most satisfied and loyal consumers to become "brand ambassador" giving them privileges or preview on the company sequence of events;

- **Causal campaigns**: to support a good cause, with the aim of giving to the consumer one more reason to both purchase the product and develop the WOM;

- **Influencer outreach**: to select the influencer going directly to them as they are the people to whom the consumer ask suggestions when they have to buy a new good or service;

- **Advocacy tracking**: it is the monitoring of the WOM aimed at correcting or changing the approach of the company's marketing strategies.

5. Some Evidences on Companies and Unconventional Communication: The Method

The method involves qualitative analysis, in particular through the investigation of case studies, highlighting the strategic role of unconventional marketing.

The unconventional communication can be successfully used by big and small companies; it can be used as distinction element of the communication, to strengthen the brand notoriety and build and spread the company's policy. In the competitive markets, the building of the belonging to a certain life style, the spread of some interpretation of the way of thinking, the emotion, the consumption way, are all possible also thanks to paths based on input that are continuous and incisive toward the referred target. Although the traditional communication supports a continuative stimulus process, the unconventional one allows the encouragement of the referred market with tools that have been properly created to generate an habit dystonia.

The product categories that have been affected by a wider experimentation of unconventional communication strategies are: food and drinks, media and entertainment, consumer electronics, retail selling, automotive (Gambetti, 2010).

The companies that can successfully use the unconventional marketing and communication activities, present characteristics that make them compatible with the adoption of new marketing approaches and of unconventional communication techniques.

Generally, the company that adopt unconventional marketing and communication strategies, with a higher possibility of being successful, so companies that get positive results from these activities, have particular characteristics:

- **A budget that is adequate to the unconventional communication typology:** Some unconventional activities can be realized with a budget that is reduced compared with the traditional communication on the usual media; on the contrary, some other one can be interested by greater investments to reach the goal;

- **Creative capabilities:** the companies aim at conveying one or more messages. They can do it by using the knowledge and the capabilities that are already inside the company (if owned), otherwise they must look for external experts who perform the activity in outsourcing. Anyway, not every company has the possibility to

use the unconventional communication because of their product typology that is identifiable in the core business. Anyway, to use a project of unconventional communication (internally or externally), the company must internally recognize itself in the creativity factor.

- **An adequate business culture:** a culture that must be advanced, flexible, open to new unconventional experiences, inclined to innovation, risk, changes and to the continuous adjustment and improvement.
- **They put in the market products/services that are compatible with an alternative and unconventional communication:** not every product and/or service is completely compatible with the most innovative forms of unconventional communication. Some products or service can be compatible with a communication that is too much far from the rules and that can easily adapt themselves to the traditional communication media or modality.

Referring to the development and use of the unconventional marketing, the main difference between big and small companies resides almost always in the available budget and, above all, the economic and human resources allocated for the specific projects. As a matter of fact, we should not do a distinction between small and big companies but, among companies that can be potentially interested from the unconventional communication. The distinction could be between companies that need to establish themselves in the market by conveying feeling, emotion, life style and sensation and the ones that base their core business on products whose value is strongly characterized by their material nature. So companies should have the following characteristics:

- A defined budget to be invested in marketing and advertising activities. The size of the budget is not as important as the willingness to believe in an unconventional communication strategy and to invest the right budget needed to reach the established goal;
- A business culture that is open and dynamic, inclined to try new marketing strategies;
- Capabilities helpful to create, eventually realize, and control the unconventional marketing and communication actions in a proper way, by investing time and money in the formation of internal resources or by using external experts.

The difference in using these marketing and communication tools, that resides between big and small entities, is just in the economic and human resources availability that are able to create, manage and finance an unconventional marketing campaign.

The small and medium companies find bigger difficulties in realizing unconventional campaigns for different reasons:

- Lack of specific and adequate knowledge in the creation and control processes;
- Limited budget that can be destined to marketing and communication activities. Often marketing and communication are considered a loss of time and a wrong investment;
- A business culture that is often limited, not so much flexible, not inclined to changes, risk and innovation. A kind of culture that often underrates the importance of a good marketing and communication strategy.

Ultimately, considering the nature of the unconventional marketing, we can fill a model of SWOT survey in order to understand the role and the potentiality of the tools utilization.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of unconventional marketing

STRENGHTS
• Surprise
• Originality
• Extraordinary/exceptional nature
• Unicity
• Unpredictability
• Flexibility
• Memorable content
• Participation
• Involvement

- Emotional impact

- Creativeness

- Entertainment/fun

- "Collaborativity" (user collaboration in the communication process)

- Importance and reliability of the message

- Active relation brand-consumer

- Sensitive richness

- Effect-context

- Divergence (simplify memory and memorization)

- To build or improve the brand notoriety

- To influence the consumer's behaviour

OPPORTUNITIES

- Consumers' availability to the unconventional communication

- Society and consumption changes

- Adoption of unconventional strategies by the several companies with the consequent acceptation of the techniques

- Hyper connectivity of the consumers

- Green-friendly approach used by the consumer (limitation of squandering and green communication)

- Consumer's attention to the value co-creation

- More informed consumers, that have a more variable taste and consumption

WEAKNESSES

- Absence or low repeatability level of the action/event

- Fast loss of the surprise effect and originality

- Fast obsolescence

- Pervading message: it tends to be spread everywhere so that it can be invasive

- Easy loss of control: the control of the effects/consequences of the communication is difficult

- Difficulty in planning an unconventional action supported by a solid strategy

- Low measurability of the efficiency and the results

- Risk that the message results not relevant

THREATS

- Risk of a failure deriving from the low external support

- Risk of an invasive and not relished communication

- Restrictive laws

- Negative consequences deriving from eventual damages to the environment and to the common assets

- Contamination of the communication made by other external activities

- Potential loss of positive positioning

- Addiction to the unconventional

- Need of adequate resources

Source: Author's elaboration.

6. The Red Bull Case

The methodology used involves the analysis of a single case study (Yin, 1994; Dubois e Gadde, 2001), suitable technique to develop theories about phenomena still little known in the context in which they take place. The use of cases also has the advantage of allowing the study of issues related to the "how" and "why" of recent and

contemporary events over which the researcher has little control (Sturman, 1998; Cecconi, 2002; Yin, 2003).

6.1 The Company

Red Bull is the name of a commercial energy drink produced by the namesake Austrian company, from Salzburg, Red Bull GmbH. Dietrich Mateschitz, founder of the company and creator of the drink, drawing on some other Asian products like the "Krating Daeng" ("red water buffalo") – *a "tonic drink" to fight the fatigue sensation* – decides to import in Europe a similar drink and to found the Red Bull GmbH company in 1984, developing the formula of the product and creating a unique concept of marketing. Three years later, for the first time, Mateschitz launches the "Red Bull Energy Drink" on the Austrian market.

In the '70s, Chaleo Yoovidhya, cofounder of the Red Bull, managed a pharmaceutical firm that had created a tonic drink, appreciated by truck drivers and firm workers. In 1984, Chaleo met Dietrich Mateschitz, and they invested together in this energy drink by revising the name, the packaging and the original receipt adapting it to the Occidental liking. Few years later, thanks to a revolutionary marketing strategy, Red Bull conquers Austria, Hungary, Great Britain, Germany, and then the whole Europe and in 1997 also enters the USA market.

In the end of 2013, Red Bull had taken on 9.694 people from 166 different Countries while in the end of the previous year; the employees were 8.966 from 165 Countries. In terms of market share, Red Bull is the most popular energy drink in the world; in 2013 5.387 billion cans have been sold, recording an increase of 3.1% compared with 2012. Thanks to a price increase and to a currency fluctuation, the company's sales volume has increased by a 2.2% moving from 4,930 billion to 5,040 billion Euros. Sales, revenues, productiveness and profit have registered the record in the company's history. This positive result is related to the great sale result registered in India (+55%), Japan (+32%), Turkey (+18%), Scandinavia (+16%), Russia (+13%) and Brazil (+12%), together with an efficient management control and continuous investments in the brand (redbull.com).

Red Bull has registered a great growth in the last few years and it is continuing to improve and reach great results – *although the difficult economic situation that the world has suffered in the last years* – showing new records in term of market share, sales volume, expansion in new markets, and internal growth by increasing the number of the human resources.

In comparison with the global market, we represent below the synthetic situation and the progressive increase of people hired and sales volume:

- 2010: 7.758 people hired in 161 Countries with a sales volume of 3,785 billion euro;
- 2011: 8.294 people hired in 164 Countries with a sales volume of 4,253 billion euro;
- 2012: 8.966 people hired in 165 Countries with a sales volume of 4,930 billion euro;
- 2013: 9.694 people hired in 166 Countries with a sales volume of 5,040 billion euro;

6.2 The Product

The energy drink is purchased in 3 formats and 3 versions; in 2008 also a Coke ("Red Bull Simply Cola") has been produced, with exclusively natural products and in 2009 the "Red Bull Energy Shot" has been commercialized in advance in the USA market and it has still not reached the Italian one.

The company shows the energy drink as a physic and a mental energy stimulus that increase the performances, the reaction capabilities, the attention threshold, which improves the feeling of well-being and stimulates metabolism.

6.3 Red Bull Marketing Strategy

Red Bull has registered extraordinary results in several Countries of the world and it has become a leader in the energy drink market thanks to the characteristic of the product recognized by the customers and to the results obtained through the several marketing strategies they used. The company invests in traditional channels – *TV, radio, cinema, newspapers* – uses advertising tools – *mainly sport and music* – and invests in unconventional communication.

Over the past years they have linked the brand to the sport world, starting from extreme sports like windsurfing, base jumping and snowboarding, and progressively widening to the traditional ones like soccer (FC Red Bull Salzburg RB Leipzig, New York Red Bulls, Red Bull Ghana, Red Bull Brazil), hockey (EHC Red Bull München) and Formula 1; in parallel other funny self-deprecating events have been organized: the "Red Bull Soap Box Race" and the "Red Bull Flugtag – a day with the wings" are events where amateurs challenge on board of cars or airplanes devoid of engine, self-built and with funny shapes.

Concerning TV, Red Bull has been advertised through a series of sketches conceived by Kastner & Partners, advising company; the spot structure, unchanged since the beginning, tells short stories, which are ironic and funny,

through skits drawn with a comic strip style where often the characters break free from small and fastidious daily situation thank to the energy drink that "gives you wings". Part of Red Bull success is also related to the innovative style design of the aluminium can: the product is proposed in the "*sleek cans*", slim cans with a particular and innovative design.

The Red Bull marketing strategy arises in an integrated communication plan the simultaneously promotes the traditional communication, the sponsoring and the unconventional communication to represent its own idea and philosophy of the brand marketing; over the past years several marketing campaign, sponsorship and unconventional communication campaign have been developed. As a matter of fact, to distinguish itself from the competitor, it has decided to invest in advertising and above and below the line communication; Red Bull realizes diversified marketing campaigns at an international level and the several sponsored activities go from the extreme sports to the Formula 1, but also to culture and music.

The company constantly invests in traditional media using a self-deprecating and direct style of communication, continuously highlighting the claim "Red Bull gives you wings". The main target group is made of 18-30 years old people – *male and female*- and, although the communication is somehow calibrated to the year season, the base philosophy is always the same.

Red Bull's communication is aligned with the unconventional marketing not only for the spot activities arranged in several part of the world, but also for the marketing philosophy of the company that, as a matter of fact, represents, in all the initiatives, situations that are at the same time extraordinary, unconventional, extreme and, for sure, astonishing. Red Bull's marketing strategy, which is combined with the company brand in every situation and occasion, provides for the creation of consumers meeting and exchange of strong sensation in order to communicate the excellence and the possibility to go beyond the habits by using the communicated product. These guide lines arise from initiatives already arranged in the past – *at an international level we can remember the Red Bull Road Rage (road cycling and Mtb downhill), the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, where the most famous drivers in the world challenge in a diving competition from a 24m high trampoline-*.

In addition to others memorable initiatives with a high level of adrenalin, we can remember the success in Formula 1 and the step out from 39.045m   – *Red Bull Stratos* – of the Austrian parachutist Felix Baumgartner, the first man ever going beyond the speed of sound reaching the speed of 1.342,8 Km/h. The event was followed all around the world on the TV and internet setting the live streaming record share with 8 million connections. The operation requested 5 year to be prepared and Red Bull financed it with about 50 million euros.

The global success of Red Bull derives, in part, from the unconventional communication combined with the traditional one and a strong conveyed message that, as a matter of fact, has a great importance because it is autonomously interpreted by the consumers. The brand fills up with contents also through experiences and sensations that involve the consumers in the events and experiences (also just the online ones) where brand loyalty paths get started.

Among the several strategies use to develop curiosity and passion in the consumers, there is the attention to the mystery that surrounds the product since the '90s; a strategy of "myth building" and doubt on some ingredients contained in the Red Bull drink to whom the unconventional marketing has strongly contributed. Also in presence of negative word of mouth and in difficult periods like the current one, the company succeed in planning and keeping a constant development and uses all the elements needed to strengthen the brand communication and the company philosophy that for sure is focused on the creation of value elements able to give to the consumers the possibility of building new models of utilization and the consumption of the product.

7. Results and Conclusions

The most part of the companies that adopt unconventional communication strategies are big organizations that invest high budgets in marketing and communication. They are supported by an adequate sales volume and a more open, innovative and dynamic culture; they are company with specialized, resourceful and creative staff that has high knowledge in marketing and communication; by using outsourcing activities they can manage the design of unconventional marketing activities but, as a matter of fact, the consideration of the use of the tools comes out from the open-mindedness and the necessity to propose messages that are alternative and different.

Companies that use the unconventional marketing need to communicate emotions, philosophy, life style, groups to which belong and new consumption model; they are companies that want to aggregate followers, fans and supporter around their offer that, in some cases, can take a second place compared to the conveyed message; they have not only the necessity to show the existence of a product/service that solves a problem or does a specific function.

The unconventional marketing is a complex tool that must be used according to a precise project and a compatible strategy with the widest and complete marketing project and company communication; as a matter of fact, the financial commitment – that is not necessarily small –represents just one of the components of a project that has to fit with other ones that must be developed in parallel. In fact, it is impossible to think to an unconventional marketing activity having not the related support of a communication project inclusive of the whole company or product/service that is the object of the unconventional campaign. In addition to the astonishment and after the sensation and the stimulus, also a concrete and solid offer is needed.

In parallel, in some cases, also the small or medium companies can plan and realize successful unconventional campaigns, especially for the launch of a product/service, if they use creativity, original ideas, competence, professionalism and a flexible and innovative business culture; the utilization of the cheapness and efficiency of the new social web channels, social network, of the community and physic and virtual ambient, allows to convey original and impact unconventional messages or actions. In this way they can succeed in starting the word of mouth and a virtuous and involving stimulus. One of the strong points of the unconventional communication is the possibility to multiply the success occasion of a communication project through original, creative and unique ideas.

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