

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

DOCTORAL FIELD: MARKETING

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVERTISING
CREATIVITY - TRADITIONAL VERSUS AMBIENT**

- SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS -

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:
PROF. UNIV. DR. IOAN PLĂIAȘ

DOCTORAL STUDENT:
MARIA ALINA JURCA

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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

SUMMARY	1
TABLES LIST	4
FIGURES LIST	5
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER I. ADVERTISING - FROM TRADITIONAL TO UNCONVENTIONAL	10
1.1 ADVERTISING – SHORT HISTORY AND DEFFINITION	10
1.2 THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING	13
1.2.1 Advertising clutter	14
1.2.2 Consumers' advertising literacy	17
1.3 NEW PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	19
1.3.1 ATL versus BTL	21
1.3.2 Guerrilla marketing	23
1.3.3 Unconventional advertising	26
1.4 UNCONVENTIONAL ADVERTISING TECHNIQUES	29
CHAPTER II. ADVERTISING CREATIVITY	36
2.1 PROBLEMS IN DEFINING ADVERTISING CREATIVITY	36
2.2 DIMENSIONS OF ADVERTISING CREATIVITY	38
2.2.1 Novelty	38
2.2.2 Relevance	39
2.2.3 Well-craftiness	40
2.2.4 Humor	41
2.2.5 Other factors	41
2.3 AMBIENT ADVERTISING - CREATIVE FORM OF UNCONVENTIONAL ADVERTISING	42
2.3.1 Ambient advertising in the literature	43
2.3.2 Towards a new deffinition of ambient advertising	49
2.3.2.1 Terminology	50
2.3.2.2 Location	51
2.3.2.3 Execution	53
2.3.3 A new deffinition of ambient advertising	56

CHAPTER III. MEASURES OF ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS	58
3.1 SCHEMA THEORY	58
3.1.1 Schema congruence theory	61
3.1.2 Measuring schema incongruence	63
3.2 AMBIENT ADVERTISING AND SCHEMA THEORY	64
3.3 CREDIBILITY, PERCEIVED VALUE, ATTITUDES AND WORD-OF-MOUTH INTENTIONS AS INDICATORS OF ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS	65
3.3.1 The perceived credibility of the ad	66
3.3.2 The perceived value of the ad	68
3.3.3 Ad and brand attitudes	69
3.3.4 Ad and brand word-of-mouth intentions	71
CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	74
4.1 THE DEVELOPEMENT OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS	74
4.1.1 The developement of the conceptual model	76
4.1.2 Formulating the research hypothesis	78
4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS	81
4.3 RESEARCH METHOD	84
4.3.1 Research typology	84
4.3.2 Data collection method	85
4.4 SAMPLING	87
4.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	89
4.6 DATA COLLECTION	90
4.6.1 Pretest	90
4.6.2 Data collection	90
CHAPTER V. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH	93
5.1 DATA PREPARATION FOR ANALYSIS	93
5.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION	94
5.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SCALES	97
5.3.1 Schema congruence	98
5.3.2 Creativity dimensions	101
5.3.3 perceived credibility of the ad	103
5.3.4 Perceived value of the ad	103

5.3.5 Ad and brand attitudes	104
5.4 HYPOTHESIS TESTING	105
5.4.1 Dimensions of advertising creativity	105
5.4.2 Effects of advertising creativity	108
CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSIONS	115
6.1. DISCUSSIONS	115
6.2 IMPLICATIOIS	122
6.2.1 Theoretical implications	122
6.2.2 Managerial implications	123
6.3 LIMITS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127
ANNEXES	143

KEYWORDS: advertising, advertisement, unconventional advertising, ambient advertising, creativity, cognitive schema

INTRODUCTION

In the context of global economy, qualitative differentiation of products has become minimal, so that companies seek alternative methods to highlight their offer and to attract the attention of consumers. One of the solutions adopted by more and more organizations to address this situation is to place an emphasis on communication strategies in order to achieve differentiation through promotion. Thus, the number of ads worldwide has increased exponentially in recent decades, one person being exposed to hundreds (Media Dynamics Inc., 2007) or even thousands (Shapiro & Nielsen, 2013) of promotional messages daily, especially in countries like United States or Western Europe. As a result of excessive advertising clutter, consumers have developed protective mechanisms in the form of cognitive schemas that help to identify and to avoid the unwanted promotional messages. Consequently, the effectiveness of traditional advertising has experienced a sharp decline in recent years. Thus, the alternative forms of promotion have become increasingly attractive, as they are more effective in attracting attention and delivering the message to the target audience.

Romanian advertising industry is growing and expanding as a result of economic development in recent decades, while Romanian consumers are becoming savvier, with growing expectations about the products and services offered by companies. The situation of Romanian advertising industry seems to be similar to the global situation.

Since studies of creativity and unconventional advertising, as an alternative to traditional advertising have been undertaken exclusively in the context of Western countries, it is necessary to address this issue in the context of Romania also, due to its high importance. This paper deals with the subject of unconventional advertising in the context of Romanian consumer, the empirical research conducted representing a first step towards a better understanding of the predictors and effects of advertising creativity in Romania.

In choosing the theme of this paper several aspects were taken into consideration, as follows:

- ❖ The global decline of traditional advertising effectiveness due to extreme advertising clutter and consumers' increased advertising literacy, a trend observed also in recent years in Romania. According to a study conducted in February 2013 in Romania, traditional media spending was reduced by 2.7% compared to the previous year, while this percentage was estimate to increase for the next period (eMarketer, 2013).
- ❖ The increased effectiveness of unconventional advertising compared to traditional advertising, in drawing consumers' attention and delivering the advertising message.
- ❖ The rapid development of the ambient forms of advertising, including in Romania. For example, in the period 2007-2012 there was an increase in the global share of alternative media (which includes ambient advertising) in the total advertising revenues from 13.3% in 2007 to 22.9% in 2012, with an estimate of 32.7% by 2017 (PQ Media, 2007, PQ Media, 2008 PQ Media, 2013).
- ❖ The significant impact of advertising creativity on consumer behavior.
- ❖ Lack of concern for the study of the predictors and effects of advertising creativity and of unconventional advertising in the context of Romanian market.
- ❖ The important implications of using alternative forms of promotion on consumers' perceptions and attitudes.

The purpose of this paper is thus to identify the antecedents and effects of advertising creativity and to observe the differences between traditional and unconventional ads, with ambient advertising being elected as the representative form non-traditional advertising.

Regarding the structure of the paper, it is organized into three theoretical chapters, one chapter presenting the research methodology, another chapter presenting the analysis of the results, and finally, a conclusions chapter, all of which will be summarized in what follows.

The first chapter, entitled *Advertising - from traditional to unconventional*, starts with a brief overview of the most important aspects related to advertising in general, then it identifies and presents the most important causes that led to the steep decline of advertising effectiveness observed around world in recent decades, namely excessive advertising clutter and consumers' increased advertising literacy. Further, it identifies one

potential solution to these problems, namely the use of the new unconventional forms of promotion. In this context are presented the origins of the differentiation between unconventional and traditional advertising and also guerilla marketing as the starting point of unconventional advertising. Furthermore, a review of the literature on unconventional advertising and its categorization is conducted.

The second chapter, *Advertising creativity*, is centered on the concept of creativity. The first part presents the main problems in defining the concept, then, the most important dimensions of advertising creativity are identified and described. The second part of this chapter presents ambient advertising, one of the most creative unconventional forms of promotion. To establish a solid theoretical framework for this concept, it was conducted first a review of the existing literature addressing the issue of ambient advertising and identifying its most important features. Then a new definition of the concept was developed, a definition that is intended to be more accurate and comprehensive than those identified in the literature to date.

The third chapter, the last theoretical one, refers to *Measures of advertising effectiveness*. The first part of this chapter presents the theory of cognitive schemas that originated in cognitive psychology, a theory that is further used as a basis for explaining the differences observed between traditional and unconventional advertising. Furthermore, there are observed the most important aspects regarding ambient advertising's ability to overcome the barriers posed by consumers' developed advertising schemas that act as shields against unwanted promotional messages. The last part of this chapter identifies and describes the main methods of quantifying advertising effectiveness, using the theory of cognitive schemas as the basis for explaining them.

The fourth chapter presents the *Research methodology*, illustrating the proposed conceptual model and the hypotheses developed, the research method, the sampling method, the data collection instrument and the data collection procedure used.

The fifth chapter, the *Results of the research*, overviews the stages of the analysis of the data collected. Initially, there are described the preparation procedures for the data analysis, after which it is made a brief summary of the analyzed sample. In what follows,

there are described the data analysis procedures used, starting with testing the reliability and validity scales and continuing with the proposed hypothesis verification.

The sixth chapter, and the last of this paper, presents the *Conclusions* of the study. In this chapter there are discussed the results of the research, then there are described the theoretical and managerial implications of the study, and finally the main limitations of the study and the possible future research directions in the field are identified.

CHAPTER I. ADVERTISING - FROM TRADITIONAL TO UNCONVENTIONAL

This chapter offers a general view of the most important theoretical aspects of advertising. The first part, presents a brief history of the evolution of the concept of advertising, mentioning its most important definitions.

Furthermore, it identifies and describes the main causes that contributed to the decline in the effectiveness of traditional advertising, a trend observed in several previous studies (Zanot, 1984, Elliott & Speck, 1998; Baack, Wilson, & Till, 2008). The first issue mentioned is advertising clutter, a phenomenon that appeared as a result of the continuous growth in the number of ads that consumers are exposed to every day. The main effects of media clutter are the reduced consumer attention to promotional messages (Rosengren, 2008; Rotfeld, 2006b), the negative impact on consumers' attitude towards the ads their exposure medium (Ha, 1996), the reduced memorability of the ad and the promoted brand (Webb & Ray, 1979, Ray & Webb, 1986; Hammer, Riebe, & Kennedy, 2009). The second aspect that has affected the effectiveness of traditional advertising is consumers' increased advertising literacy. Nowadays consumers are able to understand the vocabulary, the elements and styles used in advertising and at the same time, to decode complex visual images and make inferences based on minimal clues (O'Donahoe & Tynan, 1998). A number of studies have shown that a high level of advertising literacy leads to increased skepticism towards advertisements, translated by mistrust and negative attitude towards the promotional message (Moore & Rodger, 2005; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005), consumers' negative reactions to advertising often taking the form of avoidance behaviors.

The last part of this chapter highlights the evolution of the advertising industry from traditional media (TV, radio, street billboards, etc..) towards the new and unconventional forms of promotion, which are listed and described briefly in the end of this chapter.

CHAPTER II. ADVERTISING CREATIVITY

The second chapter of this paper is centered on the concept of creativity. A first step in establishing a conceptual framework for advertising creativity is the attempt to define it, which is problematic because of the multidimensionality of the phenomenon. A number of definitions found in the literature are mentioned, of which the most comprehensive is the one belonging by Leo Burnett (1968) who considered advertising creativity as "the art of establishing new and meaningful relationships between previously unrelated things in a manner that is relevant, believable, and in good taste, but which somehow presents the product in a fresh new light" (El- Murad & West, 2004, p 188).

Furthermore, the dimensions of advertising creativity were identified and described, of which novelty and relevance are the most important and, in fact, widely accepted in literature (White & Smith, 2001; El- Murad & West, 2004; Sheinin, Varki, & Ashley, 2011; Baack, Wilson, & Till, 2008). In addition to novelty and relevance, two other dimensions can be identified in the literature: humor (Lee & Mason, 1999 West, Kover, & Caruana, 2008), and well craftiness (White & Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2003).

Novelty refers to how different an execution is compared to other ads in the same category (Sheinin, Varki, & Ashley, 2011; Ang & Low, 2000) and is considered by some authors the basic criteria in determining the level of creativity (Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2003, White & Smith, 2001). Through relevance, creativity adds value to the execution, transforming novelty into something meaningful for consumer, in the context of the ad (Ang & Low, 2000). Regarding the well craftiness of an ad, there are several studies that included this aspect among the determinants of creativity (White & Smith, 2001; Koslow, Sasser & Riordan, 2003; Mercanti - Guérin, 2008), based on the importance of aesthetics in assessing creativity in the arts. As for humor, it can also be considered a determinant of creativity, as a study by West, Kover, and Caruana (2008) showed that the sample of consumers used, also mentioned humor among other characteristics when asked to define advertising creativity.

To illustrate the concept of advertising creativity, the second part of this chapter presents ambient advertising, a creative form of promotion that uses elements from the surrounding environment of the target audience, which are then integrated in the execution and delivery of the promotional message. First, it describes the evolution of the concept in the literature and identifies the main approaches of the term and also the definitions belonging to both academicians and practitioners. Furthermore, the main features of ambient advertising are outlined and exemplified through ad campaigns that have used this form of promotion. In the end of this chapter, based on the main characteristics identified, a new definition of the concept is developed, which is intended to be more accurate and comprehensive than those identified in the literature to date.

CHAPTER III. MEASURES OF ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

In this chapter, the last theoretical one, is presented the basis for evaluating advertising effectiveness. Since the effectiveness of an ad is directly influenced by the extent to which information conveyed by the promotional message is processed by consumers, the first part of this chapter presents the schema theory which can explain how consumers process, evaluate and react to the information they receive. Schemas are cognitive structures of prior organized knowledge stored in memory (Stayman, Alden, & Smith, 1992), which may include information about the elements of a category, its features, and the attitudes towards it (Goodstein, 1993). The new situations and experiences that consumers face may correspond to a greater or lesser extent with the information stored in the cognitive schemas. Thus, if there is a match between the situation and an existing schema then we have congruency, but if the situation can not be reconciled with any of the existing schemata then incongruence occurs. Congruence theory seeks to examine the effects of confirmation or disconfirmation of consumer expectations on their reactions to stimuli (Hastie, 1980; Srull, Lichtenstein, & Rothbart, 1985). Individual response is assessed on both information processing and evaluation behaviors. This theory is relevant to the field of advertising as it provides a way of predicting how consumers evaluate and react to an advertisement based on their previous experience.

To measure the level of incongruence with existing schemas, Heckler and Childers (1992) developed a bidimensional model to facilitate the study of incongruent information processing behavior. The two dimensions are expectedness and relevance. The first dimension refers to the extent to which an advertisement is in accordance with consumers' expectations about that particular type of advertising, while relevance is the extent to which incongruous elements in an advertisement provide useful and meaningful information about the promoted brand, product or idea, facilitating the cognitive processing necessary to understanding the message of the ad (Joost & Verlegh, 2002). The three levels of incongruity with cognitive schemas (low, medium, and extreme) are

explained by the different levels of the two dimensions, namely expected-relevant, unexpected-relevant and unexpected-irrelevant.

Furthermore, some of the most important measures of advertising effectiveness, chosen as representative for the present study, are described: perceived ad credibility, perceived advertising value, consumer attitudes toward advertising and towards the brand and ad and brand word-of-mouth intentions.

According to Belch and Belch (2003, p GL4) credibility is "the extent to which a source is perceived as having the knowledge, skills and experience relevant to a specific topic of conversation, and it can be trusted to provide an unbiased opinion or to present objective information about the topic." While credibility is recently considered one of the most important factors that influence the success of an ad (Moore & Rodger, 2005), consumers trust advertising less than they used to (Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005)

The perceived value of advertising is very little studied in the literature, although it seems to be a determinant of consumer response to advertisements (Ducoffe, 1995). With regard to existing studies, they appear to be more concerned about the information value of advertising and less about consumers' perceptions of value. Ducoffe (1995, p.1) believes that the perceived value of advertising can be an indicator of consumer satisfaction on company's "communication products", and he defines it as "a subjective assessment of the relative importance or utility of advertising for consumers".

A favorable attitude towards a product or service is seen as an important prerequisite of the purchase intent for the product or service (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2005). Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2003, p 112) define attitude as "a learned predisposition, a feeling that an individual has for an object, a person, an idea that leads to a particular behavior." The basic idea of all the definitions of attitudes is that they are formed through learning and generally rigid over time, hence their importance in determining the success of an ad in influencing consumer buying behavior.

Another important indicator of advertising effectiveness is consumer's behavior as a result of his/her exposure to the promotional message. One aspect of this behavior is the word-of-mouth intention. Intentions are subjective evaluations of individuals' future behavior

(Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2005). There are many studies that have shown the positive effect of intentions on actual behavior (Juster, 1964 Howard & Seth, 1969; Ajzen, The theory of Planned Behavior, 1991, Smith & Yang, 2008). Word-of-mouth intention refers to the "informal transmission of ideas, comments, views and information between two persons" (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2005). The voluntary ad and brand word-of-mouth effect offers significant advantages for the company. Thus, in addition to the free advertising, it was also proved that messages delivered through word-of-mouth are also very persuasive (Smith, Coyle, Lightfood, & Scott, 2007; Keller & Fay, 2012).

CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological approach used to achieve the objectives of the paper. A first step in this approach is the development of a conceptual model that represents the basis of the present study, after which the proposed research hypotheses are formulated, and then are presented the paradigm, the research methods, the sampling method, the research instrument, and the data collection method.

A research must start with identifying a real problem existing in the society of the population studied. Thus, the current research aims to analyze the Romanian public perception of conventional versus unconventional advertising, using a sample of students from a business faculty. The importance of such a study is given by the lack of studies of this kind regarding the Romanian consumer, needed in the light of the direction in which Romanian society and market are heading, a trajectory that seems to be similar to that of Western societies. Starting from the basic research question (Are there any differences between conventional advertising effectiveness compared to unconventional advertising effectiveness?), there have been identified a set of research questions that are then answered through empirical research:

- What are the determinants of advertising creativity?
- What are the effects of creativity on consumer perceptions, attitudes and intentions?
- What is the impact of congruence/incongruence of advertisements with existing schemas on the dimensions of creativity?
- What is the impact of congruence/incongruence of advertisements with existing schemas on advertising creativity effects?

Thus, in order to facilitate a response to the research questions, a model was developed to highlight the variables taken into consideration in the empirical research and the relationships between them.

The hypotheses proposed for the present research are reflected in the proposed model, following the relationships between the variables identified. The hypotheses of this study are:

- ❖ H1: The ambient ad will generate a moderate level of incongruity with consumers' ad schema, while traditional advertising will be congruent with consumers' ad schema.
- ❖ H2a: The novelty of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.
- ❖ H2b: The relevance of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.
- ❖ H2c: The well craftiness of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.
- ❖ H2d: The humor of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.
- ❖ H3: The congruency with consumers' cognitive schema will influence the dimensions of creativity, the levels of novelty, relevance, well craftiness and humor being higher in the case of an incongruent ad compared to a congruent ad.
- ❖ H4a: Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer perceived credibility of an ad.
- ❖ H4b: Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer perceived value of an ad.
- ❖ H4c: Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer attitude towards the ad.
- ❖ H4d: Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer attitude towards the brand.
- ❖ H5: The levels of ad attitude, brand attitude, ad perceived credibility, ad perceived value, and brand and ad word-of-mouth intentions will be higher for the incongruent ad compared to the congruent ad.
- ❖ H6a: Consumer perceived credibility of the advertising will directly and positively influence consumer's attitudes towards advertising.

- ❖ H6b: Consumer perceived value of the advertisement will directly and positively influence consumer attitudes towards advertising.
- ❖ H7: The relationship between creativity and ad attitude will be mediated by the perceived credibility and the perceived value of the ad.
- ❖ H8: Consumers' ad attitude will directly and positive influence their brand attitude.
- ❖ H9: The relationship between creativity and brand attitude will be mediated by consumers' ad attitudes.
- ❖ H10: Consumers' attitude towards the ad will directly and positively influence their ad word-of-mouth intentions.
- ❖ H11: Consumers' attitudes towards the brand will directly and positively influence their brand word-of-mouth intentions.
- ❖ H12: The perceived advertising costs will directly and positively influence the perceived value of advertising.
- ❖ H13: The perceived advertising efforts will directly and positively influence the perceived value of advertising.

In the case of the current research it is obvious the affiliation to the positivist paradigm. The study is quantitative and uses a questionnaire administered to a sample of the population studied. This research is based on the theory of cognitive schemas developed by Bartlett (1932) and seeks to observe the differences in consumers' behavior and attitudes that are generated by the congruence or incongruence of an advertisement with consumers' existing schemata, trying to anticipate their reactions in order to increase the effectiveness of advertising. Basically, the study aims to objectively test the model and the assumptions associated.

Empirical research meets the criteria of an exploratory study, and because its aim is to analyze the nature and the extent of the cause-effect relationships between the identified variables, it can be appreciated that the present study is also a conclusive causal one (Plăiaș et al, 2008; Malhotra & Birks, 2008).

Data collection was performed using a self-administered online questionnaire being. To collect data online the LimeSurvey application was used which enables the online creation of the questionnaire, and then generates a virtual address (link) of the survey from where it can be accessed by respondents.

With respect to the sampling techniques used in the present research, the chosen sampling method is convenience, a non-probabilistic method. Non-probabilistic methods are based on researcher's judgment in choosing the target population and sometimes provide a good estimate of the characteristics of the studied group (Malhotra & Birks, 2008). Convenience sampling is the selection of any person who satisfies the criteria of the investigated population and agrees to answer the questions in the survey (Pop, 2004).

Students represent the population selected for testing the proposed model, as the sample was comprised of undergraduate and graduate master level students, from a business faculty.

Data collection took place between July 16th and August 20th 2013, during which, in addition to the initial message there has been sent one other reminder.

CHAPTER V. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

A first step in the analysis of the research results was the preparation of data for analysis. This step ensures reliability and validity of the data collected in order to test the proposed hypotheses (Gaskin, 2012).

Furthermore, the sample description has been done by calculating the relative frequency of descriptive variables.

A third step in the data analysis was the reliability test of the measurement scales used in the study. This was done by checking the internal consistency using Cronbach α . After verifying the reliability of each scale, a factor analysis was performed in order to reduce the number of variables used in the data analysis (Huck, 2012), and to determine the convergent validity of the scale. Following the exploratory factor analysis, from each construct were eliminated, where appropriate, those items with factor loading below acceptable levels. The aggregation of the item values was performed by averaging the values of the variables in each scale, the results being saved in a new variable which substitutes the original scale.

Following the analysis of all the scales used in the questionnaire, the hypothesis verification was performed. In order to test the hypothesis a number of statistical tests were undertaken including simple and multiple linear regressions, independent samples t test, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and it was also used the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2013) that verifies the mediator and moderator effect of variables.

Doing a summary of the results of the analyzes performed, it can be observed that out of the 20 proposed hypotheses, 17 were confirmed, two were rejected and one was accepted with some restrictions, as it can be seen in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1 Summary of the results

No.	Hypothesis	Statement	Result
1	H1	The ambient ad will generate a moderate level of incongruity with consumers' ad schema, while traditional advertising will be congruent with consumers' ad schema.	CONFIRMED
2	H2 _a	The novelty of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.	CONFIRMED
3	H2 _b	The relevance of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively.	CONFIRMED
4	H2 _c	The well-craftiness of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively	CONFIRMED
5	H2 _d	The humor of an ad will influence creativity directly and positively	CONFIRMED
6	H3	The congruency with consumers' cognitive schema will influence the dimensions of creativity, the levels of novelty, relevance, well craftiness and humor being higher in the case of an incongruent ad compared to a congruent ad.	CONFIRMED
7	H4 _a	Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer perceived credibility of an ad.	CONFIRMED
8	H4 _b	Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer perceived value of an ad.	CONFIRMED
9	H4 _c	Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumer ad attitude.	CONFIRMED
10	H4 _d	Advertising creativity will directly and positively influence the consumers' brand attitude.	CONFIRMED with restrictions
11	H5	The levels of ad attitude, brand attitude, ad perceived credibility, ad perceived value, and brand and ad word-of-mouth intentions will be higher for the incongruent ad compared to the congruent ad.	CONFIRMED

No.	Hypothesis	Statement	Result
12	H6 _a	Consumer perceived credibility of the advertisement will directly and positively influence consumer's attitudes towards advertising.	CONFIRMED
13	H6 _b	Consumer perceived value of the advertisement will directly and positively influence consumer's attitudes towards advertising.	CONFIRMED
14	H7	The relationship between creativity and ad attitude will be mediated by the perceived credibility and the perceived value of the ad.	CONFIRMED
15	H8	Consumers' ad attitude will directly and positive influence their brand attitude	CONFIRMED
16	H9	The relationship between creativity and brand attitude will be mediated by consumers' ad attitudes	CONFIRMED
17	H10	Consumers' attitude towards the ad will directly and positively influence their ad word-of-mouth intentions.	CONFIRMED
18	H11	Consumers' attitude towards the brand will directly and positively influence their brand word-of-mouth intentions.	CONFIRMED
19	H12	The perceived advertising costs will directly and positively influence the perceived value of advertising	REJECTED
20	H13	The perceived advertising efforts will directly and positively influence the perceived value of advertising.	REJECTED

Source: The author

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSIONS

This paper addresses the topic of unconventional advertising in the context of Romania. The empirical research undertaken attempts to observe the differences between traditional and unconventional advertising in terms of creativity, while identifying the most important effects that creativity has on the perceptions, attitudes and intentions of Romanian consumers. For explaining the effects and relationships observed, it is used the cognitive schemas theory, which has its roots in cognitive psychology. This study is intended as a first step in assessing the impact of the use of unconventional advertising and in evaluating the effectiveness of advertising creativity. This was done using a sample of students of a renowned business faculty in the country. After analyzing the collected data, the results of the current research were similar to the results of other research studies undertaken in Western countries.

Thus, a first step was to assess the used advertisements congruity with cognitive schemas of the population investigated. The results confirmed that traditional advertising matches individuals' expectations of advertising, while the ambient ad is incongruent, thus confirming hypothesis H1.

Next, out of the four dimensions of creativity identified in the literature review the results have shown that are all relevant in assessing the level of creativity of an advertisement (confirming hypotheses H2a-d), however their importance is different. Thus, it appears that for the population investigated ads' novelty and ability to entertain or amuse is more important in assessing the creativity than the well craftiness of the ad or the relevance of the information presented.

Regarding the differences between the two types of ads used in the study (H3), it was observed that the scores obtained by each of the dimensions of creativity were higher for unconventional advertisement than in the case of the traditional one. This can be explained by different levels of congruence with ad schemas for the two commercials used. Thus, the fact that traditional advertising matched to a large extent individuals' expectations of advertising, made them to appreciate it as less novel, less amusing and

less appealing compared to the unconventional ad. In terms of relevance, its levels were close for the two campaigns used in the study, the investigated population finding both ads able to convey the brand message quite well, however the ambient ad was better appreciated in the case of relevance also.

Of the four effect variables tested (hypothesis H4a-d), creativity exerted the strongest influence on ad attitude. In other words, consumers have more favorable feelings toward creative ads, which they consider to be more likable. Not only attitudes are more favorable when advertising is perceived as highly creative, but also consumers' perceptions of the ad credibility and value. Thus, the results of analyzes carried out showed that the interviewed population consider more valuable and have greater confidence in ads with a high level of creativity. Consumer perceptions also have an important role in shaping attitudes towards advertising. Thus, the more an ad is considered as more credible and valuable (H6a-b), the more likable it is for the public. Regarding brand attitudes, the influence of creativity on them is quite low, which can be explained by the fact that consumers evaluate the creativity of the ad and not of the brand, thus not influencing their brand attitudes. Instead, indirect impact through ad attitude is major, the peaking effect of the indirect relationship between the two variables canceling the direct relationship (H4d is accepted with restrictions). Basically, the positive impact of creativity on consumer brand attitudes may be best explained by their favorable ad attitude (H9).

Regarding the investigated population's behavioral intentions (hypothesis H10 and H11) it can be observed from the results of the analyzes, a positive impact of consumers' attitudes on their desire to speak about the ad and the promoted brand. Thus, the more attractive and likable are the ad and the brand perceived to be, the more willing will the consumers be to share their views on the ad and the brand to those around them.

Differences between traditional and unconventional advertising (hypothesis H5) can also be observed in relation to their effectiveness. Thus, the impact of creativity on the investigated population is clearly more favorable in the case of the ambient ad compared to the traditional ad. The sample population considered the unconventional advertisement as more credible and at the same time more valuable, showing more favorable ad and brand attitudes. Behavioral intentions were also more positive in the case of the ambient

ad, the ad and brand word-of-mouth intentions being more intense for the unconventional ad. In other words, a brand promoted in a creative, unconventional way has more chances to become the topic of a conversation.

Unlike other studies that have shown an influence of the costs and efforts required for implementation of an advertisement on its perceived value (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlen, Granlund, & Grenros, 2009, Dahlen & Rosengren, 2005), the sample investigated in the present research does not consider these two factors as having a role in their appreciation of advertising value, thus rejecting the H12 and H13 hypothesis. A possible explanation for this situation may be consumers' high advertising literacy and their ability to understand marketers' persuasion techniques, which thus lose their effectiveness. Basically, consumers do not care about the effort or costs involved by an ad, and are strictly interested in the final outcome, the ad being considered valuable only if creative.

Regarding the implications of this study, there are both at the theoretical and managerial implications. Thus, at a theoretical level the study succeeds to :

- ❖ Develop a new conceptual model and to test it;
- ❖ Make a first step in identifying the predictors and effects of advertising creativity in the context of Romania;
- ❖ Confirm the higher ambient advertising effectiveness compared to traditional ads;
- ❖ Develop a conceptual framework for the notion of ambient advertising.

From a managerial standpoint, the present study draws attention to several issues, including:

- ❖ The need to promote the use of new and creative advertising to overcome the shortcomings of traditional advertising;
- ❖ The need to increase the importance of the quality factor of the ads to the detriment of the quantitative factor;
- ❖ The need to know and understand the general public's perceptions of advertising, as it can help predict their behaviors and reactions to advertisements.

Moreover, the paper presents a multidimensional model of creativity that offers both organizations and advertising agencies a simple solution for pretesting advertisements, and also a method of assessing the effectiveness of an advertising campaign.

Regarding the limits of present research they are mainly due to financial and time restrictions, and they can easily become research opportunities for future empirical studies. Table 2 presents the main limitations of the current empirical study and possible future research directions in the field.

Table 2. Limitations and future research directions

LIMITATIONS	FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using a non-probabilistic sampling method ■ The small size of the sample used in the research ■ The use of only two commercials for testing the hypothesis and the model ■ The use of a one time only data collection method that does not observe the overtime evolution of the behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implementation of studies that use probabilistic sampling techniques ■ Investigation of larger samples, representative at a regional, or even national level ■ Elaboration of a research based on an extensive set of commercials ■ The testing of the model through a longitudinal research design ■ The implementation of qualitative studies on ambient advertising and advertising creativity

Source: The author

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